

The task of purchasing works for the interiors commenced in early January 2006, with a tour of the campus and review of the entire Mater Health Services art collection. As our team wandered the corridors and travelled through the historic grounds of Mater campus they discovered not only individual works of art and religious iconography but the culture of Mater. This journey was the precursor to building a significant art collection for the new Mater Mothers' Hospitals.

The role of curator was to research emerging and established Queensland artists and recommend artworks to reflect the values of Mater Health Services, the focus of the Mater Mothers' Hospitals and respond to the environment in which the work will be displayed. The themes of journey, motherhood and tree of life have informed this enriching process of creating a snapshot of Queensland Art from 2000 until 2008.

The next phase was to address the interior spaces and respond to the brief to provide an artwork for every patient's room as well as corridors and waiting areas. Over 180 artworks were required within a two year timeframe and fixed budget. As a curator, building a collection of this size was a challenge. There was a sense of urgency as our journey began to unfold and as we started to research - looking in artist studios, trawling through stockrooms of galleries and artist run spaces, web and catalogue searching, talking, listening, reading and thinking.

Once a significant body of artworks had been purchased the collection began to take shape and required curating within the space. Sub themes were developed to create legibility. For example, the artworks on level 12 investigate interpretations of the Australian landscape and an extension of the interior design theme of the 'tree of life'. Artworks on level 11 present an eclectic mix of works by Queensland artists and have been predominantly sourced from outside of South East Queensland. Level 10 explores memory through object-based and embellished artworks. Levels 8 and 9 house six bodies of editioned prints including an important series of photography by Joachim Froese inspired by his mother. Levels 5, 6 and 7 house individual works for designated areas such as the birthing suites, waiting and interview rooms.

Installation and documentation of the collection has been the final stage of our journey. The collating, shifting and positioning the collection into its new home has been as enjoyable and as exciting as discovering the artworks for the first time.

**Renai Grace**  
 Assc. Director, Positive Solutions  
 Curator Mater Mothers' Hospitals' Collection



Photography by Carl Warner

# The Architects

Bligh Voller Nield

## The Architectural Concept

The intent of the architectural design for the new Mater Mothers' Hospitals is to reinvigorate the Mater campus, re-establishing Aubigny forecourt as its heart. The new Mater Mothers' Hospitals building is an elegant response to the heritage of its place and setting. It is simple in appearance in contrast to the complexity of the surrounding buildings. The architectural design responds to and evokes a subtropical environment expressed in a contemporary way.



Photography courtesy of Mater Hospitals

The prime orientation of the new hospitals is towards Aubigny forecourt. The design responds to this important heritage precinct by creating a duality of entrances and re-establishes a 'green and social heart' in the Mater campus. This large open space with gardens on the hillside beneath the three large ficus trees fills the centre of the historical space. These trees provide shade over the new gardens and driveway and a visual balance between Aubigny Place and the eight floors of the new hospitals. The historical driveway up the hillside to Aubigny Place is retained and a restored drive loop reminiscent of the original (1911 - 1970) landscape. The entrance to the new Mater Mothers' Hospitals is from this quiet garden setting with its large shading trees, palm lined driveway and flower beds, via the covered concourse which bridges this landscape.

The external design for Mater Mothers' Hospitals is based on the relationship of urban form and heritage within the constraints imposed by functional requirements of the facility. The natural mood of the buildings on the Mater campus, particularly those which utilise brickwork as a cladding material, are heavy, solid, sombre and strongly grounded. To replicate the brick materiality of the campus in the new building would be contextually simplistic. The architectural design complements the masonry buildings with a lightness and delicacy.

The new Mater Mothers' Hospitals have been clad in metal and glass. The design utilises a metal screen which responds to climatic orientation and requirements for privacy which is set forward of the building façade. The diaphanous nature of this screen delivers a layering, depth and transparency to the building design. The use of subtle tones of colour further reinforces the luminosity sought in the architectural design.

The design seeks to 'uplift' functionality through the creation of a courtyard in the centre of the building which embodies ideas of legibility and transparency.

### Art and Architecture

The concept of incorporating art within the fabric of the building's architecture provides an opportunity to both strengthen and create a regional sense of place. This idea was pursued from the outset of the project and in combination with the final selection of locally based artists has delivered a unique outcome for Mater.

The integration of art with architecture creates an enriched architectural background which has been undertaken in two ways. For example harmony with the architectural design is achieved in the works of Mandy Ridley (the concourse screens), Lyell Barry (the lift lobby panels), and complemented by the sculptural work of Marisa Molin in the courtyard.

The selection of the artists to produce these works was undertaken with the architectural concepts in mind, which underpinned the design. A journey through the building assists in illustrating the manner in which this has been achieved.



Photography courtesy of BVN



Photography courtesy of UAP

### The Concourse

The concourse is the transition space to the entry of the building. Just as the veranda is the transition space in a traditional Queensland house, that in-between space between the inside and the outside, so the concourse fulfils a similar function. This veranda is turned ninety degrees to the building and provides the physical link between the landscape of the Aubigny Forecourt (where patients and visitors arrive) and the entry foyer to the building.

Initial architectural design ideas for the concourse were of a roofed arbour type structure that was enclosed on one side by a screen of timber battens. This timber batten screen wall was utilised to reinforce the concept of the building having a 'unique sense of place', imbued with physical regional characteristics of what typifies a traditional subtropical Queensland building. The concourse is not only a circulation space but a place where people can meet and families can sit and interact with each other and the landscape. This relaxed entry promenade seeks to reinforce one's sense of wellbeing and reinforce our relationship with the natural world.

The integrated artwork of Mandy Ridley is a perfect expression of these architectural design concepts. Her work enriches the batten screen wall. It is regionally based, being a contemporary version of timber fretwork that typifies Queensland houses, recast in a contemporary form. These metal screens are grounded by, and complement, the materiality of the timber batten screens. This work reinforces the sense of place and provides an abstract historical connection to the Sisters of Mercy in establishing the original Mater Hospital and its continuing evolution in the provision of health services.



Photography courtesy of BVN

## Interior Design

Upon arrival at the entry foyer the materiality of the interior design concepts alluded to in the journey along the concourse are revealed. These concepts were developed from the themes of welcoming, calmness, life, family and community. In addition ideas enhancing the perception of space with respect to material selection were light, nature, healing, history, spirit, warmth and openness. The origin of these ideas is from the 'tree of life' taking its physical manifestation from the existing fig trees in the Aubigny forecourt.

These concepts generated the thematic use of specific materials throughout the building - timber floors, wall panels and joinery items for textural warmth. The use of colour and carpet reinforces this warmth in a manner not typically found in health facilities. The use of colour and material also assists with wayfinding and legibility of the facility for the occupants. Staff stations, reception and waiting areas are treated in a manner which makes their identification obvious.

The integrated art works of Lyell Barry in the lift lobby foyers (which can be found on each level of the building) have their origins in these interior design concepts. Produced on plywood panels, the natural materiality of these timber works enriched with colour and plant motifs are a literal visual expression of life in bloom having a balance and harmony with the natural world.

## The Courtyard

Moving through the foyer into the central courtyard of the building, the artwork by Marisa Molin provides a final expression of the major architectural design concepts for the Mater Mothers' Hospitals. Traditionally, hospital buildings have a deep plan, with only rooms along the perimeter able to access views of the external environment. The central courtyard is an internally located external space, through eight levels of the building, which provides the occupants an additional connection to the external environment. This connection to the external environment is paramount to maintaining the wellbeing of both staff and patients. The wall lining to this urban space is a delicate green metallic material which is an abstract allusion to the natural environment previously experienced in the Aubigny Forecourt. At ground level the landscaped central courtyard space both opens on to the entry foyer and birthing rooms, providing a relaxed social meeting place for families.

It is within this backdrop that artist Marisa Molin developed the concept for her work. Metal in form, the work has a delicacy and sensuality that can be appreciated from all levels of the building. It is the physical manifestation of the 'tree of life' with its reference to the Moreton Bay fig trees in Aubigny Place and the curvaceous forms that are the beauty of pregnancy. Spiritual in nature, this artwork reaches to the heavens and bursts with the buds of new life.

Bligh Voller Nield Architecture



Photography courtesy of BVN

# Developing a Site Specific Art Collection

## A Critical Perspective

Journeys through the labyrinthine web of roads, passages and bridges common to modern hospital layouts rarely encourage a sense of ceremony. Destinations are often gained almost by surprise, when, after much following of signage and occasional moments of doubt and disorientation, visitors land with a sudden thump of recognition – not unlike hitting the ground at the base of a twisting slippery slide. Despite the best efforts of architects, hospital design is often compromised by crowded locations where buildings from numerous decades accrete and subsume their once-ceremonial forecourts and surrounding landscapes. Connections between the ever-expanding cluster appear as afterthoughts, revealing a strange surgery of arteries fed from the primary organs at aberrant points.

The new Mater Mothers' Hospitals reverse the pattern of confusion and dons its visitors with a remarkable sense of arrival. Both architecture and art have been instrumental in producing a legible and profound experience of place. Resplendent above the new Bligh Voller Nield designed building is the original hospital, designed by Robin Dods (of Hall & Dods) and opened in 1910. Its dignified, gabled façade overlooks a generous circular drive and garden beds, allowing visitors to pause and contemplate the two buildings facing each other across a green apron of space. A magnificent trio of Moreton Bay fig trees (circa 1933) sits near the driveway in Aubigny Place, offering a deeply shaded resting place for further contemplation. Visitors catch glimpses of the figs as they turn their backs to the old building and take a sloping timbered concourse up from the gardens and into the foyer of the new building.

The sense of arrival inherent in the entry concourse is heightened and consciously celebrated by artist Mandy Ridley.

*I'm aware that each day the concourse is traversed by people who will have experiences that cover the full gamut of the human condition, the bringing of life, sometimes even loss and disappointment. Monumental as these experiences are for those concerned it is the very minute, ordinary, most everyday nature of their activities that unite them; visiting, washing, praying, caring for, celebrating and being present for those in their care and of their family and social circles.* (Mandy Ridley, 2007)

Ridley's aluminium screen encases one side of the 27 metre structure in a tracery of large-scale motifs derived from medicinal plants and Irish lace. The delicate, succulent foliage of the centipeda minima (aka spreading sneezeweed) attracted the artist partly because of its humbleness, while the traditional Inishmacsaint lace draws on the history of the Sisters of Mercy who founded the hospital. Both motifs are powerfully domestic, and redolent of traditional mothering skills. The plant is strongly associated with caring and ministering, the lace with careful handcrafting. In transferring the small into the large, and the fragile and transient into durable metal, Ridley has successfully encapsulated a sense of vigour and growth. The entry attains an appropriate processional dignity minus the pomp. At night, the screen is awash with lights the colours of corals and flowers of the Pacific Islands, heralding a place of beauty for visiting friends and family. For departing mothers, babes in arms, the gesture is subtly festive - a culturally inclusive rendition of having their path strewn with rose petals or rice.

The theme of celebration of life is powerfully reinforced by Marisa Molin's courtyard sculpture '...and all the trees of the fields shall clap their hands'. Placed in the public court adjacent to reception, it forms part of the arrival sequence and is the building's defining centrepiece. The serpentine trunks and branches of Molin's anthropomorphic 'Tree of Life' ascend eight metres into the void, where they taper then explode into magnificent buds, illuminated by night. The piece is able to be viewed from rooms and foyers in each of the twelve floors of the surrounding building, as well as providing a playing/ crawling zone for children on the

ground level. The trunk forms bear a distinct muscularity as they break through their chthonic base and push skyward. There is a sense that more mysterious growth is yet to emerge from underground. A cradle of space representing the pregnant womb is formed at the base of the piece by the protective, resilient frame of branches as they snake their way through the air. Reminiscent of both plant and animal forms, the textured surface of the aluminium is, on close inspection, decidedly imperfect. Molin took her inspiration for the finely etched surface from the bark of the Moreton Bay figs outside the building, but it also recalls the frailty and intimacy of human skin.

Both Molin's and Ridley's works respond sensitively to their siting within the building and its architecture, as well as to the ethos of the hospitals. Indeed, they are threaded into the warp and weft of the design in an intrinsic way which speaks of a commissioning process that embraced the art collection from the building's inception.

Lyell Bary considers the materiality of the building elements in his rendition of a tree of life in the Merthyr Park Series. His murals greet people at the lift lobbies of each floor. They employ the plywood featured in the reception joinery. Bary plays with the patterns of the exposed timber grain, leaving large areas unadorned and others routed and painted with glorious depictions of flowering trees. The foliage thrusts its way up each floor on a continuous journey to light. Level numbers are carved into the timber then further enumerated by the same number of doves carved into and fluttering across the imagined landscape.

The tree provides a rich religious reference for many of the artists whose work sits in the rooms and corridors of the building. Vivienne

Kelly's vivid photographic work 'Flame Tree' has a direct spirituality, while Jennie Jackson's intricate examination of patterns within palm leaves in 'The Undergrowth' celebrates a creative life force and order within diversity.

Landscapes feature in several areas, often taking their cue from familiar local scenery. There's a playful naivety to many of the works that is refreshingly upbeat. Katarina Vesterberg's landscapes adopt a quieter tone and speak of metaphysical worlds beyond their vast perspectives and ethereally-lit palettes. Joachim Froese's photographs imply a similar metaphysical presence through the reverse mechanism of interior close-ups which examine solitude and intensely personal memento mori. The daily detritus of nappy pins, combs, thimbles, pegs and doilies all find representation on these walls, as do scenes of families and their dogs, cats, cows and birds. Angels and mythical beasts add dreamscapes to the mix, while babies and Madonnas fuse the heavenly with the everyday. The Indigenous Liaison Unit provides a coherent collection of indigenous works. Other floors are themed to promote coherence in the diversity, either in media or subject matter, and all align with the broad curatorial themes of journeys, motherhood, families and the 'tree of life'.

The 180 works in the collection have all been completed since the year 2000, providing a time capsule of astounding clarity and quality. Artists range from emerging and little known to established and highly regarded, but the placement of their works is entirely democratic. The collection has both depth and breadth, an ecumenical approach reflective of the hospitals' core values. Warm humour is never hard to find. The foundation stone for the hospitals, perched at the beginning of the entry concourse,

is a simple white eiderdown, neatly folded, and sitting in the garden like an abandoned piece of luggage. Alexander Seton's rendering of a soft bed cover in adamant white marble chips away at the common dreariness of institutional memorial stones. It is an apt punctuation mark at beginning and end of the hospital journey, and, for what is to so many, a significant and profoundly personal journey.

**Margie Fraser**  
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Background, Processes and Outcomes

## A Family's View

To say Mater means a lot to our family would be a gross understatement. Besides the fact of all seven of us being born there, our first born twins came into the world 15 weeks early. While our outcome was a very happy one, we experienced many a life saving moment during their four month hospitalisation.

As a result of our firsthand experience of the exceptional people providing exceptional care at Mater, it was natural for us to be avid supporters of the new Mater Mothers' Hospitals and most specifically the hospitals' art program.

Bringing new life into the world is a beautiful experience, made all the more special in beautiful surroundings. Art inspires quiet contemplation and unique art makes it all the more special. We feel there is a power in art to heal, to inspire and to create calmness.

We believe the artworks can provide a focal point in the delivery room and quiet contemplation in the post birth experience. For mothers childbirth requires intense focus. Elizabeth would repeatedly count the ceiling tiles to maintain her focus during delivery, but new artworks in the birthing suites and around the hospital will allow new mothers to lose themselves within the picture...if only for a short while.

### The Porter family

*Photography courtesy of Mater Hospitals'*



A Family's View

# Public Art Commissions

## Concourse - Mandy Ridley

Ridley's art practice spans intimate investigations of pattern, colour and craft through her object based artworks to major site specific public art commissions. A central focus of her work is to explore the relationships and connections between individuals. This idea is extended to the production of the artwork that allows encounters with many people who contribute to the process.

Ridley's vision for the concourse is to create a space that welcomes, delights and provides a point of transcendence for all who enter the hospital.

Mater Mothers' Hospitals Concourse commission allowed Ridley to research the intricate patterns and styles of traditional Irish lace and investigate Australian medicinal plants as the subject matter for her steel lace panels. The lace reference pays homage to the Sisters of Mercy, founders of the Hospital and the medicinal plant form is a link to the geography of the artwork and to the caring role of the Mothers' Hospitals.

From the outset Ridley felt there was "potency to the motif of textiles and cloth as they are so intimately involved in the processes of care." The research into two separate traditional practices, that of lace-making and herbal medicine were sketched and reconfigured to create a lyrical pattern.

*Lace in the Inishmacsaint style was referenced for its dynamic forms and three-dimensional appearance. A plant from the southeast Queensland region, Centipeda minima, was selected for its medical properties and charming, though unassuming, form.*

The pattern was then transformed into laser cut steel and cast aluminium panels for the 27 metre long concourse. It is transformed at night, awash with brilliant colour. The artwork creates a dynamic, transitional space both during the day and night as the entry to the new Mater Mothers' Hospitals.



Mandy Ridely, 2007-8, *Nativitas*, stainless steel, cast aluminium, lights

Photography: Scott Burrows



Photography courtesy of UAP



## Public Art Commissions

### Lift Lobbies - Lyell Bary

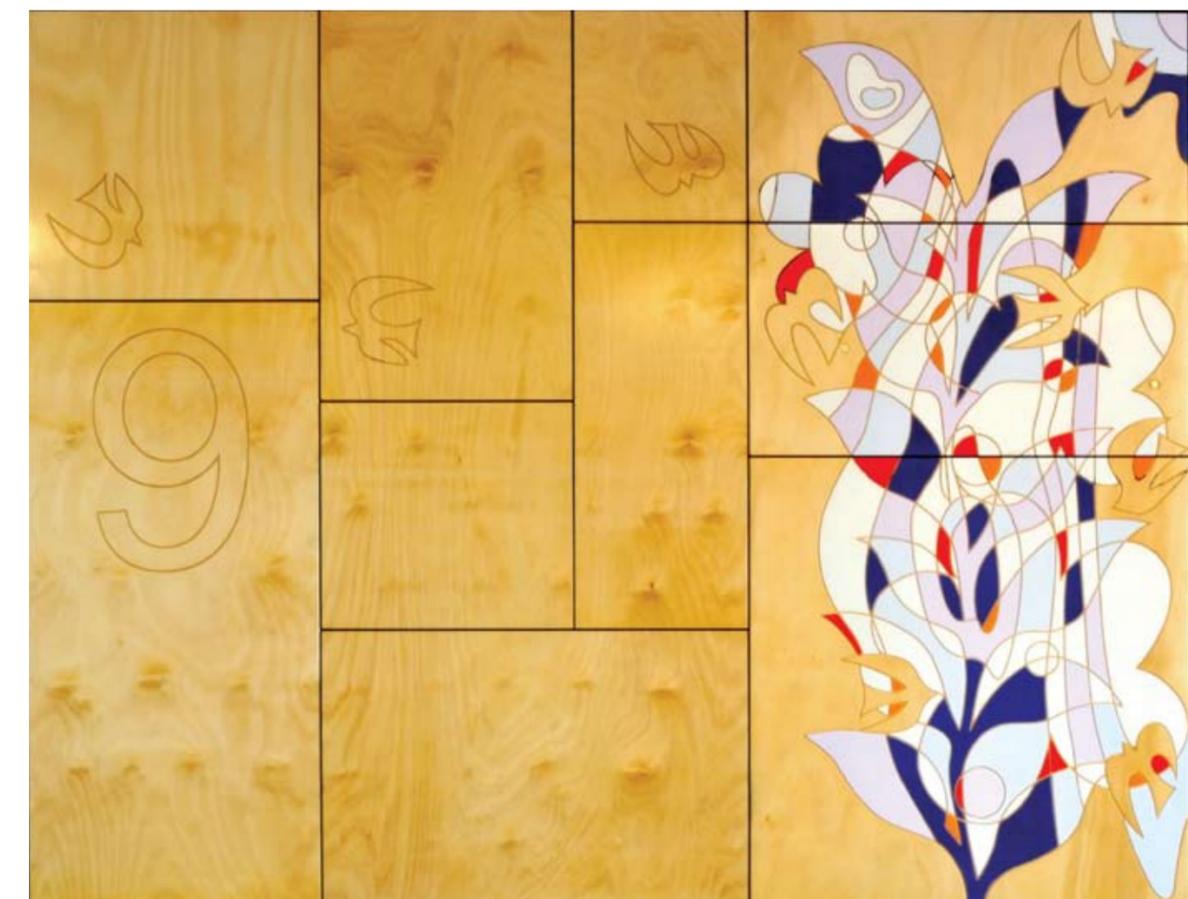
Lyell Bary's art practice is based in acrylic paint and plywood. His compositions for the lift lobby commissions use the grain of the wood to create abstract and figurative interpretations of nature. Painted on a plywood surface, the narrative of the work is revealed through partially exposed grain of the timber.

His brightly coloured infill treatment used across the grain sections create lyrical and unique patterns. The surface of the paintings consist of sections of the plywood left bare of paint, contrasted by areas of flat colour and defined edges. The surface of the paintings are systematically applied with numerous layers of paint to create a matt effect similar to stenciling or a screenprinting process.

Bary's paintings of blooming Jacaranda and Frangipani trees inhabited by birdlife welcome visitors to each floor of Mater Mother's Hospitals. These works reflect the rhythm and harmony of nature not only through pictorial content but also via materials used. Bary invites visitors to explore his work on each level of Mater Mothers' Hospitals and discover the symbolic link between the birds within the paintings and the levels in which they inhabit.

The lift lobby commissions were inspired by original artworks created by Lyell which are featured on the level 2 lift lobby entry from the Mater Adult Hospital.

Located in each of the eight lift lobbies, Bary's work is significant to the collection as the paintings unify the prominent theme of 'tree of life' seen in both Mandy Ridley and Marisa Molin's work.



Lyell Bary, 2007-8, *Merthyr Park Series*, Acrylic on plywood  
Photography: Ben Harris