

STEPHEN HART



Spent Time

STEPHEN HART SCULPTURE

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Something Like This: Stephen Hart's Artistic Journey

Before the samoom there is stillness. This stillness is so perfect it sucks the moisture from the air and from the lungs and from the mind. Her grandmother called this stillness the laughter of the gods ... Whichever direction you decided to go, it could not be the right direction. For there was no right direction. Alex Miller, Lovesong, 2010¹

In a departure of sorts from his stylistic and aesthetic practice, Stephen Hart took a leap in 2010, venturing into the abstract. In *Something Like This*, an exhibition at Jan Manton Art, Hart reconfigured the figurative sculpture for which he is best known, developing, instead, a series that abstracted the human figure — tiny segments of coloured timber, jammed together like the compressed contents of an electrical cable. These were rendered as small elements among a larger landscape of architectonic elements that were flat, angular and larger than (human) life. In his *Infinite Possibility* (2010), he used geometry to evoke universally recognised truths, and his own interest in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. *Planet Mirth* (2010) included a vast crowd of small figures in a rusty milieu, reduced to silhouettes with eyes. The work of sculptor Anthony Gormley may be conjured here, as both artists share an interest in the human condition.

Hart's journey in art is a philosophical enquiry that has reflected a largely internal dialogue about the rituals, habits and complexities of human society. These concerns are writ large in his notebooks which comprise press clippings about international events, disasters and wars, and national sensations. There are also the individuals — men and women who are not completely in control of themselves — the multiple social dysfunctions. These have been studied on a daily or weekly basis, annotated, redrawn, images sometimes copied from newspaper images in Hart's meticulous watercolours. In Nabokov's novel *Laughter in the*

Left: Stephen Hart's Studio, 2011

Dark (1933), his character Albinus says, ‘In the free city of the mind, the story belongs to me’². It is this sensation that seems most at liberty in Hart’s studio, the site of construction of his work of the last 15 years; it is his free city of the mind. Within this space he may journey in and around, in a study area integral to the studio, and then enact his thoughts, interests and speculations in materials which are carved, shaped, modelled, even whittled, or drawn and painted.

At 57 years, Hart is no longer a young artist. In his personal interests and professional explorations he remains committed to a quest for a rational understanding of the human condition. His moral compass is aquiver in the face of global events that impact on human behaviour. These have provided him with rich fodder for an art-making that is process-driven highly crafted³, with conceptual layering. There is also an intrinsic alliance with a sense of irony and absurdity that underpins and resources the work. He described elements of his art practice as ‘going down the rabbit hole, in terms of imagination and invention’. This is a useful analogy. His artistic interest is in going within, pushing beyond what has been before, allowing the work to emerge into uncharted aesthetic waters. He cites the words of Tom Robbins in this context (from *Even Cowgirls Get The Blues* [1976]):

It doesn’t matter what anyone chooses. If you take any activity, any art, any discipline any skill, take it and push it as far as it will go, push it beyond where it has ever been before, push it to the wildest edge of edges, then you force it into the realm of magic. And it doesn’t matter what you select, because when it has been pushed far enough, it contains everything else.⁴

Hart’s journeys have traversed the ‘Wild Blue Yonder’ (Jan Manton Art, 2006), prompted by observations of changing human dynamics in the architectural density of the modern city. They have allowed him to be ‘Frank’⁵ (Jan Manton Art, 2008), an extension of his explorations in to the everyman allied to a response to the contradictory nature of being. In this publication, the most substantial publication to date on Stephen Hart’s artistic practice, we may embark on ‘A Silent Walk’ (QUT Art Museum, 2005) with the artist, through his technical processes, allied to the ideas and concepts that carry his practice forward. On this journey we hope to add depth and understanding to Hart’s inherent drive to explore the



Stephen Hart aged two, Glenbawn Dam, NSW, 1955



Stephen Hart in the arms of his aunt Cate Monty, construction site for Lake Keepit, NSW, 1953

nature of humanity today.

Stephen Hart was born in Tamworth, New South Wales on 31 July 1953. He was the second-born of four children — he has an older sister Meg, younger brother Bill and sister Philippa. His father, John Edward Hart, was an engineer and a returned serviceman whose enduring long-term war trauma cast a shadow over family life. Hart's awareness of the pall this experience had over the family is embodied by his childhood memories. He recalls playing with a Japanese flag that his father had souvenired from a Japanese officer after the man had been shot. Other items removed from the soldier's body included the dead man's family photographs that Hart's father examined with regret.⁶

Hart's mother Jean was a teacher-librarian and a Quaker. She was, in accordance with the Quaker faith, socially committed and interested in causes from the abolition of land mines all over the world to Australian protest against the Vietnam War.

Hart left Tamworth and his family home after his last school exam. It was the end of 1971 and he went to Sydney at a time of profound questioning of the whole Western canon. He began labouring on building sites in Surry Hills and enjoying the music, the politics, and the whole counter-cultural atmosphere of the early 1970s. This embodied the spirit of the times and encouraged his interest in creativity that embraced cerebral and artistic activities as both valid and important.

Contrary to his own expectations, he not only matriculated but was awarded a teachers college scholarship at Goulburn College of Advanced Education. By then he was enjoying life, but the value of education — absorbed from his family — saw him accepting the scholarship and returning to study. His initial reluctance dissolved as he discovered the art library, books on Henry Moore and a philosophy teacher who saw his potential — particularly in an early self-portrait.

After he completed teacher's college he taught in primary schools for a couple of years. While he enjoyed working with children, he found the bureaucratic demands of the profession frustrating. The income however allowed him to travel (an interest that has stimulated his imagination ever since). Initially he went to the Himalayas and India. The culture and craft of these places entranced him. 'The culture was palpable — the smell, the touch, the places: the wood turner's streets, the goldsmith's streets. The aesthetic dimension was integral to their culture.'⁷ As a result of this experience he summoned the courage to



Student work, Sandstone, 1980, Collection Sydney College of the Arts



Student work, sandstone & timber, 1981

pursue a dream of exploring his creative impulse.

Encouraged by Sydney conceptual artist Joan Brassil⁸, a family friend, he enrolled at the Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) in 1979 as a mature-age student. He approached the opportunity with commitment and enthusiasm, determined to work hard and to catch up with others who may have come to the course with greater cultural depth and knowledge.

At the end of his first year he went travelling again, this time to the United States. On his return he found that Adrian Hall, a graduate of London's Royal College and Harvard had been appointed head of the sculpture department at SCA. This appointment assisted Hart who found that suddenly there was a broader dialogue available to him concerning, '... the poetics of space, other perspectives ... a really broad dialogue about sculpture and space was encouraged'.⁹

Hart also began life drawing classes at the National Art School and Tom Bass's sculpture studio, trying to work out where his interests in the figure might lie and how to approach a subject supposedly exhausted within an Australian artistic climate. At the time aesthetic fashion seemed overtly antagonistic toward further figurative investigation. He was aware of resistance to his figurative enquiry but remained determined to pursue it. In recent years, however, the figure is again the subject of intense interest and investigation in contemporary Australian art.¹⁰

Shortly after Hart had completed his Post-graduate Diploma of Visual Arts at SCA he and wife Gail Hart moved to Bathurst to allow her to take up an academic position at Charles Sturt University. This move isolated Hart artistically, leaving him alone with his work in a fairly indifferent environment. However, in Bathurst Hart met an artistic mentor in David Wilson, a painter and teacher from the Julian Ashton School, some ten years his senior. [image of David Wilson, David's portrait of SH]. They worked from the model together and Hart found an oasis of sorts in the deep reservoir of knowledge Wilson possessed. 'We had intense studies, and my memories of our time together are some of the richest and fondest. It was an amazing experience of two minds sharing space.'

Hart was clearly proactive in his new environment. He audaciously proposed a monumental sculpture, *Conversation*, as a bicentennial project for the Bathurst community. The Australian Bicentennial Authority approved the project (although the grant was inadequate, with the balance raised by the local community).



David Wilson, *Stephen Hart*, oil on canvas, 1984



Hauling sandstone blocks for *Conversation*, Bathurst, 1987

Hart credits the beginning of his real artistic endeavours to the monumental work he proposed and created of four figures carved from two 15 tonne blocks of Bondi sandstone. It was his first major, mature work and contains many of the artistic elements that have surfaced in his work since, beginning with an interest in exploring the machinery of communication. Hart's extraordinary tenacity, his ability to complete a technical tour de force and extremely ambitious sculpture from an idea hatched essentially alone in the studio, highlights a commitment to stretching himself that continues to drive his innovation beyond technical skill and stylistic recognition. It explores the idea of dialogue, a conversation about art and its foundations in a cultural life, the importance of debate about what is possible and achievable, and daring to deliver. Its placement in a public park also extended art into the realm of the everyman. Importantly, for Hart, it demonstrated his hand in the work, and proved accessible to all.

In its dialogue, it encapsulates many of the artistic elements that remain germane to his subsequent work, particularly human connectedness. *Conversation* anticipated the notion that Richard Tarnas succinctly expressed when he described the post-modern intellectual situation as '... a wide spread call for the practice of open conversation between different understanding, different vocabulary, different cultural paradigms'.¹¹

Hart was, by the time he made *Conversation*, a father of two daughters (Jody, born 1981 and Ruby, 1985). While making the work he invented the process and aesthetic without, at that stage, a great deal of confidence in his own language. The fear he experienced, however, was galvanising. In retrospect, he concedes that the carving was like doing a PhD in terms of developing his skills.

After the work was installed, embraced by the community and lauded by the few art world insiders who saw it, Hart found himself in some difficulty: it was an anticlimax, due in part to the disparity between the effort he had invested personally and professionally and the lack of real response or follow on. With his marriage failing under many stresses, Hart suffered a bout of depression (a condition he has experienced from time to time since). He realised too that he needed to move north to Queensland, to follow his children and Gail, who had found a new job in Brisbane.

The experience of another relocation was a challenge and, in 1991, trying to find work in Brisbane and putting the fragments of his life back together, Hart contemplated giving



Working on *Conversation*, the initial roughing out, Bathurst, 1987



The finished *Conversation*, being hauled to site, Bathurst, 1988

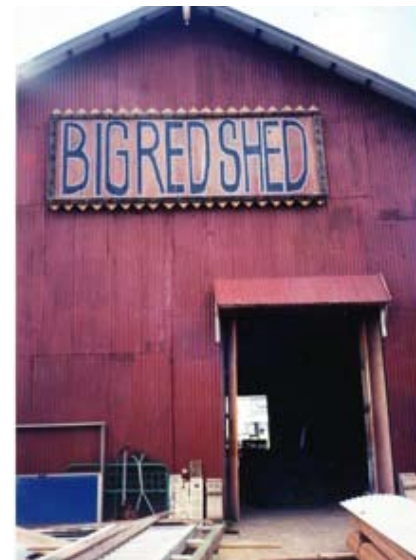
up his artistic career. However he had begun work towards a Masters degree at Sydney's College of Fine Art so transferred to Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and was mentored there by head of sculpture, John Armstrong. Hart was determined to reinvent himself and his approach to making sculpture, and opened up to an increasing multiplicity of approaches. He was offered tutoring work at QUT and eked out an existence for a while but the level of income available to him soon became untenable.

Hart decided to channel his passion for making sculpture into creating a workshop that was open to the street. He set up a workshop adjoining the Big Red Shed.¹² This business specialised in recycling Brisbane's colonial heritage — particularly old timber from riverfront buildings, warehouses and wharves — then being demolished for urban renewal. Hart made furniture on a commission basis utilising his superb technical skills. He used the income to buy his own time back to make sculpture. The paid work, however, became all-consuming, a little too successful, leaving little time for more speculative possibilities. While he completed the Masters degree in 1994, by 1997 he had reached another crossroads. The death of his father in the same year as David Wilson's early passing (at only 53 years) and a relationship issue pushed him to again consider his future.

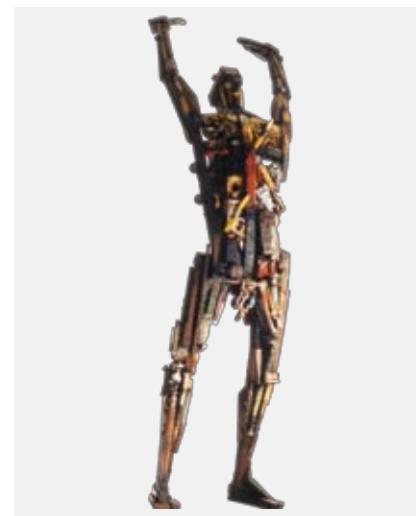
Hart's life has had a few flash points, during which his drive to be a sculptor has been pitted against a degree of self-doubt. This moment, in 1997, was another and possibly, in retrospect, the last time he faced down the doubts to recommit to a creative life. A fire destroyed the Big Red Shed workshop in the same year and that too seemed symptomatic of another beginning to Hart.

In 1999 he sold a sculpture called *Highway*, a freestanding larger than life figure, bricolaged from recycled material. The work reflected the figure fragmented and reassembled — perhaps mirroring his recent life experiences. Certainly he was intensely aware, during this period, that life was fragile. With the proceeds of this sale he bought a ticket for Europe and set off in search of artistic and cultural stimulation, which he found in abundance during time spent in Paris, London and Italy.

On his return to Australia, Hart felt that the challenges of the preceding years had been necessary as 'gateways to a more informed sense of self'.¹³ His work developed quickly, and his carved figures on elongated totems emerged to significant critical interest. He was a finalist in the Wynne Prize in 2001 with *The Guardians*, subsequently purchased for Bear



Big Red Shed, Brisbane, 1993



Highway, 1994
Mixed media
280cm high
Private Collection

House, a Sydney-based charity. The same year he won the Conrad Jupiters Art Prize (Gold Coast) with *Guardian Gateway*, two totemic sculptures that built further on Hart's 'everyman'. He also won the Jury Prize for Artistic Excellence in the Thursday Plantation East Coast Sculpture Show (Ballina) in 2001. He continued showing commercially with Gallery 482 in Brisbane, and further sales and private commissions buoyed him. In 2002 he was a finalist in the Woollahra Sculpture Prize and was awarded an Australia Council New Work Grant.

By 2000, Hart had purchased his current studio in Newstead. Around the same time he met Beverley Trivett and he credits Beverley's business background with helping him become more strategic about his pursuit of art and sculpture as a full time vocation. (They married in 2005.)

In 1998 he had an exhibition called 'This Thing'. The title refers to the wrestle of art with the ineffable, a form of boxing with shadows, an internal conversation without resolution. Gombrich writes in *The Story of Art*, 'There really is no such thing as art. There are only artists'.¹⁴ His point is that art is the story of the people who make the work. If you accept the mission, you become part of a procession; of artists, souls. This sentiment was depicted in Hart's *Endless Column*, 2005, where a procession of figures walk — protesting, beating drums, waving flags — in a work that marries figuration with larger ideas.

Art of the heart

Hart's artistic essence was laid out, defined, and simply expressed in his first major work, *Conversation*, 1988. It describes his intense commitment to craft, his desire to develop and utilise technical skills of the highest order as a means of giving his internal vision figurative clarity. And it exposes his interest in the dialogue about human understanding and perception that sculpture has historically encapsulated. The figures are rendered into the stone with a series of planes. Yet there is tenderness in their juxtaposition; to each other, to the viewers, to the children clambering over them. Hart loves dialogue, having the time to talk through his thoughts, current issues, ideas; and his focus is international. In its ambition, technical proficiency and execution and conceptual concerns, *Conversation* is a precursor to Hart's iconic 'everyman', and its later abstraction into the essential elements of a figure visible in the 'Frank' series.



Stephen Hart journals.
Photograph Alex Chomicz



Stephen Hart with Alison Kubler at a Jan Manton Art+Conversation event at his studio, 25 September 2010.
Photograph Alex Chomicz

Stephen Hart's abiding interest over 20 years has been the human condition. His challenge has been to represent this through the body in tandem with an exploration of various materials. Yet, as has emerged in his most recent exhibition, on occasions abstraction has been a more appropriate mode. Other examples include his *Random Construction*, 2009, which took a personal loss and transformed it into an agglomeration of elements, a bricolage of trauma. This work is fragmented, with elements that come together like a car crash, meshing anger and grief toward a sculpture all the more powerful given its lack of complete resolution.

Since arriving in Brisbane in 1991, Hart has worked largely in recycled timber. The sculptures are poly-chromed carved timber, invoking an old practice of enhancing sculpture with layers of paint. There is an embrace of the *arte povera* concept too with Hart's practice of using what is to hand, eschewing waste and drawing visual poetry out of unlikely materials.

His journey toward the MA at QUT saw his development of the image of the rabbit. Partly this motif emerged out of Hart's interest in absurdity, the fine line between sense and nonsense. It appears in several guises; nude and reclining, as the base for a book, triumphantly running over a skull. It is an image that delights in its own absurdity, laughs at fate, and is seemingly unassailable. Drawn from the archetypal plastic rabbit with the cheesy grin found in second hand stores, it elevates a children's toy that celebrates the banality and inanity of a meaningless smile. However, it has entered darker territory with Hart's discovery of a photograph of Austrian Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann tenderly cradling a white Angora rabbit. The irony of this association has become, for Hart, part of a long meditation on the nature of good and evil — Eichmann being responsible for the bureaucratic management of the wholesale slaughter of Jews in concentration camps yet apparently capable of tenderness for the fluffy and vulnerable rabbits he farmed. For Hart, this contradiction signals the inability of any human to truly know of what acts we might be capable.

The Guardian images began as elongated heads carved into well-seasoned wharf timbers and developed into crowd scenes. They were inspired in part by Hart's experience, on a Parisian street, of being drawn into a crowd. The sheer pressure of people meant that, for a moment or two, he lost the boundaries of his own body. This caused him to speculate on the



Adolf Eichmann while manager of an angora rabbit farm, Argentina, 1950s.
Photograph courtesy *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1992



Angora rabbit hutch, Dacheau concentration camp. Photograph courtesy Lee Miller, 1944

sensation of being within his own body as opposed to melding personal boundaries into part of a larger and more powerful force.

Possibly Hart's best-loved images have come from his 'Everyman' series. The mass of figures on top of the Guardian totems became gradually more individual, separating into doubles and singles and taking on more movement. This was subject to the development of higher order technical skills. And gradually, multiple figures became singular, leading to Hart's first 'everyman' emerging from the timber. That day Hart felt that this figure contained an enduring essence. In the figure's male simplicity, undemanding stance, with head tilted slightly to one side, dressed in unpretentious clothing, Hart found a simple truth. Often this figure is walking, an integral part of his daily ritual, an element that also beckons to the everyman's inevitable autobiographical references to his creator.

Hart's 'everyman' is generally relaxed, hands in pockets, and male. But they are not comfortable figures. As mentioned earlier, Hart's sense that humanity is afflicted with pain is visible in figures that strive for ideals that may prove ephemeral. By the time he developed the everyman as an element in his assemblage, the events of 9.11.2001 had pierced the human psyche. In the assemblage, *A Victory of Hope over Adversity*, (2000–04), everyman is impaled on a series of aircraft-tailed arrows, highlighting that we have all been fundamentally changed by this period in history. Inverted, the implication is that we can view this time as positive or negative, half-full or half-empty, or, perhaps, that a new perspective is the way to capture the future. Other groups of figures, like *Endless column* (2005) have given scope for the marriage of figuration with bigger concepts about the human condition.

Hart's more recent figurative essays see the 'everyman' compressed and reduced. In the 'Frank' series humanity distilled to its essential proportional elements. The figure provided an opportunity for Hart to play not just with the proportions of the human shape and aesthetics, but also with words — another abiding interest.¹⁵ A huge dictionary is open daily in his studio study, the meanings in words decanted for pleasure and their power. This figure is usually married with one liner gags as titles, the figure reduced to its essence, stylised and simplified. While generalised, and more simply wrought, Frank is expressive with slapstick humour. Cranes and city images emerged at a similar time, and many of these works can be seen to be exploring the city as an extrapolation of ancient geometry.

Though I Walk (2005) is mesmerising in its capture of the mirror image of Hart's everyman



Journal entry, 2001



Journal entry, *Frank* conceptual drawings, 2007

figure within a perfect carved circle. It is a work that poetically symbolises the circular nature of repetitive activity.

Public art commissions, notably the cantilevered and inverted *Leaning Towards Heaven* (2003) in the City of Toowoomba, have allowed the exploration of abstracted ideas on a large scale while a private commission in Port Douglas yielded the *Soul in Space* works. These falling figures are influenced by Rilke's 1916–17 poem but also evoke the archetypal dream in which we plummet through the air.¹⁶

Sculpture for 2010's 'Something Like This' exhibition was made from modern building off-cuts, with Hart again choosing available materials. Geometry and architectural elements are used to house growing populations, and the human form expressed in abstract form creates humanity as a single and unified mass, much as a city appears from a distance. They speak to a lesser known aspect of his practice, but the reduced elements in not only *Random Construction* 2009 but other works which evoke the city, allow a distillation of the visual poetry that takes the viewer on an *Odyssey* (2010) of another kind. On the day that I meet Hart to finalise this text, I imagine that he will have examined the images on the front page of today's *Australian* showing grieving families whose sons, brothers, fathers and grandfathers have perished in the NZ mine disaster of 2010.

An integral facet of modern life and the communication enabled by the technologies at our disposal is this compulsion to witness, in pictures, words and real time, the wars, tragedies and natural disasters that befall our fellow man all over the world. The seething mass of humanity with which we may empathise in both their sorrows and successes, are alluded to in Hart's major work for 2011. *Spent Time* was planned and then carved over a six month period in 2011. This major sculpture is a tour de force, a benchmark work, with some parallels to his early *Conversation* (1988). *Spent time* was also a technically daunting and physically demanding exercise with significant hard graft and persistence attached to, and an integral part of, its conceptual rationale.

The finalised sculpture incorporates some 356 'everyman' figures, all hand-carved, hand-painted, with individual differences, arranged along the four sides of a rectangular plinth. Some are dressed conventionally, others in harlequin-like clothes in contrasting colours. All are bald, expectant, different, yet they merge into the collective seamlessly, extending the idea that in modern Western society we are individuals yet at the same time part of a greater



Leaning Towards Heaven, 2002
One of four, seven-metre, inverted & tilted black granite obelisks, Ruthven Street, Toowoomba QLD.



Spent Time work in progress, 2011

unit. We may feel both separate but also part of a universal experience — with the rider that global communications may be shrinking the cultural differences that have historically divided the world.

Spent Time also alludes to Hart's interest in the craft of art making, the time spent thinking through the processes behind art-making generally and his work specifically. The idea that time spent may result in sculpture that affects the viewer (or not), the inability of art to change the world (or anything at all), is allied to the compulsion that he nonetheless feels about its creation; is yet another of the paradoxes of humanity.

Spent Time's genesis, six months in the making, also made for six months of reflection about process, life and art; six months of spent time. It has been a constant anchor for his practice over this period, with the need to continue to reapply himself to the realisation of the work. The sculpture comes with Hart's listing of time amongst other materials (carved timber and paint), and the sombre realisation that our time (daily, weekly, annually, a lifetime) is limited.

Hart's best work, its most powerful distillation, comes from crisis, trauma, both personal and universal. Art may become a register of contemporary life, an individual's reading of the state of the world. Its power is in its taking of this pulse, its expression of the zeitgeist, and Hart's future work will continue to plumb both the depths and the heights of the contemporary mind.

Louise Martin-Chew is a freelance arts writer, based in Brisbane.



Stephen Hart and Everyman

The painter and draughtsman David Brian Wilson (1946-1998) first made me aware of Stephen Hart's work. He spoke of him and his sculpture with genuine affection and showed me three early works he owned: a small sensitively carved plaster head of Adrian Hall (a former Head of Sculpture at the Sydney College of the Arts, where Hart studied in the early 1980s); a bold seated mother and child (also in plaster); and a poetic chair-like form woven out of driftwood gathered from the Turon River, an armature-based extension of the mother and child theme. Each appealed immediately, but I didn't meet the artist or see more of his work until shortly after Wilson's death, when Hart introduced himself to me. Hart and Wilson had a particularly close friendship in Bathurst, where Wilson had a private art school for a time and Hart was working on a major bicentennial commission for the Bathurst Council. A portrait of Hart by Wilson, from 1984, one of Wilson's finest early works, is testimony to their friendship.

I have seen much more of Hart's sculpture since, in his studio and in various exhibitions, and my interest has grown as I have witnessed the development of his work over the last decade or so. The variety, inventiveness and craftsmanship of his sculpture are part of the appeal of his work; his 'Everyman' theme in various guises is another.

The human figure is very much at the centre of Stephen Hart's work and is, I believe, at its purest in a small, sensitively simplified *Everyman* (2001). His 'Everyman' is an individual anyone, a sympathetic down-to-earth common man, one with whom we can identify in bearing, movement, size and circumstance, hands in pockets, leaning forward slightly, listening and engaging.

Hart's 'Everyman' began to take shape in his mind and in his work in the late 1980s when he was undertaking the commission for the Bicentennial Authority. Situated in Bathurst's Bicentennial Peace Park alongside the Macquarie River, *Conversation* (1987-88) is monumental in scale, comprising four brutally simplified block-like seated figures leaning towards one

Left: Still from *Spent Time: The Work of Stephen Hart*. Photograph Alex Chomicz

another as if in animated conversation. Carved out of Bondi sandstone, it cost Hart dearly in time and effort, but with it he evolved a language of elemental form that confirmed his approach to the human figure thereafter. *Conversation* is a universal subject that reaches back to the genre subjects of the art of 17th century Netherlands, and the material he used to make it is admirably suited to the rugged demands of public sculpture. It is a matter of sculpture being of lasting value — in subject and the material in which it is made. As Francis Bacon has stated:

. . . supposing you were to think of the Sphinx made of bubble gum, would it have had the same effect upon the sensibility over the centuries if you could pick it up gently and lift it? . . . I think it has to do with endurance. I think that you could have a marvellous image made of something which will disappear in a few hours, but I think that the potency of the image is created partly by the possibility of its enduring. And, of course, images accumulate sensation around themselves the longer they endure.¹

Hart's single standing *Everyman* figure was carved in hardwood in 2000 and cast in a small edition in bronze in 2001 with differing patinas. *Everyman* gave birth to *Guardians* (2001), a tightly-knit group of men, brightly coloured, clustered on top of a tall monumental mask-like head, clearly inspired by tribal art. The whole is carved in hardwood, only the men are polychromed.

Still moving and *Kissing figures* (2002) followed, *Ten men singing love songs* (2003), *Though I walk* (2005), *Endless column* (2003-05), *Life is lethal* (2004), *Wild blue yonder* (2006) and a brilliant sequence of utterly minimal figures entitled *Frank* (2008). The figures in each are re-workings of his 'Everyman' theme. And in each there is the suggestion of an ongoing narrative, imparted with a generous dose of irony.

Still moving is seemingly benign. Four figures walking on a continuous loop, the severe formal geometry of which highlights each individual, carved with great attention to detail and coloured with the utmost care. It is a scene each of us encounters daily — everyday life on the footpath, escalator, shopping mall, bus stop or train station. We observe one another in passing, barely without second glances, yet the experience of communal interchange is an inviolable part of our collective consciousness, and hence serious subject matter for art.



Kissing Figures, 2002
Ironbark
80 x 40 x 20cm
Private Collection

High sentiment is at play in *Kissing figures*, in which a man and a woman lean towards one another, touching ever so gently at the lips, though both figures are bold and solidly grounded, carved out of ironbark. Tenderness gives way to hilarity in *Ten men singing love songs*, each elongated figure painted in bright colour, similar though different in height; hands in pockets, mouths open in song, the seriousness of figurative sculpture seemingly set aside. In *Though I walk*, a figure is encircled by a thick band. Seamlessly joined at the feet by another figure exactly the same but in reverse, is its reflection. It is an emphatic work, a veritable logo for his everyman series.

Life is lethal is one of Hart's bleakest sculptural tableaux: A be-suited anyone ascends as another much smaller descends the stairs of an empty, anonymous, transparent multi-storied office block reduced to a severe, geometric construction, suggesting Escher-like conundrums of perspective. It is a chilling depiction of the inescapably earnest business of modern life in the city. In contrast, a moving crowd, a demonstration or procession, is the subject of *Endless column*, the metaphysics of space and place as much a part of this sensitively carefree work as the informal articulation of the many figures moving in the same direction.

In *Wild blue yonder* human activity is regimented — teams of construction workers packed together on an imaginary building site. It is the evolving modern city, cranes and scaffolding, men in safety helmets, boots and brightly coloured orange jackets. It is an arrangement of many parts, Meccano or Lego-like, an installation entirely constructed in wood and coloured, suggesting an ever-changing future. Hart explains that the title stems from an old song:

I first heard the song . . . in a war film about the US air-force that I suspect was made as propaganda during World War II . . . it seemed to convey . . . a sense of euphoric optimism for an uncertain future. Contemplating the rising skyline in Brisbane simply parallels . . . cities everywhere with their seas of tower cranes orchestrating seemingly unending development . . . hopefully [it] conveys a hint of irony . . . of a present which despite its implicit optimism can only at best be uncertain.²

Some of the figures have been individually cast in bronze, two chattering women under umbrellas for example. They function well as works separate from their *Wild blue yonder* context, extensions of the everyman theme.

Intriguing is the series named *Frank*, each sculpture reduced to an elongated wooden blue peg-like figure in various guises, such as many tiny Franks in miniature filling a jar or a monumental Frank leaning against a wall all the way up to the ceiling. Others are joined head to feet to form a red wheel, or bounce about on springs. Their titles tell the story: *Frank feels full of himself*, *Frank follows the light*, *Frank gets it*, *Frank's eternal spring*, *Frank rocks*, *Frank's revolution*, *Frank's indomitable side*, *The bedside Frank*, *Frank squared*, *Frank says thanks*. Altogether they suggest a circus act or sideshow of sculptures — faced by them it is almost impossible to keep a straight face!

Hart's pursuit of his 'Everyman' theme reflects a philosophical bent. It represents his enquiry into the nature of art and the human condition. He may have something in common with the work of the distinguished Paris-based English sculptor Raymond Mason and the German artist Stephan Balkenhol (Hart's contemporary), both of whom also produce polychromed figures that convey an acute awareness of the realities of modern urban life.

In his approach to the human figure Hart also takes in the mechanical and robotic — *Highway* (1996) and *And now there stands a city* (2008) for example — which the British sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi explored so convincingly. The 'gritty' is also part of Hart's vocabulary.

A rhythmically sensuous pair of upright nude male figures (one standing, the other on his elbows) in *Within and without* (2003), initially carved in wood almost twice life-size, with a maquette-sized edition cast in bronze, reveals another aspect of his sensibility — romantic humanism? *Atman* (2010) (a Sanskrit word for self or importance), a private commission comprising an integrated group of entwined ascending figures, is similarly rhythmically sensuous. In both *Within and without* and *Atman* there is something of the legacy of 19th century heroic figurative sculpture, which for Hart begins with Rodin and stretches to Giacometti and Marino Marini.

Quite apart from his interest in the human figure, the constructed setting for his figures reveals yet another rigorous aspect of his work. Hart makes highly sophisticated non-figural sculpture. *UFO* (1993) is an early example and, his elegant monumental and finely balanced inverted obelisks *Leaning towards heaven* (2001-03), is more recent. Commissioned by Toowoomba City Council and situated at intervals along Ruthven Street, Toowoomba, it highlights his capacity to imaginatively undertake diverse public sculpture projects. A sequence of recent improvisatory abstract sculptures from 2009 may owe something to



Atman (rotational views), 2010
Bronze, free standing construction
320 x 150 x 150cm
Private commission

Robert Klippel. *Over the moon, Chance it, Horse play* and *You are my rock* are impressive sculptural assemblages that culminate in *Random construction*, where clearly Hart has found a playfully lyrical and informal language of his own.

Drawings have provided Hart with another outlet for his creative juices, some of which he has, on occasion, exhibited in tandem with his sculpture; fastidiously plotted drawings of figures based on photographs in newspapers. *Angry young man* and *World leaders* (2006) are typical. Sculptors' drawings invariably suggest three-dimensional form. Hart's drawings extend the vocabulary, but are part of a strictly disciplined practice in which awareness of bodily movement and posture is primary.

Essentially a carver rather than modeller, Hart is most at home carving stone or wood, often deliberately choosing the hardest materials, including ironbark from old discarded jetty pylons. The resistance suits his dogged persistence and desire to make something solid and weighty, in keeping with the rugged simplicity of his work. What he carves in hardwood he often casts in bronze. Truth to materials is second nature to him. That is why he is a sculptor.

Hendrik Kolenberg is Senior Curator of Australian Prints, Drawings and Watercolours, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.



Conversation, plaster working maquette
Two blocks each 290 x 220 x 190cm
Collection Bathurst Regional Art Gallery
Photograph courtesy Ian Hobbs

Early work and the Infinite Possibility

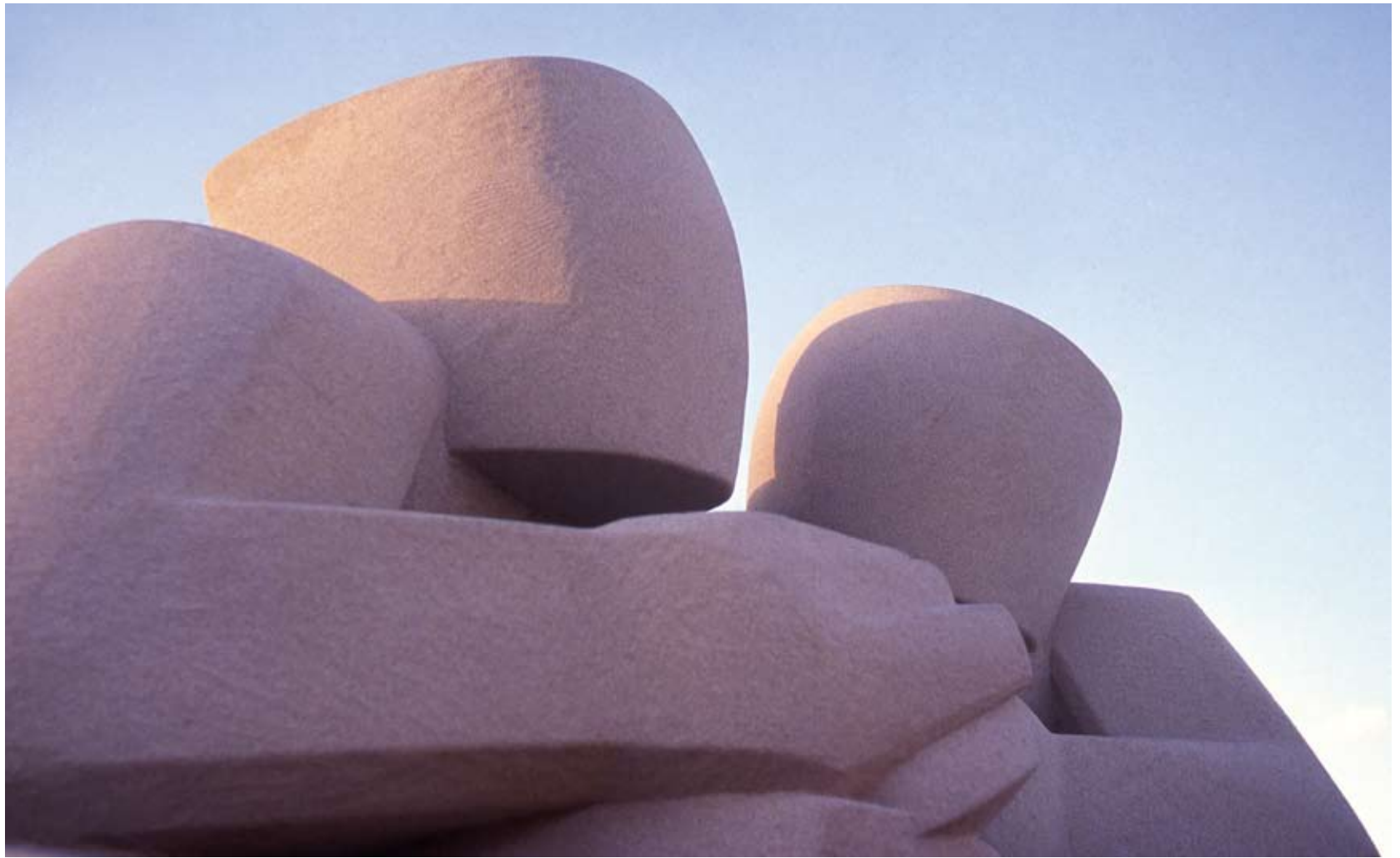
War memorials and toy soldiers first awakened me to sculptural presence. Still, silent monuments concentrating the mind on the grief that was, the aftermath of the two world wars, were pervasive in the landscape of my youth. Toy soldiers, the same hand size as one of the earliest known sculptures, *The Venus of Willendorf* (24,000-21,000 BCE), mysteriously concentrated my mind. Hardly surprising that, growing up in a household where my own stoic father embodied the trauma of war, my imagination should frequently range over bloody conflict and its aftermath. Through the play and fascination with the detail of dad's story I unwittingly absorbed something of that human trauma. As I grew older I was inexorably drawn to the vocation of sculptor that allowed me to live and give form to the examined life. I needed time to think and a way to express my thoughts, and that is how I have spent my time. The work on these pages is some of the residue of that spent time. It focuses on the past 12 years with references to a few earlier works that have informed my journey.

I spent over a year carving *Conversation* from two 15-ton blocks of Bondi sandstone for a site in the city of Bathurst's Peace Park. In part it was the desire to participate in a more constructive humanity than war (which had enthralled me as a child), that sustained me through its arduous creation. *Conversation* was my first major sculptural commission. It recognised the centrality that human dialogue would need to assume in the deregulated, environmentally challenged and global village that Australia was merging into in 1988, its Bicentennial Year.

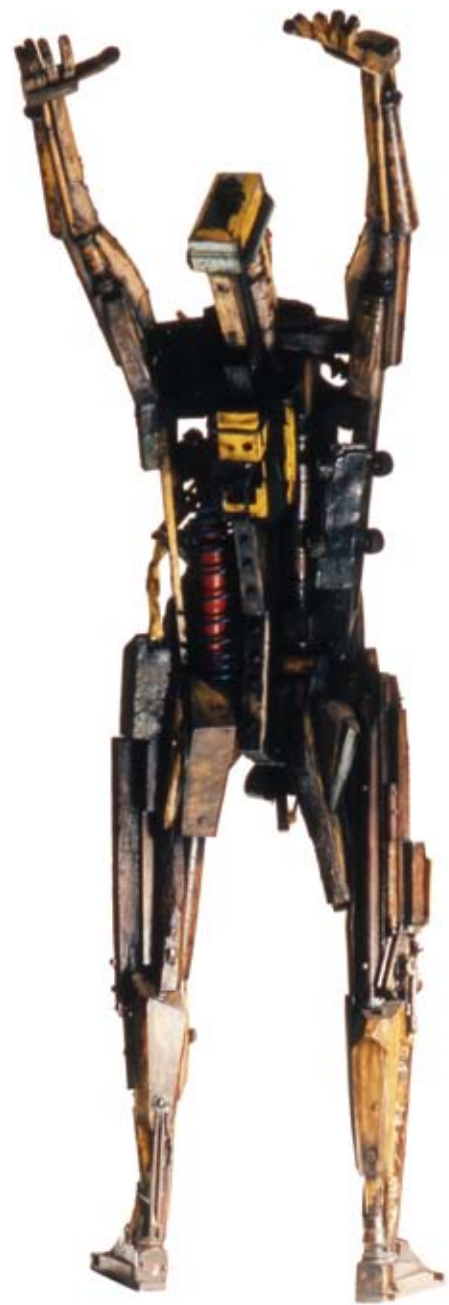
That familiar yet amazing carapace, the human body, has been my primary source of sculptural inspiration. I think about sculpture as containers of the body of thought that has gone into their making. Because one work leads to another, each is an expression of the ongoing inner dialogue witness to this unfolding life. The appearance of each work represents a gradually attuned conversation between mind, hand and universe. Given the infinite space of the mind and the hand's capacity to translate its discoveries, anything is possible. It is infinite possibility that I have grappled with in my solitary life in the studio.

STEPHEN HART





Left & above detail: *Conversation*, 1988
Bondi sandstone
Two blocks each 290 x 240 x 210cm
Bicentennial Peace Park, Macquarie River, Bathurst
Above: detail of two of the four figures





Left: *Highway*, 1994
Mixed media
280cm
Private collection

Above: *UFO*, 1993
Bronze, cast 2009
44 x 12 x 14cm
Collection of the artist



This Enlightenment, 1993
Constructed, recycled timber blinds
130 x 120 x 85cm
Collection of the artist

'I came across the photograph of Adolf Eichmann holding a white angora rabbit when he was in Argentina in the 1950s where he had a job managing an angora rabbit farm ... It just seemed like an extraordinary image to see this person who embodied evil holding this fluffy white thing.'

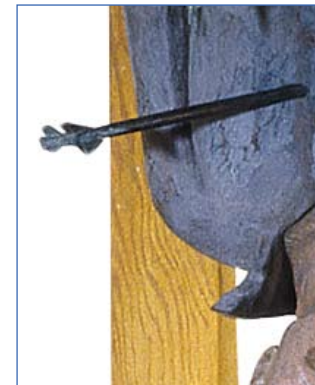
Reclining Nude, 1999

Carved & polychromed timber & found object

90 x 60 x 28cm

Collection of the artist





A Victory of Hope Over Adversity, 2003
Carved & constructed polychromed timber & metal
304 x 110 x 120cm
Private collection



Memento Mori, 2004

Carved & constructed polychromed timber & brass

172 x 79 x 68cm

Private collection

Left: *Gravitas*, 1999
Carved & polychromed recycled ironbark
200 x 300 x 20cm
Private collections

Right: *Everyman*, 2001
Bronze cast (edition of 6)
from original hardwood carving
26.5 x 9 x 7cm
Private collections







Left, detail & right: *Guardians*, 2001
Carved & polychromed recycled ironbark
108 x 17 x 28cm
Collection, Bear Cottage, Manly NSW,
gift of the Hilmer family





Left & right detail: *Guardian Gateway*, 2001
Carved & polychromed recycled ironbark
240 x 15 x 25 cm
Collection of the Gold Coast Regional Art Gallery,
QLD



Left: *Within & Without*, maquette, 2003
Cast in bronze from original ironbark carvings
Two figures each 28 x 3 x 3cm
Private collections

Right: *Within & Without*, 2003
Carved & painted ironbark
280 x 25 x 25cm
Private collection





Ten men singing love songs, 2003
Carved & polychromed ironbark
Various sizes
Private collection

Above: Pages from Stephen Hart's
journal



Light Reading maquette, 2004

Carved & polychromed timber & mixed media

50 x 19 x 28cm

Private collection



Open Learning, 2004

Carved & polychromed timber & mixed media

190 x 100 x 20cm

Collection of the artist



Mahdis, 2004

Carved & constructed polychromed timber

215 x 70 x 70cm

Private collection

Above: Pages from Stephen Hart's journal





The Everyman in Motion

When not sitting, standing or resting, movement animates humans. In sculpture this liveliness has traditionally been expressed in the gait of a walking figure. And it continues to be a powerful image for me.

In life we move restlessly towards a destination that might afford us more repose. I associate the life force with the walking figure and find it endlessly expressive. A solitary walking figure or a group may convey the miracle of gravity overcome.

I made a procession of walking figures as the war in Iraq approached in 2002 meditating on an outcome whose only certainty would be that, many would suffer. I titled that work *The Endless Column* wanting to associate it with the continuum of human experience in moving forward.

In *Though I Walk*, the single walking figure walks on a mirror reflection of himself. The original two figures were carved from a single block of ironbark, which was doubly challenging to technically execute. I was reflecting on that inner dialogue which in a sense insures that we 'never walk alone'.

STEPHEN HART

Left: *Still Moving* maquette, 2002
Carved & polychromed ironbark,
timber & mixed media construction
28 x 30 x 14cm
Private collection

'In life we move restlessly towards a destination that might afford us more repose. I associate the life force with the walking figure and find it endlessly expressive.'





Left & above detail: *Still Moving II*, 2002
Carved & polychromed timber
44 x 62 x 18cm
Collection QUT Art Museum

Pages from Stephen Hart's journal,
September 2001





Entropy, 2002

Carved, constructed timber & mixed media

59 x 33 x 33cm

Collection QUT Art Museum



Above & right details: *Endless Column*, 2003-2005
Carved & polychromed ironbark & mixed media
Dimensions variable
Collection Redcliffe Art Gallery, QLD





Left & right: *Though I Walk*, 2005
Polychromed bronze
105 x 105 x 10cm
Private collection





Right & details: *Life is Lethal*, 2005
Seven carved & polychromed figures, timber construction
250 x 38 x 38cm
Courtesy Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney





Watercolours

Drawing in whatever form it takes is inseparable from the process of making. Any line projected in space is a representation from the mind that imagined it. As such it offers endless opportunities for invention and expression.

My fixation on depictions of the figure conveyed daily in newsprint grows with the unfolding human drama. We see ourselves transformed in the 24-hour cycle of a day. My drawings in pencil and watercolour have become a way for me to filter this life affecting information.

I free my figures from their context, reconstructing them in the paper's void, using my own primitive version of trigonometry to map their essential co-ordinates. The process is time consuming but that time spent allows me to think a great deal about what I'm seeing. In my mind, this ever-growing cast of subjects share equal status.

These drawings are generally made on a scale so small that you have to look very closely to see the life within. I am experimenting with an enlargement but I don't yet know if that will provide me with as satisfying a result. As I learnt in childhood, a thing doesn't have to be big to concentrate the mind.

STEPHEN HART

Left: *World Leaders*, 2006

Pencil & watercolour

15 x 50cm

Private collection



Burning Man, 2005
Pencil & watercolour
34 x 51cm
Private collection



Life is Lethal, 2006
Pencil & watercolour
34 x 51cm
Private collection



Angry Young Man, 2006
Pencil & watercolour
34 x 51cm
Private collection



Angry Young Men, 2006
Pencil & watercolour
34 x 51cm
Private collection



Angry Young Man, 2006
Pencil & watercolour
34 x 51cm
Private collection



Mother & Child, 2005
Pencil & watercolour
34 x 51cm
Collection QUT Art Museum



HMV, 2009
Pencil & watercolour
11 x 8.5cm
Courtesy Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney



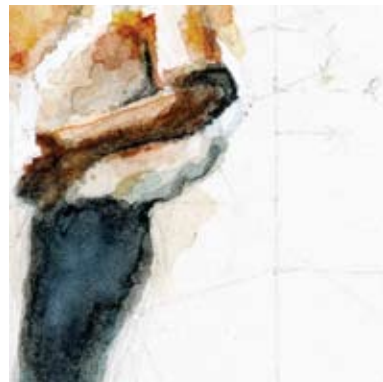
Father & Son, 2009
Pencil & watercolour
11 x 8.5cm
Courtesy Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney



Sport, 2009
Pencil & watercolour
11 x 8.5cm
Courtesy Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney



Claire, 2009
Pencil & watercolour
11 x 8.5cm
Courtesy Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney



'Drawing in whatever form it takes is inseparable from the process of making ... The process is time consuming but that time spent allows me to think a great deal about what I'm seeing.'

Watercolour details
Pencil & watercolour
11 x 8.5cm
Courtesy Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney





The Wild Blue Yonder

I am a city dweller and a traveller. Cities everywhere are getting bigger. Humans congregate and as we do we form vast structural agglomerations.

When I'm not stressed by the increasing tempo generated within this man-made density, I find them very stimulating places.

There is a new aesthetic emerging as this structural density increases and unlikely combinations of form blend together and become possible. This is endlessly fascinating from a sculptural point of view — it is as though all the pioneering modernist sculpture has grown up to become, our built environment. It is very challenging now to envisage a more dynamic sculptural presence than a tower crane looming over a city sky scraper — until you see scores of them looming over acres of new construction.

I began to acclimatise myself to this changing reality when I made *Wild Blue Yonder*. Good, bad or indifferent, it is the future; this was my way to begin to appreciate it.

The transformation of the mass of humanity taking place within the harnessing machinery of a city is definitely ... awesome. Humour and perspective may help!

STEPHEN HART

Left: *Wild Blue Yonder*, 2006

Polychromed & constructed timber & figures

320 x 320 x 320cm

Private collections



'When I'm not stressed by the increasing tempo generated within this man-made density, I find cities very stimulating places.'



Left & right details: *Wild Blue Yonder*, 2006
Polychromed & constructed timber & figures
320 x 320 x 320cm
Private collections





Left & above detail: *Operator, Operator*, 2007
Constructed brass, carved & polychromed timber
280 x 28 x 28cm
Private collection



Above & right detail: *Planet Mirth*, 2009
Mixed media construction
76 x 155 x 5cm
Collection of the artist







Left: *Now There Stands A City*, 2003–2009
Polychromed, mixed media
40 x 30 x 128cm
Collection of the artist

Right: *Time & Again*, 2009
Patinated & constructed timber
16 x 16 x 54cm
Courtesy Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney



Frank

The dignity the classical world once afforded its human depictions has been reduced in modern time and space to a cipher or cartoon of that ideal.

Our means of communications now are so rapid that any utterance beyond a sound bite is ponderous; or so it seems.

Frank is a cipher for the Everyman. He is a universally adaptable site for endless one-liners and gags with philosophic undertones. He channels the dead-pan humour of Charlie Chaplin or Buster Keaton. He is a safety valve, an outlet for the daily struggle for meaning in an ever-changing existence

As in the adjective, *Frank* is un-reserved, candid and always straightforward, homage to the vernacular simplicity of a draughtsman's square. He is resilient and goes on and on.

STEPHEN HART

Left: *Frank* Installation view, 2008
Polychromed timber & mixed media
Various sizes
Private collections

'Frank is un-reserved, candid and always straightforward, homage to the vernacular simplicity of a draughtsman's square.'

Frank Squared, 2008

Constructed timber & draughtsman's square

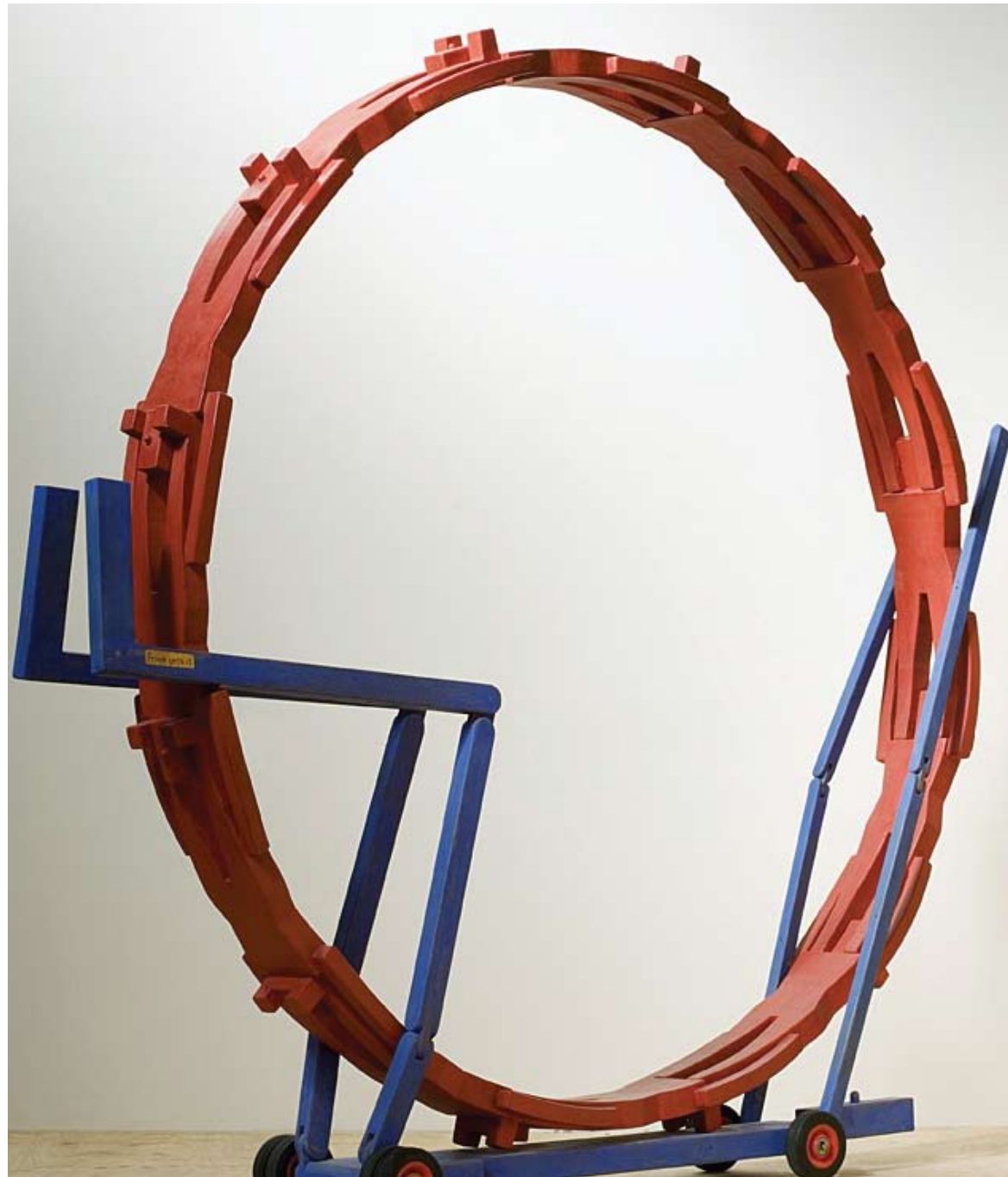
108 x 50 x 2cm

Private collection



Frank Reflects, 2008
Constructed timber & mixed media
115 x 42 x 14cm
Collection of the artist





Frank Gets It, 2008
Constructed timber & mixed media
200 x 240 x 38cm
Collection of the artist



Frank Feels Full of Himself, 2008
Above detail: Jar full of Franks
Constructed timber & mixed media
200 x 66 x 30cm
Private collection

Frank Rocks, 2008
Constructed timber & mixed media
167 x 85 x 39cm
Collection of the artist





Frank's Eternal Spring, 2008
Constructed timber & mixed media
99 x 18 x 18cm
Private collection



Frank Says Thanks, 2008
Constructed timber & mixed media
162 x 50 x 32cm
Private collection



Frank Follows the Light, 2008
Constructed timber & mixed media
250 x 130 x 38cm
Private collection



Frank's Revolution, 2008
Constructed timber & mixed media
81 x 40.5 x 22.5cm
Courtesy Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney



The Bedside Frank, 2008
Constructed timber & mixed media
124 x 21 x 21cm
Private collection



Frank Looks Back, 2008
Constructed timber, brass
203 x 97 x 30cm
Private collection



*'Frank is a cipher for the Everyman.
He is a universally adaptable site
for endless one-liners and gags with
philosophic undertones.'*

Frank's Moving Conversation, 2008
Constructed timber, brass
163.5 x 100 x 20.5cm
Collection of the artist



Frank's Indomitable Side, 2008
Constructed timber, brass
71 x 38 x 33cm
Courtesy Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney



Frankophile, 2008
Constructed timber, brass
90.5 x 23 x 6cm
Private collection



Left & right detail: *Frank's High Horse*, 2009
Constructed timber & mixed media
190 x 150 x 50cm
Private collection





Something Like This

As an urban dweller the physical evidence of what the mind of man has projected on the natural landscape surrounds me daily. The human consciousness wherever it may be taking us, is reflected in the ever-changing cityscape. It is in this landscape of the mind that I see infinite possibilities to imagine new sculpture.

We see ourselves as never before harnessed into complex structures of our own making, uncertain how we got here and still vulnerable to natural forces beyond our control.

It seems anything is possible both within and without, and this is the reality I seek to illuminate in the things I am making now.

STEPHEN HART

Left: *Blue chair with circuit*, 2007
Circuit of 12 interlocking figures
constructed into found chair
95 x 62 x 40cm
Collection of the artist



Chance It, 2009
Constructed timber, brass
55 x 14 x 14cm
Private collection



*'It is in this landscape of the mind
that I see infinite possibilities to
imagine new sculpture.'*

Over The Moon, 2009
Constructed timber, brass
55 x 14 x 14cm
Courtesy Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney



You Are My Rock, 2009
Constructed timber,
mixed media & found rock
55 x 14 x 14cm
Private collection



Horseplay, 2009
Constructed timber & mixed media
55 x 14 x 14cm
Courtesy Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney

*'It seems anything is possible both
within and without, and this is the
reality I seek to illuminate.'*

Left & right rotational views: *Random Construction*, 2009
Constructed timber & mixed media
60 x 56 x 210cm
Private collection







Rotational views: *Oblique*, 2010
Constructed timber
140 x 140 x 80cm
Collection of the artist



Rotational views: *Odyssey*, 2010
Constructed timber, steel
& heart shaped found rock
175 x 60 x 40cm
Private collection



Rotational views & detail: *Roger That*, 2010
Constructed timber & steel
195 x 80 x 40cm
Collection of the artist



Rotational views & detail: *Ark*, 2010
Constructed timber & steel
190 x 40 x 50cm
Courtesy Jan Manton Art, Brisbane

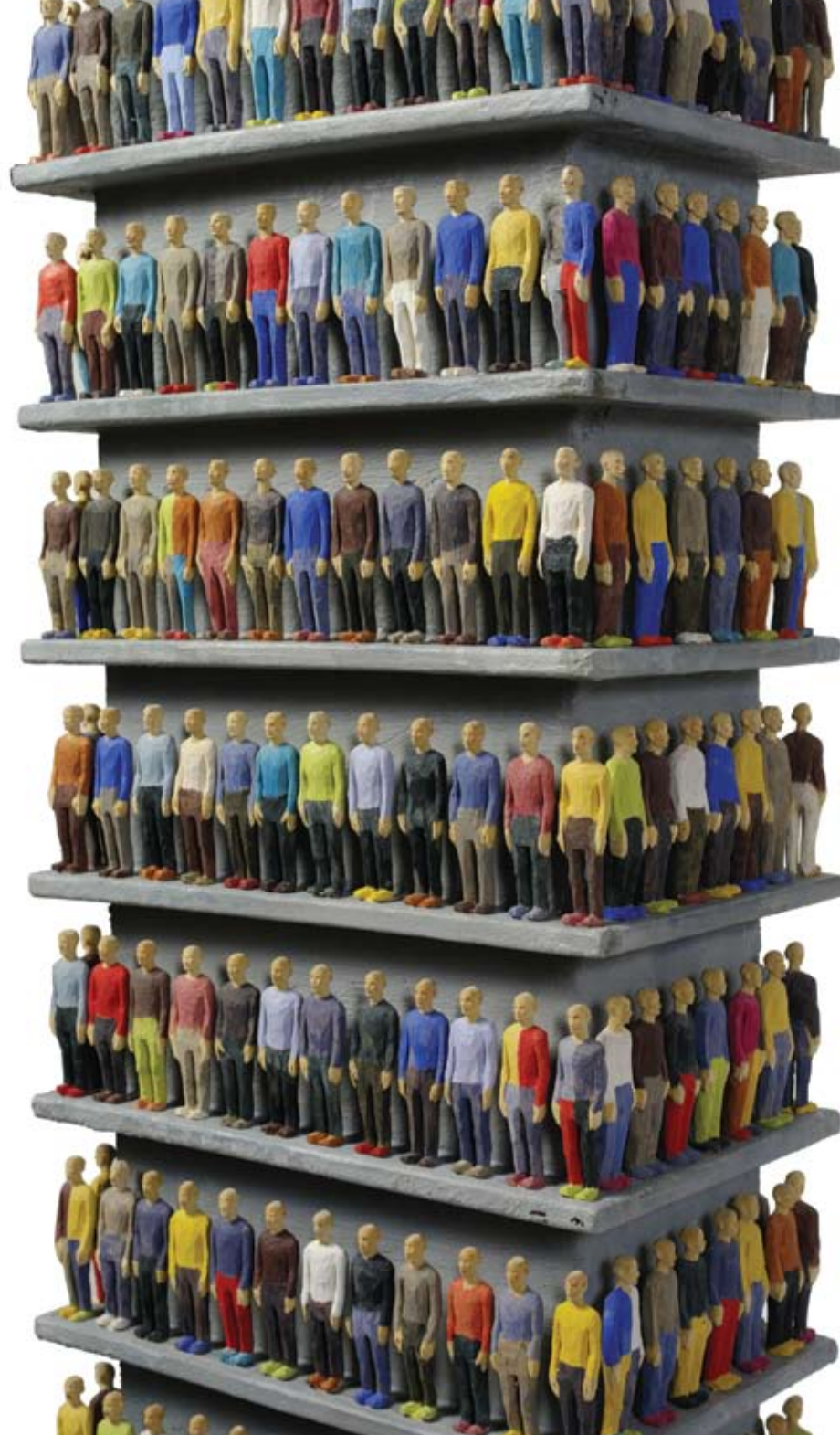




Left & right details: *Free as a Bird*, 2010
Bronze edition of two from original timber
& salvaged metal cladded construction
58 x 55 x 35cm
Private collection



Left & right detail: *Spent Time*, 2011
540 hand carved figures set
in a timber construction
192 x 43 x 37cm
Courtesy Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney



Endnotes

Something Like This: Stephen Hart's Artistic Journey

- 1 Alex Miller, *Lovesong*, Allen & Unwin, 2009, p.306.
- 2 Vladimir Nabokov, *Laughter in the Dark*, Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis, 1932.
- 3 'Craft' has been seen in recent years almost as a pejorative term. Hart's interest in technically sophisticated work is driven by his interest in conveying sincerity and extracting the maximum feeling from a work or idea. In this context he cites the example of Shostakovich, who, in his mature years told a student who complained that he couldn't find a theme for the second movement of his symphony: 'You shouldn't be looking for a theme, you should be writing the second movement'. Craft, for Shostakovich, was all, he placed his faith in it as a child and he depended on it all his life. From *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich*, as related to and edited by Solomon Volkov, Harper and Row, New York, 1979, p.xxiii (Introduction).
- 4 Tom Robbins, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1976.
- 5 Hart's 'Frank' is a cipher for a universal being.
- 6 Interview between the author and Stephen Hart, October 2010.
- 7 Interview with Stephen Hart.
- 8 Joan Brassil's influence during her lifetime was significant. Born 1919, died 2005, *McCulloch's Encyclopaedia of Australian art* notes, 'Her sculptures often dealt with environment, nature and technology, and developed from largely organic works in the 1970s to more technologically-based ones in the 1980s. Evocative renditions of place and sensation, her installations often included elements of sound.' She lived in Wedderburn, NSW, in an artist colony that is ongoing. (Australian Art Editions, 2006, p.280.)
- 9 Interview with Stephen Hart.
- 10 Andrew Lausing, *Sculpture Since 1945*, 'The inbetween, the ambiguous, the composite. These are the properties and problems – whether or not to observe the borders between aesthetic categories – which back in the 1960s where the debating points at art. One of the changes which enabled the debate to get underway was the virtual elimination of the work out subject of the human figure as a subject for sculpture. As the figure re-emerges as a subject in the 1980s, it does so as a dynamic category full of possibilities.' Lausing, Andrew, *Sculpture Since 1945*, Oxford History of Art, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998, p.259.
- 11 Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that have shaped our World View*, Pimlico (Random House), London, 1996, p.402.
- 12 Brisbane's Big Red Shed was established originally on a site in Milton in 1992 by Jim Ruig. The business traded in the wharf timbers made available by the redevelopment of riverside sites in Newstead and Teneriffe. It operated on that site until it burnt down in 1997 and is now located at premises in Darra.
- 13 Interview between the author and Stephen Hart, October 2010.
- 14 EH Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, Phaidon, London, 1984, p.4.
- 15 'Frank', the adjective, means open or unreserved, sincere, undisguised.
- 16 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, The Hogarth Press, London, 1949, p.14. 'Soul in Space' is one of Rilke's last poems, and begins: 'Here I am, here I am, wrested, / reeling, / Can I dare? Can I plunge?'

Stephen Hart and Everyman

- 1 David Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1975, p.58.
- 2 From an email exchange between Stephen Hart and the author, May 2011.

Acknowledgements

The preparation of this book has involved the talents, energy and enthusiasm of many people. I would especially like to thank:

My wife Beverley, for her loving support, belief in this project and wise counsel.

The book designer David Althiem, whose dedication, creativity and generosity have made this project possible.

The writers Louise Martin-Chew and Hendrik Kolenberg and the filmmaker Alex Chomicz for their empathy, generosity and enthusiasm.

Special thanks to Arts Queensland for funding production of the DVD *Spent Time: The Work of Stephen Hart*.

My dealers Jan Manton and Michael Reid for believing in my work.

Photographers Barry Anderson, Gavin Bannerman, Ian Hobbs, Jon Linkins, Al Sim and Carl Warner.

Ian Were for thoughtful editorial services.

My daughters Jody and Ruby for their loving acceptance of their father's journey.

My parents, Jack & Jean, whose examined and thoughtful lives provided a bedrock to do like wise.

Stephen Hart Biographical Notes

Education

1994	Master of Fine Arts	Queensland University of Technology
1984	Post Graduate Diploma Fine Arts	Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney
1982	Bachelor Visual Arts	Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney
1980-4		National Art School, East Sydney
1980-4		Tom Bass Sculpture School, Sydney

Professional Appointments

2002	Lecturer, Griffith University, Brisbane
1992-4, 1997	Lecturer, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane
1985, 1987-9	Tutor, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst
1981-4, 1989	Lecturer, Sydney College of the Arts

Selected Solo and Collaborative Exhibitions

2009	<i>Oddfellows</i> , Michael Reid, Sydney
2008	<i>Frank</i> , Jan Manton Art, Brisbane
2008	<i>Works on paper</i> , Michael Reid, Sydney
2007	<i>But that might change</i> , Michael Reid, Sydney
2006	<i>Wild Blue Yonder</i> , Jan Manton Art, Brisbane
2006	<i>Doubletake</i> , Museum of Brisbane
2006	<i>Animals in Allegory</i> , QUT Art Museum
2005	<i>A Silent Walk</i> , QUT Art Museum
2004	<i>Light Reading</i> , Gallery 482, Brisbane
2004	<i>Temperature Contemporary Queensland Sculpture</i> . Museum of Brisbane
2003	<i>Leave your gloves at the door</i> , Gallery 482, Brisbane
2002	Woollahra Sculpture Prize, Sydney
2002	<i>The colour and the shape</i> , Thornquest Gallery, Gold Coast
2001	Gold Coast Jupiters Art Prize, Gold Coast
2001	<i>Whatmore new Sculptures</i> , Gallery 482, Brisbane
2001	<i>Real World Art</i> , QUT Cultural Precinct Art Museum, Brisbane
2001	Thursday Plantation East Coast Sculpture Show, Ballina
2001	Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Exhibition, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
2000	<i>Gravitas</i> , Gallery 482, Brisbane
1998	<i>Celebrating Conversation 1988-1998</i> , Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst
1998	<i>This Thing</i> , Gallery 482, Brisbane
1998	Gold Coast Jupiters Art Prize, Gold Coast
1997	<i>Still Moving</i> , Eva Breuer Art Dealer, Woollahra
1996	<i>Queensland Designer Makers</i> , Metro Arts, Brisbane
1995	<i>Living with the master</i> , Palace Gallery, Brisbane
1994	<i>Everything must go</i> , Loading Bay, Museum of Modern Art, Brisbane
1993	<i>Happenstance</i> , Royal Institute of Architects, Brisbane
1992	<i>Sculpture</i> , Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst
1991	<i>The Bathurst 4</i> , Bathurst Regional Gallery, Bathurst
1990	<i>Sculpture</i> , Charles Sturt University, Bathurst
1989	<i>Under the Greenhouse</i> , Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney University, Sydney

1985	<i>Sculpture</i> , Charles Sturt University, Bathurst
1984	<i>Graduate Diploma of Visual Arts Exhibition of 1983</i> , Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney
1984	<i>Sculpture</i> , The Performance Space, Sydney

Awards, Prizes

2008	Finalist, Wynne Prize, Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Exhibition, AGNSW, Sydney
2002	Australia Council New Work Grant
2002	Finalist, Woollahra Sculpture Prize, Sydney
2001	Winner, Gold Coast Jupiters Art Prize, Gold Coast
2001	Jury Prize for Artistic Excellence, Thursday Plantation East Coast Sculpture Show, Ballina
2001	Finalist, Wynne Prize, Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Exhibition, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
1998	Finalist, Gold Coast Jupiters Art Prize, Gold Coast

Public commissions

2003	<i>Leaning Toward Heaven</i> , Ruthven Street, Toowoomba City Council
2000	Darra Suburban Centre Improvement Project, Brisbane City Council
2000	Bald Hills Suburban Centre Improvement Project, Brisbane City Council
1999	Relief sculpture, Sebel Hotel, Brisbane
1997	Relief sculpture, Mariner Reach, Newstead
1997	Features furniture, Beaches Apartment, Gold Coast
1988	<i>Conversation</i> , Bathurst

Collections

Gold Coast City Art Gallery
Queensland University of Technology Cultural Precinct Art Museum
Sydney Children's Hospital, Westmead
Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst
Quintrex Australia, Gold Coast
Private collections Brisbane, Sydney, Bathurst, Hong Kong, Los Angeles

Publications

Tim Morrell, 'Preview', *Australian Art Collector*, April 2008
Louise Martin-Chew, 'A Silent Walk: The Sculpture of Stephen Hart', *Artlink*, Vol 25 No 4.
Louise Martin-Chew, 'Stephen Hart', *Temperature: Contemporary Queensland Sculpture*, Museum of Brisbane, 2004.
Michele Helmrich, 'Gone Troppo', *Australian Art Review*, July 2004
Brown, Phil, 'Homegrown', *Brisbane News*, 14 June 2000
Maccheroni Collins, Kate, 'Hart is a dab hand when it comes to artwork', *The Courier Mail*, 4 July 1998
Durham, Alison, 'Man made', *Australian Country Looks*, August 1996, 86-87
Hedger, Michael, *Public Sculpture in Australia*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 1995
Donnelly, Fiona, 'Style revolution', *The Courier Mail*, 16 December 1995
Griffiths, Bruce, 'Lasting gifts for future', *Western Advocate*, 21 November 1988
Maloon, Terence, 'Pure prodigy – no preservatives added', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 1983