

Les Sculptures Refusées opens at Sydney's Quarantine Station with artworks rejected by Sculpture by the Sea

ABC Radio Sydney / By Amanda Hoh

Posted Thu 15 Oct 2020 at 2:33pm, updated Thu 15 Oct 2020 at 7:46pm



Simon Hodgson's sculpture examines the relationship between the body, landscape and the built environment. (ABC Sydney: Amanda Hoh)

The inaugural Les Sculptures Refusées is more "revolutionary" than its famous and lauded counterpart [Sculpture by the Sea](#), according to founder Tania McMurtry.

Sculpture by the Sea, which has turned the Bondi-to-Tamarama Beach walk into the world's largest public sculpture exhibition for the past 22 years, has been postponed while [COVID-19 restrictions in New South Wales prevent mass outdoor gatherings](#).

Les Sculptures Refusées on the other hand, opens on Friday after only 10 weeks of planning and features rejected artworks that were submitted to the more established event.

Key points:

- The inaugural Les Sculptures Refusées opens on October 16 at Q Station, at North Head in Manly
- The exhibition features artworks that missed out on selection for Sculpture by the Sea
- Seven artists are being featured including founders Tania McMurtry,


"It's been madness, but I'm very excited to be part of Sydney's art history," McMurtry said.

The open-air exhibition is being held at the historic Quarantine Station at North Head, Manly.

Simon Hodgson and Orest Keywan, who has been in Sculpture by the Sea 22 times

Share news you know you can trust.

[abc.net.au/news/les-sculp...](https://www.abc.net.au/news/les-sculp...)

 COPY



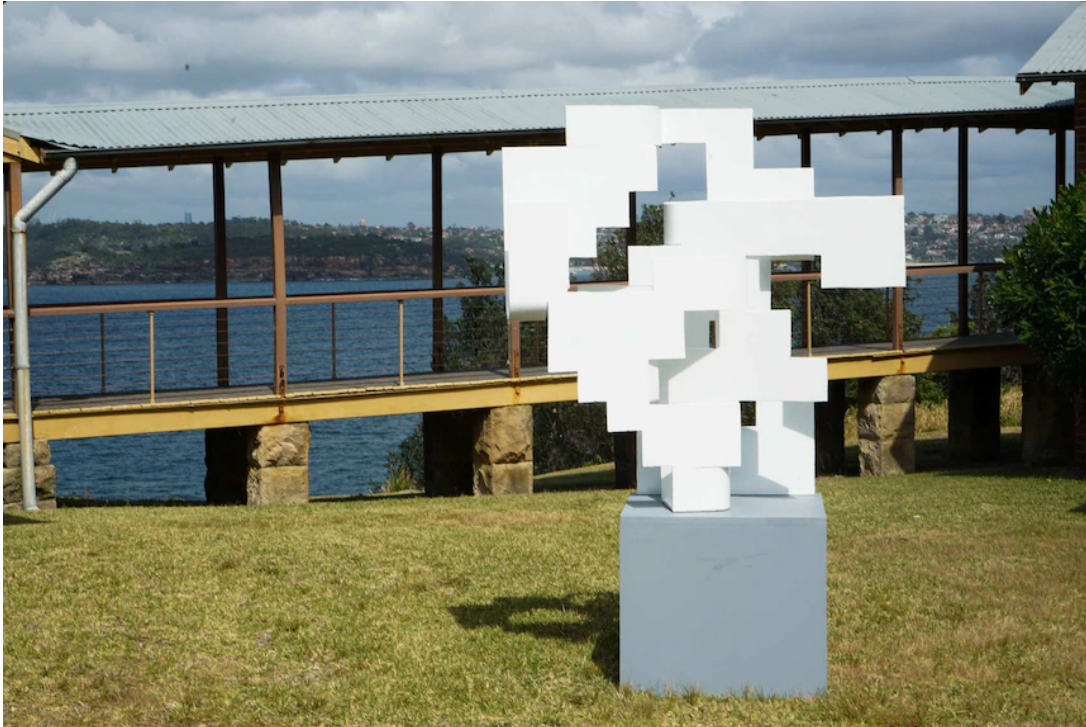
Empty Yellow by Ellenor Griffith. (ABC Sydney: Amanda Hoh)

Like [Sculpture by the Sea](#), artworks have been placed around the coastal and park spaces of the site offering magnificent harbour views.

Entry and crowd numbers will be managed by the site operators.

The exhibition features seven artists who all had artworks rejected by Sculpture by the Sea this year, including McMurtry, Orest Keywan, Simon Hodgson, Anthony Battaglia, Paul Selwood, Ellenor Griffith and Lucy Barker.

Most of the artists have been in Sculpture by the Sea multiple times, including Keywan who has been in the exhibition every year since 1998.



Paul Selwood's sculpture *Extended Play*. (ABC Sydney: Amanda Hoh)

Born from a chat about 'rejections'

McMurtry came up with the idea of *Les Sculptures Refusées* in collaboration with friend and fellow artist Simon Hodgson.

This is the first time she has organised and curated an art exhibition.

"I had just been rejected by *Sculpture by the Sea*, and he said he had too,"
McMurtry said.

"That surprised me because [Simon] has been in there 15 times in a row."

Founder Tania McMurtry has included three of her sculptures in the exhibition that feature carved and burnt timber beams. *(ABC Sydney: Amanda Hoh)*

McMurtry had two sculptures installed at the Q Station Retreat at the Quarantine Station last year and so pitched the idea to the site's managers.

The Refusés has a long history

Exhibitions of refused artworks are not a new concept and they have their own cult following.

The [Salon des Refusés](#), which exhibits rejected Archibald portraits, was established in 1992 which McMurtry cites as inspiration for her idea.

"The Refusés has a bit of a history of being a bit more revolutionary — having a fringe vibe, not so established, so it's freer," she said.

"It's a strong alternative to those established exhibitions that have been successful for years."



Orest Keywan's *Summa*. Keywan is the only Australian artist to have won Sculpture by the Sea twice. (ABC Sydney: Amanda Hoh)

Sculpture by the Sea founding director David Handley told [ABC Sydney](#) that he actually thought of creating a refusée in 1999 after being "taken aback" by how many good artworks were not selected for the exhibition.

However, he was told that the organisers of Sculpture by the Sea could not run the alternative exhibition.

"The whole thing about the refusée is that, 'Hey you refused us — sod you — we're going to have our own show anyway'," he said.

So when Mr Handley heard this year's Refusée was being organised, he said it was "totally cool".

"Goodluck to the artists in this show," he said.

"Some of the artists in the show I've worked closely with for two decades."

Anthony Battaglia's Without End sculpture was awarded Most Outstanding Work by the judges. *(ABC Sydney: Amanda Hoh)*

Supporting local artists

The art sector has faced enormous economic pressure in the face of the coronavirus with [funding cuts](#), [closure of venues](#) and [Music in shock over COVID-19](#)

So having a new exhibition open in Sydney with no sponsorship funding, and in the midst of social constraints is being applauded.

"It's really great to be back in touch with other artists and installing works together," said Barker.

"We've definitely missed that aspect of things."



Lucy Barker's *Check For Rash* represents the symptoms of excessive digital technology use. (ABC Sydney: Amanda Hoh)

Barker has been in *Sculpture by the Sea* 11 times.

Her two works in the *Refusées* exhibition include *Check For Rash*, which features distorting mirrors spread across a fence, and an old collection of sandstone works carved into tech devices that look eerily like headstones and made more so by being placed in the ground beside historic rock carvings.



Tania McMurtry's *Blurring the Lines* (right), *State of In-betweeness* (centre) and *Ode to Tide* (left). (ABC Sydney: Amanda Hoh)

Can only get bigger

McMurtry spread the news that she was setting up the Refusées by word of mouth and had 13 artworks submitted for consideration.

But she hopes the exhibition will only grow in the years to come by attracting sponsorship and getting access to the pool of artworks submitted to Sculpture by the Sea.

"I don't think a refusée would compete but it should complement and it should add to the buzz of Sculpture by the Sea," McMurtry said.

Mr Handley said he would be happy to pass on details of the artists if they allowed it for next year's exhibition.

He hopes to have a decision by NSW Health and Waverly Council by October 22 regarding whether Sculpture by the Sea can go ahead this spring.

Les Sculptures Refusées opens at Q Station, Manly on October 16 and runs until November 19.

Update: Anthony Battaglia was awarded Most Outstanding Work for his sculpture *Without End*.

