

TOY STORIES

13 NOVEMBER 2021 - 12 FEBRUARY 2022
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Toy Stories brings together artists, hobbyists, regional museums, and community groups in a showcase of contemporary and historic handmade toys, on display at Midland Junction Arts Centre from 13 November – 12 February. Curated by Sarah Toohey, this exhibition is presented as part of the inaugural Indian Ocean Craft Triennial, supported by Lotterywest.

Toy Stories features toys from Western Australia dating back to the 1920s, providing insight into the lives of children across the state over the past century. This exhibition celebrates the imagination and creativity of hobbyist toymakers and professional artists alike, acknowledging the long history of artists making and modifying toys for use in their work. It also unearths the secret world of 'private jobs', explores backyard industries established to meet a growing demand, and examines the enduring appeal of some of the world's most beloved toys.

The makers exhibiting in *Toy Stories* are Emanuel Arkeveld, Clem Bond, Len Bunn, Kate Campbell-Pope, Paul Caporn, Crystal Chong, Jennifer Cochrane, Jane Davies, Angela Ferolla, Susan Flavell, David Gregson, Christine Groom, Geri Hayden, Adam Ismail, Theo Koning, Maxxi Minaxi May, Ellen Norrish, Sue McPhee, Danielle Ryan, Ross Smith, Robert Smith, Barry Tyrie, Yolande Ward-Yarran, Cecile Williams, Susie Vickery, and curator Sarah Toohey. There are also works on loan from Maylands Meccano Club, Narrogin Old Courthouse Museum, Carnamah Historical Society and Museum, and a private collection.



Barry Tyrie, *Tambilling Town*, 1984, recycled cardboard, paper and plastic, dimensions variable. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

Barry Tyrie is a hobbyist who has been creating model railways for over forty years. His work *Tambilling Town* is a 1:87 scale model of the main street of a typical West Australian country town in the early 1970s. *Tambilling Town* has evolved over the years, along with Tyrie's practice. Made mostly from cardboard and found materials, this work was originally a small number of buildings intended to complement a train set that Tyrie's sons played with when they were young. It's now the main feature of a model railway that takes up an entire bedroom in Tyrie's house.

Theo Koning has exhibited in Perth since the early 1970s. His work is featured in several significant collections, including the National Gallery of Australia, Parliament House Canberra, and the Art Gallery of Western Australia. Koning draws similarities between his artistic practice and making toys, describing a recurring dream he has where his backyard studio bears a sign reading 'Theo's Toyshop'. His work *RUP 1234* is a car that he created for his son when he was four years old. The car was made to look similar to a Citroen 2CV, as Koning admired its quirky shape.



Theo Koning, *RUP 1234*, 1990, enamel paint on wood, 21 x 39 x 13cm. Photograph by Acorn Photo.



Cecile Williams, *Escape to the Country*, 2021, recycled cardboard, plastic milk bottles, wire, cable ties, pop sticks, foam core, electronics, 76 x 24 x 24cm. Photograph by Michael Hemmings.

Cecile Williams is a sculptor with a passion for repurposing recycled and found materials. She has undertaken residencies in Switzerland, Vietnam and Fiji and her work has been acquired by the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Edith Cowan University, and numerous private collections. Williams received a grant from the Department of Local Government, Sport, and Cultural Industries to develop her work *Escape to the Country*. She has always been fascinated by toys that move. Drawing inspiration from her own childhood toys, specifically a soft white rabbit she was given when she was young, she has created a mechanical rabbit that moves upwards out of a box. Williams worked with inventor and electrical engineer John Davey who made the mechanisms and programmed the electronics, using discarded electronic waste, to elevate the rabbit.

Relics from the Narrogin Doll Factory are on loan from Narrogin Old Courthouse Museum to be showcased in *Toy Stories*. In WWI, Narrogin resident Grace Burkitt and her family began to make dolls to replace foreign-made dolls that weren't available due to import restrictions. They made these dolls from papier-mâché, after finding clay to be too heavy, and their popularity led to the Burkitt's home being dubbed the 'Narrogin Doll Factory.' Staff were eventually employed and up to forty dolls were being produced weekly.

Toy Stories delves into the history of toys in Western Australia, presenting both historical and contemporary works made by artists and hobbyists over the past century. It encapsulates their skill, optimism, humour, and unstoppable urge to play. This exhibition is on show at Midland Junction Arts Centre from 13 November as part of the 2021 Indian Ocean Craft Triennial program, supported by Lotterywest.



Narrogin Doll Factory, *Puppet Heads*, c. 1920, papier-mâché, paint. On loan from Narrogin Old Courthouse Museum. Photograph by Casey Thornton.

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Midland Junction Arts Centre

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Wed – Fri 10am – 5pm, Sat 11am – 3pm



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