

HOLD

4 SEPTEMBER - 30 OCTOBER 2021
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On display at Midland Junction Arts Centre from 4 September – 30 October, *HOLD* is an exhibition that pays homage to functional basketry and the purposeful application of craft skills. Curated by Leanne Bray and presented as part of the inaugural Indian Ocean Craft Triennial, *HOLD* brings together contemporary makers and examples of historical basketry to commemorate this foundational artform.



Leanne Bray, *HOLD- An Idle Composition*, 2021, cotton and rope, 52 x 55 x 20cm. Photograph by Yvonne Doherty.

The theme of this year's Indian Ocean Craft Triennial is 'Curiosity and Rituals of the Everyday'. Working from this theme, *HOLD* explores the functionality, as well as the unique artistry and sustainability, of the fibre arts. It celebrates baskets and their myriad of uses, but most importantly the skills, shapes, colours, patterns, and symbols used in the making of them, all of which reflect purpose, materiality, and availability of resources. *HOLD* is curated by artist Leanne Bray, who is known for her striking, colourful public artworks. Bray was born in Zimbabwe and is heavily influenced by the visual cultures of Africa. Through her life in Africa and her extensive travels, she developed a deep appreciation for fibre arts, with basketry becoming an integrated part of her practice.

HOLD is an exhibition in two parts, showcasing both historical examples of basketry and contemporary works influenced by these histories. The showcase of historical baskets from private collections demonstrates the shared traditions and craft techniques, while highlighting the specific cultural and material influences used in specific countries on the Indian Ocean Rim. These historical baskets will be supported by research from renowned ethnobotanist and artist Anthony Cunningham. Cunningham is a leading expert on basketry, having published several books and academic papers on the craft, including *African Basketry: Grassroots Art from Southern Africa*.

This display is complemented by an installation of new artworks by nineteen Western Australian artists, all created in response to traditional forms of basketry. These works, while not necessarily baskets themselves, interpret the stories, technical skills, materials, or design elements evident in traditional vessel making. Participating artists in *HOLD* are Gemma Ben-Ary, Sian Boucher, Kate Campbell-Pope, Mikaela Castledine, Merle Davis, Dawn Gamblen, Fiona Gavino, Megan Juresa, Maxxi Minaxi May, Jan Mullen, Stella Picciotto Winn, Tania Spencer, Liliana Stafford, Katrina Virgona, Louise Wells, Anne Williams, Cecile Williams, Martien van Zuilen, and curator Leanne Bray.

Mikaela Castledine's *Still* responds to a traumatic event in her parents' lives- the stillbirth of her younger sibling. *Still* is part of an ongoing series that references damage, both physical and emotional. Made from nine scarlet crocheted circles piled on top of one another, these components represent the nine months of a typical gestation. A large hole burnt into six of the circles represents the birth of the child at six months, and the loss, pain, and damage her parents experienced.



Mikaela Castledine, *Still* (detail), 2021, crocheted paracord, 42 x 42 x 11cm.

Dawn Gamblen normally creates large public artworks, and so found working on a smaller scale refreshing. Gamblen has made a basket using suture scissors, reflecting on her time spent working as a sterilisation technician at Fremantle Hospital. She draws parallels between surgical instruments and hand-woven baskets, believing both to be connected by human touch. Hand-woven baskets

require human touch in their making, while surgical instruments require it in their function and maintenance.



Louise Wells, *Through All Our Senses* (detail), 2021, textile remnants from previous works, 176 x 54 x 54cm, 53 x 15 x 15cm, 43 x 13 x 13cm, 41 x 15 x 15cm.

Louise Wells works primarily with recycled fabrics to reduce the tons of textiles that end up in landfill every year. Her work *Through All Our Senses* is inspired by the *Walteria flemmingi*, a deep-water glass sponge found in the Indian Ocean. The work is a lattice-like structure of tiny fragments of colourful fabric that represent the memories Wells holds on to subconsciously. Wells has made this work to reflect her height, familiar proportions reminding viewers that our bodies act as filters of memories; in the same way, the glass sponge filters water through its body - open to the elements and yet dependent on our environments both physical and psychological for prosperity.

Cecile Williams' *Take Hold* is crafted from objects found washed up on the shores of Christmas Island, one of Australia's Indian Ocean Territories. Many of these objects were parts of toys, the wheels from toy tractors in particular. These items prompted Williams to reflect on a memory from her childhood, where she pocketed a boy's tractor after playing with him and took it home. The guilt caused her to return it the next day. This story is reflected in her work, effectively demonstrating the stories that baskets can tell of their maker.

HOLD recognises both the utilitarian and aesthetic intent of basketry. It documents the history of this ancient craft and the place that baskets occupy in contemporary society.

The Indian Ocean Craft Triennial is a celebration of craft, bringing together artists, makers, and works from across the Indian Ocean Rim. *HOLD* is one of the many exhibitions and events taking place across Western Australia from September – November 2021 as part of the Triennial.

The 2021 Indian Ocean Craft Triennial is supported by Lotterywest, and this exhibition has been supported by project funding from the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries.

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Midland Junction Arts Centre

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