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# MICHAEL MESZAROS, SCULPTOR AND MEDALLIST, FROM 1986 TO THE PRESENT

Michael Meszaros and Peter Lane

In 1986 the late Ray Jewell wrote an article on Michael Meszaros, one of Australia's leading modern medallists, for volume 2 of our journal. Since that time Michael has continued to develop his career as an acknowledged sculptor and medallist.

The combination of medallic and larger work has continued but there has been a shift in the balance towards large monumental commissioned pieces, which reflects a significant shift in community attitudes towards public sculpture.

Michael has been kept so busy with commissioned work that he has not had a one man exhibition since 1986, although he has continued to produce medallions and sculpture for exhibition, mostly in group shows organised by the Association of Sculptors of Victoria. Michael has also shown many medallic works in the biennial Congress exhibitions of the International Medallists Federation (FIDEM), of which he continues to be the Australian delegate, and at the Dante Biennales in Ravenna, Italy, where he is the only artist in the world to have competed in every Biennale since its inception in 1973.

In the last few years, with the proliferation of public sculpture Michael has become increasingly concerned with the procedures used in the commissioning of work on a public or competitive basis. Michael has taken a leading role on behalf of the Association of Sculptors of Victoria and successfully corresponded with Jeff Kennett, the then Premier of Victoria, which resulted in a new set of Guidelines for Commissioning Public Art.

Artists were finding themselves increasingly dealing with anonymous bureaucratic

committees, working to conditions and processes drawn up by lawyers who have little understanding of the artistic process and the need for payment during the conception and design phase of a project. The insistence on competitive tendering in Victoria had required artists to submit unpaid designs for every project, leading to a situation where many good artists no longer expressed interest.

Michael's work has now been co-ordinated with a project which aims to have an Australia wide set of uniform conditions. The underlying principle is that artists must be paid when they are required to produce work. Bureaucracies continue to resist because they do not want to lose the opportunity of getting a free choice of designs. This aspect of his activity is consistent with his long held belief that an artist should be competent in business matters. Art schools mostly do not teach business practice and young artists are therefore severely disadvantaged. To counter this problem, he has written a 20,000 word guide to the business of living as a medallist for FIDEM which may be adapted to a more general form for use by artists of all disciplines.

Artistically he is still following the path he was on in 1986. With commissioned work he takes each client's problem, and tries to reach an educated understanding of the subject. He arrives at a philosophical conclusion as to what he thinks is of central importance to the subject, and then aims to produce a design which expresses, symbolises or illustrates that conclusion in some way.

There are some important implications in

this process. It is more analytical than some other artists' approaches and perhaps less emotional, but it gives a much better chance of being relevant to the client's purpose and therefore acceptable. It depends on having a range of stylistic and technical solutions at his disposal so that different ideas and situations can be accommodated. It relies on remaining outside artistic fads and fashions because it depends more on the strength of the idea than on any adherence to a current stylistic fashion. It depends on his understanding of his own thought processes rather than any conformity with current art theories or philosophies. The notion of following a school or artistic fashion seems to Michael a denial of the opportunity to be free in artistic terms. Similarly, slavishly sticking to one's own signature style seems to him, a crippling of an artist's own freedom, for commercial purposes or an expression of a poverty of inspiration.

One of the benefits of commissioned work is that it forces him to think hard about subjects which in many cases would never otherwise be brought to his attention. It becomes Michael's job to be interested in the subject and to have thoughts, feelings and responses to it. It forces him in many cases to look for new ways of expressing ideas, and sometimes new techniques, to achieve these expressions.

Some of his personal medallion work has become more simplified using lines and planes. He has become more willing to play with the circle itself, cutting out or adding on, and using irregular edges. He believes that for a work to remain a medallion, the circle must be kept, if not in full, at least in overall form or by the fact of the original circle being deformed. In some cases the idea of the circle may be emphasised by its being damaged or tampered with. Michael likes to look for subjects which by their nature have

a circular element or which can be worked into a circle from a particular point of view.

Michael sees the most important point as always keeping his eyes and mind open to possibilities, both for personal and commissioned work. Indeed, he believes that commissioned work should be approached on the basis that the only difference between it and personal work should be that the client nominates the subject. While this may not always be the case, the notions that a commissioned work must convey something centrally relevant about the client's subject and that a personal work must convey something worthwhile about a perception of the artist brings the two processes very close together.

Michael firmly believes "that the quality of an idea and the effectiveness or efficiency of its communication are central to the making of art. Ideas come from perceptions of experience which we all have in our own ways. The artist is the one who can produce an object or image, which tells the viewer about that perception. The recognised 'masterpieces' in art history all share the characteristics of a great idea coming from an incisive perception, communicated in an exceptionally effective manner. The means may be complicated or simple, but in general, the simpler the solution the harder it gets. In short, complexity or obscurity is often the refuge of the incompetent. The simple solution often indicates that the artist has understood the essentials of the subject and has stuck to them in the solution. However, it is most important to allow that sometimes complexity is part of the solution and that there are no absolute rules in art. As soon as we make them, somebody successfully breaks them."

# CATALOGUE OF MEDALS, SCULPTURES, EXHIBITIONS

## WORKS COMPLETED FEBRUARY 1986 - SEPTEMBER 1987

### Commissioned Works

Papal candlestick, St. Pauls Cathedral, 2 metres, bronze

Papal relief, 'Resurrection', Mercy Maternity Hospital, bronze 525 mm diam.

Reliefs at R.V. Eye and Ear Hospital, Department of Otolaryngology 450 x 225 mm and 200 x 200 mm bronze

Relief of five Coles brothers, Coles Myer Ltd., bronze, 750 x 750 mm, 8 castings

Relief, Footscray Institute of Technology, Department of Mechanical Engineering, 940 x 940 mm bronze

Ellis Stones memorial, School of Architecture, University of Melbourne

Trophy sculpture, Shell Australia, 2 versions

Telecom Australia, Outstanding Achievement Award trophy

Grave plaque, Jean Hunter, Springvale Crematorium

Centenary of Mildura Irrigation Settlement - memorial to Alfred Deakin

Private Commission, sitting camel statue

University High School, portrait plaque of Matthew Stanton Sharman

### Medallions

Oertel Nadebaum Award, Appita

Community Service Award, Rotary Club of Melbourne

Beecham Research Laboratories Award

Israeli Presidential visit Commemorative

Australian Bicentennial Authority - Schools medallion

Australian Bicentennial Authority - National commemorative

Australian Bicentennial Authority - Aussie

sports medallion

Australian Bicentennial Authority - Tall Ships medallion

Telecom Retirement medallion and long service badge

Portrait - Professor Carrick Chambers

Portrait - Sir Bernard Heinze, University of Melbourne

Franco - Australian Bicentennial medallion, joint competition winner

Australia Geomechanics Society, D.H. Trollope medal

B.H.P. Awards for the Pursuit of Excellence - Finalist plaque

Walter and Eliza Hall Institute - Burnet Prize

Footscray Institute of Technology - Building Engineering

Howard Florey Institute, The R. Douglas Wright Lecture medallion

### Personal Statues

Peace Sculpture

Sleeping Cat II

Sleeping Dog

Rationalists

Rain and Cloud

### Personal Medallions

Serpent

Ball and Chain

### Personal Reliefs

Crowd

Spectacle

Procession

Wet Window

Ants

## WORKS COMPLETED OCTOBER 1987 - MARCH 1989

### Medallions struck

Footscray Institute of Technology, Education Award

Ammunition Factory Footscray, Centenary Medallion

Opera Foundation, Australia Bicentennial award to finalists at Metropolitan Opera auditions, New York

'The Age' newspaper Plain English Speaking Award

'The Age' Curriculum Innovation Award

Rheology Conference

Kilmore 150th Year celebration

### Medallions cast

Develop Victoria Council, Bicentennial Heritage Award

Medical Funding Conference 'Finite Funding for Health Care'

Australian Human Rights Medal

Australian Society for Parasitology Sprent Award

British Art Medal Society 'Battle of Britain' Elders Resources Red Dome Gold Mine opening

Dante Gigantc, Ravenna Dante competition

### Portrait medallions cast

Melinda Paton

Decolletage

Dr. Alan Bradfield, King George V Hospital, Sydney

Prof. Nancy Millis, University of Melbourne

Ray Marginson A.M. 2nd version Howard Florey Institute

Ian Mackie

Anne Mackie

Paul Mackie

Janet Mackie

Simon Mackie

Jocelyn Corry

Susan Gimesy

### Personal sculptures

Kiss

Seduction bouquet

Deaf Man

Scratching dog

### Various other works

Footscray Institute of Technology, Electrical Engineering relief 900 x 900mm bronze

A.N.A.R.E. Club Nella Dan commemoration relief 900 x 900mm 4 castings bronze

Model for monument to Aboriginal hero, Pemulwuy bronze

Australian Bicentennial Authority, Geoff Courtis Memorial trophy for sailing, bronze

Rotary Club of Moorabbin, Victoria

Royce Abbey Golf trophy, bronze

Syme Magazines, Car of Australia trophy and medallion

Ray Marginson retirement presentation piece

Finalist entry for workcare Award, Department of Labor and Industry, Victoria, bronze

Cover design for Rheology conference proceedings

Model for Mildura Deakin monument

Australian' Customs Service crest 80cm

### Designs For

American Society of Medalists

Australian 1988 Gold \$200 piece

Women's Weekly Bicentennial Women's medallion N.Z. \$1 and \$2 pieces, Royal Australian Mint, Canberra

**WORKS COMPLETED APRIL 1989 -  
AUGUST 1990**

**Medallions and Plaques**

Courtship Set of 6, Royal Australian Mint  
Puffing Billy Preservation Society, Honorary Life Membership  
Australian War Memorial presentation medallion  
Emmaus College, 10 year celebration  
Community Service Award, City of Ringwood  
Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering small plaque, F.I.T.  
Presentation plaque, Rider Hunt Melbourne Pty. Ltd.  
Kenneth Myer Performing Arts Award, Victorian Arts Centre Trust

**Portrait medallions**

Robert Edwards, Museum of Victoria  
Professor Colin McCormick, University of Melbourne  
Kevin Duckett, Royal Freemasons Homes of Victoria

**Various**

'Rainbow' 7m stainless steel and brass sculpture, 565 Bourke Street, Melbourne, Podgor Constructions  
Madonna, wood, Benalla Catholic Church. 1.2 metres  
St. Peregrine, Bronze and brass, Our Lady of the Way Chapel, Kingsbury 1.3m  
Private commission 2.4m bronze

**WORKS COMPLETED SEPTEMBER  
1990 - MARCH 1993**

**Medallions and plaques**

Sales award, Convatec  
Outstanding Achievement Award - Teams prize, Telecom  
Protective Services Award - Telecom  
Commemorative plaque, Walter & Eliza Hall Institute Laboratories, Kew  
Reduction of Mechanical Engineering relief, Footscray Institute  
Australian Neuroscience Society Distinguished Achievement Award medallion  
Australian Society of Rheology medallion  
Dalai Lama Peace Garden Plaque  
'Staircase' medallion - Medallic Art Co., U.S.A. for American Society of Medalists  
Australian Mining and Energy Environment Foundation Award  
Gogas Award  
Entries to two Dante competitions, Ravenna  
'La Lanterna', 'Il Geometra'  
Telecom tapestry medallion

**Portrait medallions**

Professor Malcolm Copleston, K.G.V.  
Dr. Gordon Parkin, K.G.V. Hospital  
Tristan Bretherton  
Ingrid Bretherton  
David Chambers  
F.H. Drummond, University of Melbourne

**Various**

Telecom Headquarters Building Foyer - major sculpture and tapestries  
Paschal Candlestand - Mt. Magnet Catholic Church, W.A.

**WORKS COMPLETED SEPTEMBER  
1990 - MARCH 1993 CONTINUED**

**Personal Sculptures**

Aboriginal Dancer  
Mountain  
Ponytail  
Shoot, small  
Shoot, large  
Organ  
Cry  
Hairdo II  
War Dead  
Glamour Puss

**Recasting**

BHP Awards for the Pursuit of Excellence  
1987 Australian Tourism Awards The Age  
Victorian Sports Star of the Year

**Exhibitions**

Father and son exhibitions of medallions:  
London, British Museum, May-Aug 1988  
Stockholm, Royal Swedish Coin Collection,  
Oct-Nov 1988  
The above exhibition was also shown at the  
Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest in  
June 1989, and later in Gotha, East Germany,  
Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, Aug-Nov  
1990, Royal Australian Mint 1991  
Took part in four man show, Raya Gallery,  
Kew, Victoria June 1988  
Association of Sculptors of Victoria Annual  
Show 1988  
International Medallists Federation, Congress  
Exhibition, Colorado Springs, Sept. 1987  
Two medallions purchased by Tasmanian  
National Gallery

**WORKS COMPLETED 1993**

**Portrait medallions**

Helen Bickerton  
Prof. Rodney Shcarman  
Dr. Peter Elliott  
Malcolm Moore Award, Australian Institute  
of Management  
Crosbie Morrison, Museum of Victoria  
Max Marginson, University House, Univer-  
sity of Melbourne

**Medallions**

Remodel Convatec medallion in two sizes  
Madonna & Child, Catholic Archdiocese of  
Melbourne  
Crucifix, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

**Various**

Telecom Headquarters sculpture model cast,  
40th floor, AOTC  
Trophy for Auto Action magazine - Austral-  
ia's Best Driver  
St. Andrew's Church, South Clayton - three  
religious relief figures  
Trophy for Convatec - Manager's Award  
Door pushes and coat of arms, Darwin Par-  
liament House  
Dante Competition entry, Ravenna, Italy

**Personal work (Medallions)**

Cry  
Body Beautiful  
Erosion  
Corrosion  
Wave  
Waves  
Difference of Opinion  
After the Battle

**Personal statues**

Ahab  
Snobs

## WORKS COMPLETED 1994 - 1996

### Medallions

Australia Award for Urban Design, National Capital Planning Authority (won competition)  
ANZ College of Anaesthetists, Douglas Joseph Award  
Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, Victor Chang medallion, struck  
Tasman Economic Research Institute - Tasman Medal  
Montefiore Homes for the Aged - Voluntary Service Award  
Dept. of Psychology, La Trobe Univ. - Psychology Honours Prize  
Clean Air Society 1974 Medallion struck  
RMIT Food Technology Award & Consumer Science Award  
School Ski Championship medals - Mt. Buller

### Various

Bionic Ear Institute 2 reliefs  
Miniatures of Mt. Buller Skier  
Second casting Mt. Buller Skier 2.4 metres, bronze  
Third & fourth castings Mt. Buller Skier placed in Main Street Mansfield and held in offices of Buller Ski Lifts

### Portrait medallions

Prof. Don Harrison, ANZ College of Anaesthetists  
Elsie Hamilton  
Alan Chambers  
Ron Chambers  
Kelvin Bhardwaj  
Aaron Bhardwaj  
Dr. Ken Bretherton  
Lesley Bretherton

Baillieu Myer, Howard Florey Institute  
Prof. Derek Denton, Howard Florey Institute  
Dame Hilda Stevenson, Howard Florey Institute  
Dr. Fred Hinde, K.G.V. Hospital, Sydney  
Dr. John Solomon, K.G.V. Hospital, Sydney

### Personal Medallions

Gossip  
Miniskirt  
The Hat  
Purdah

### Personal Sculpture

Introvert  
Bloom  
Struggle with Disability

### Major Works

Mother and four children, lifesize bronze for Buller Ski Lifts  
Fire and water, Baillieu Myer, 2.5 m. bronze  
Skier, Mt. Buller, bronze, 2.4m bronze  
Horseman, Mt. Buller, bronze, over life size  
Monument to 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels' for Port Moresby P.N.G., 3m x 2.4m relief & 2.4m figure



## WORKS COMPLETED 1997 - 1999

### Medallions & Plaques

Bercovici Award for Biomedical Research, University of Sydney (portrait)  
Nona Lee portrait, University of Melbourne  
Clinical Pharmacy Award, Soc. of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia  
Reduction of Co-op Research Centres plaques, Bionic Ear Inst.  
Remodelling Eleanor Norris portrait, University of Melbourne  
Inscription plates, Walter and Eliza Hall Inst.  
Basketball medallion, Renaissance Editions  
AMEEF medal, Australian Minerals & Energy Environment Foundation  
Ray Jewell Memorial Award, Numismatic Association of Australia  
RMIT Award for Food Engineering  
Sidney Myer Centenary family medallion  
Sidney Myer commemorative plaque, Bendigo Myer store  
Sir Ian Potter medallion, Potter Foundation

### Reliefs

'Bushfire' and 'Regeneration', for McCulloch House, Monash Medical Centre  
Stephen Murray-Smith memorial, State Library of Victoria  
Turner Family memorial inscription plate, St. Paul's Cathedral  
Lance Hardy memorial, St. Paul's Cathedral  
Sidney & Merlyn Myer memorial, 'Cranlana', Toorak  
Archbishop Woods and Margaret Woods memorial, St. Paul's Cathedral

### Various

Donald Metcalf miniature portrait bust  
Rino Grollo, portrait bust

Designs for new honours medals, Dept. of Prime Minister & Cabinet  
Rottweiler Dog, life-size - private client

### Personal sculpture

Juggler  
With the Wind  
Gallop  
Family  
Self made man

### Personal medals

Medallic Mishaps - 11 medals  
Freeway Interchange  
Mountain  
Volcano  
Rush Hour  
Clouded Moon  
Migration  
Mouse Munched Medal  
Clinging to Life  
The Gospel According to the Medal  
Global Warming  
Mirror  
Caterpillar  
Split

### Major Works

Sir Hubert Opperman Commemoration - 5 separate works on bicycle paths for City of Knox  
William Guilfoyle memorial, Royal Botanic Gardens  
'Spirit of the Skier' - one casting placed in Nagano, Japan for Winter Olympics & one casting placed in Vail, Colorado, USA  
Sidney Myer monument, Myer Music Bowl

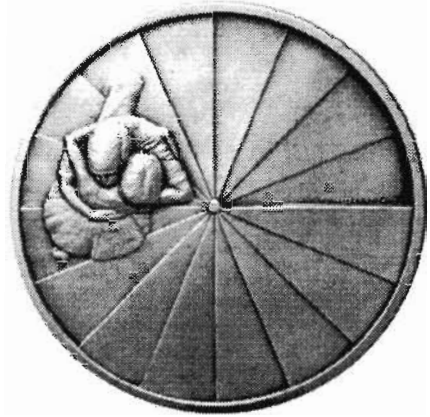
## SOCIETY MEDALLIONS

The American Society of Medallists gives a medallion to its subscribers every six months. It commissions medallists from around the world to make its pieces. A requirement is that the two sides should combine to tell a story in some way.



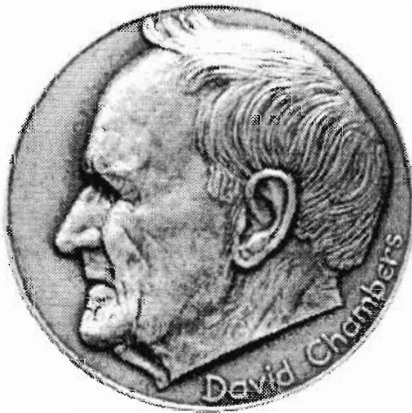
### **The Staircase**

The obverse shows a man walking up a spiral stair. A woman walks down.



On the reverse, they meet halfway and embrace.

## PORTRAIT MEDALLIONS



### **David Chambers**

One of a series of my father in-law's five brothers and sisters. He is nearly blind.  
137mm diam. 1993 bronze cast



### **Helen Bickerton**

Another of the same series. 137mm diam  
1993 bronze cast

## MAJOR WORKS

### Distant Conversations 1992

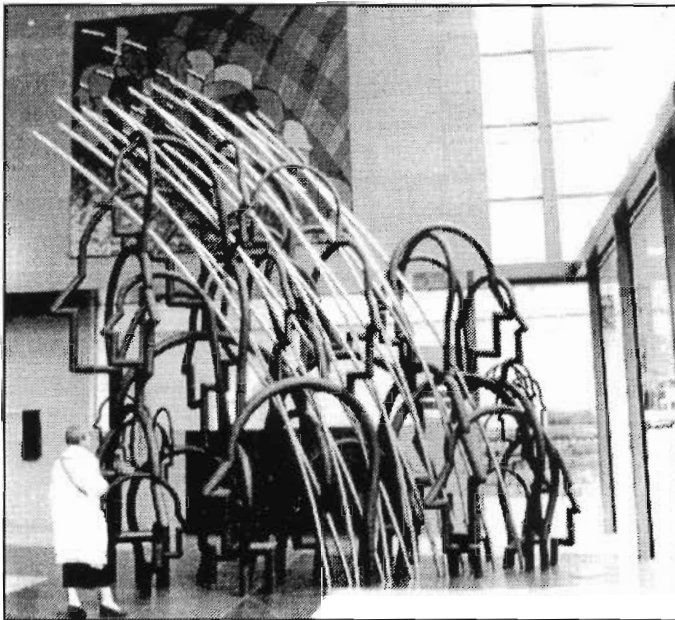
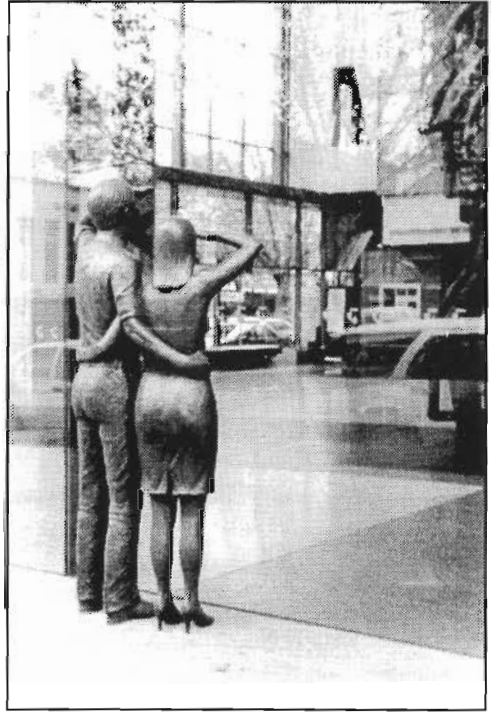
Telstra Headquarters, cnr. Exhibition & Lonsdale Streets, Melbourne cast bronze, fabricated copper and stainless steel, tapestry, 3 sculpture sections, 2 tapestries.

Figures life size, interior sculptures 6m and 3m tall, tapestries 4x4.5m. Telstra's function is to span distance using technology. The groups of faces show people communicating face to face. The stainless steel grid of technology allows each person or group to span the distances between them. The tapestries extend the sculpture and the figures on the footpath encourage passers by to look at the whole work. The volume of the foyer becomes part of the piece.

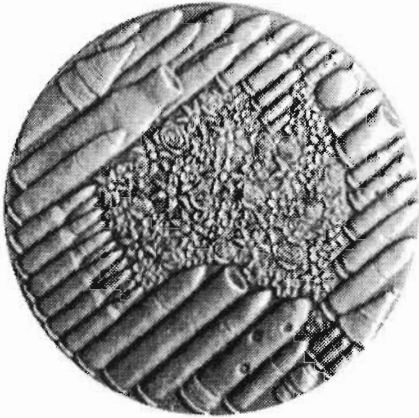
Tapestries woven by Victorian Tapestry Workshop.

*Footpath figures (right)*

*Floor sculpture, foyer (below)*



## COMMISSIONED MEDALLIONS



### Footscray Ammunition Factory Centenary 1988

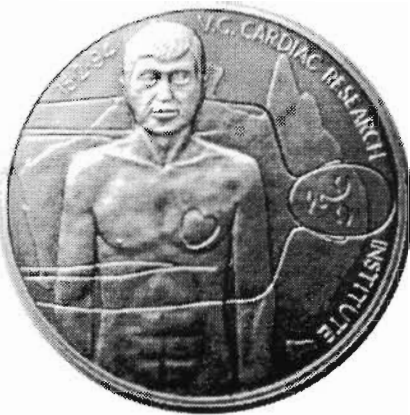
Cast 189mm bronze, struck 63mm tombac & 40mm cupronickel. At the time, all munitions made at Footscray were for the defence of Australia. A flower garden in the shape of Australia is surrounded by a sea of munitions protecting it.



### Ray Jewell Memorial Award 1998

Struck, tombac and silver, 63mm.

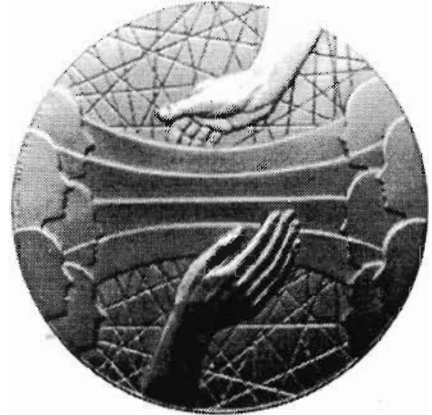
Ray Jewell was great coin collector in the true sense of collecting pieces for the history they represent. Here a holey dollar is swung aside to reveal a scene of old Sydney.



### Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute Medallion 1994

Struck, tombac, 63mm

Victor Chang was Australia's leading heart transplant surgeon. The dead donor is in outline, the live recipient in full. The heart is shared.



### Telstra Retirement Award 1987

Struck, tombac 63mm

Telstra's function is to link individuals over distance. Two sets of five faces are linked by five lines over a wider background network. The individual's contribution is the two hands nurturing that function.



**Tasman Institute. Tasman Medal 1994**

Cast bronze 150mm

Awarded to an economic innovator. Economic indicator graphs float on a stormy sea. Abel Tasman's ship cuts a wake through the storm and through the indicators.



**Montefiore Homes. Outstanding Personal Service Award 1994**

Cast bronze 150mm

Voluntary service comes from a combination of a conscious decision, an emotional response and in the case of the Jewish community, a long tradition of community service.



**LaTrobe University. Psychology Honours Prize 1994**

Cast bronze 150mm

Each personality is formed by a mass of overlapping influences. An individual's face materialises out of sections of different flow lines.



**The Australian Society of Rheology Medallion 1991**

Cast bronze 150mm

Rheology is the study of fluid flow. An elastic fluid flows out of a controlling valve, into a guiding pair of hands, finds its level and spills over the edge of the medallion.



**The SmithKline Beecham Research Award 1986**

Cast bronze 150mm

Awarded for research into infectious diseases. The hand holds a magnifying glass concentrating on the leading edge of an infection spreading across a population.

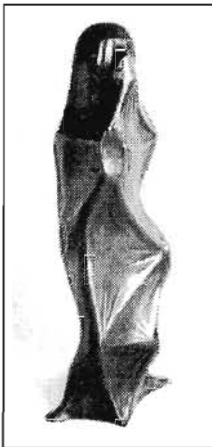


**Australian Society for Parasitology. Sprent Award 1987**

Cast bronze 150mm diam.

A successful parasite generally damages the function of the host without killing it. Dots in various positions on a cross section of an imaginary organism deform the normal lines of different organs. Sprent's portrait is superimposed.

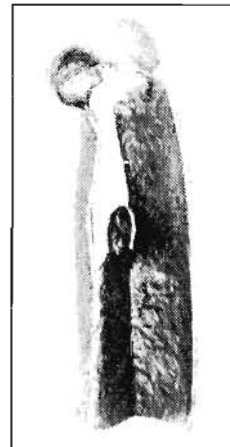
**PERSONAL SCULPTURE**



**Struggle with Disability**

An out of proportion figure struggles to escape from a constricting veil, pushing the limitations imposed by the veil.

66cm high 1995 bronze cast

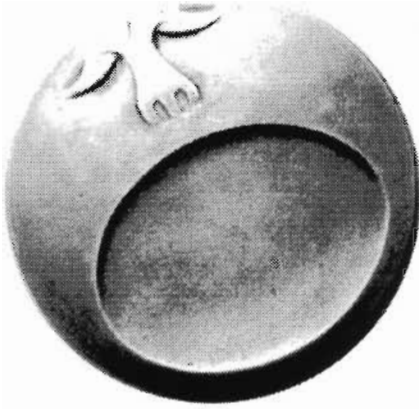


**Family**

The child is dependent on the affection of its parents. A single thickness of bronze is bent and folded to produce a couple about to kiss with the child between.

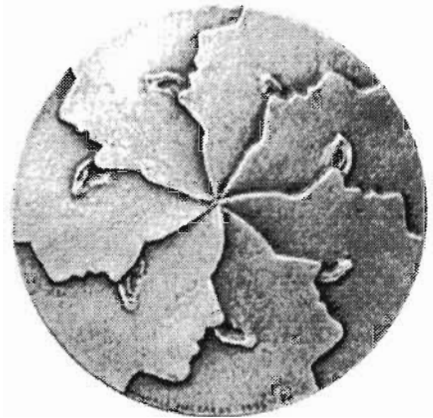
45cm high 1999 bronze cast

## PERSONAL MEDALLIONS



### Cry

A baby cries with all its might. The mouth occupies the bulk of the medallion. 100mm. 1993 bronze cast



### Gossip

Gossip goes around from mouth to ear, mouth to ear. The circular nature of gossip is reflected in the shape of the medallion. 100mm. 1995 bronze cast



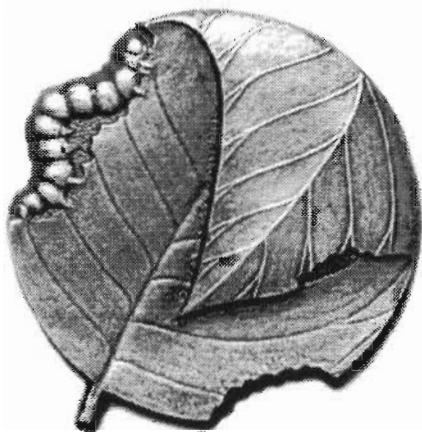
### The Hat

An elegant woman's hat with a veil partly obscuring the face. The hat uses the form of the medallion, the broad forms contrasting with the details of face and veil. 112mm. 1995 bronze cast



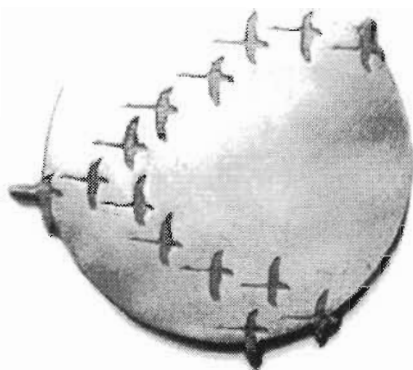
### Global Warming

A hand holds the melting world, oozing through the fingers. The world began as a circle, but has deformed and the hand now holds the world together. 112 x 117mm. 1999 bronze cast



### **Caterpillar**

The curved leaf forms the circle and the caterpillar is eating it away. 114mm. 1999 bronze cast



### **Migration**

A v-shaped flight of swans passes over a full moon in silhouette. Projecting beyond the circle and causing the moon to float in its surroundings.

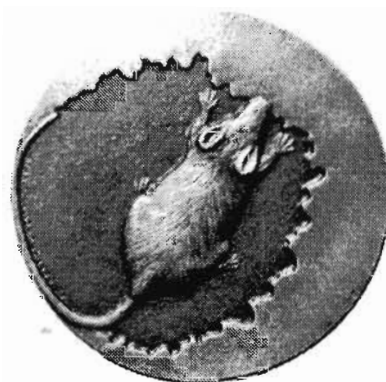
101mm. 1999 bronze cast



### **The Gospel According to the Medal**

A medallists' in-joke. The book is a circle cast in bronze as a medallion, suggesting some kind of medallic propaganda.

111 mm 1999 bronze cast



### **Mouse Munched Medal**

A mouse has eaten most of the medallion. Has its origin in a series of medallions called medallic mishaps - things that can go wrong for a circle.

110mm. 1999 bronze cast





### **Decolletage**

A woman with a low cut dress displaying her charms is constructed entirely out of sections of circles and planes. Her pendant repeats the medallion in miniature.

114mm. 1989 bronze cast



### **Freeway Interchange**

A three level overpass enters and leaves the circle with the ramps giving the effect of Celtic calligraphy.

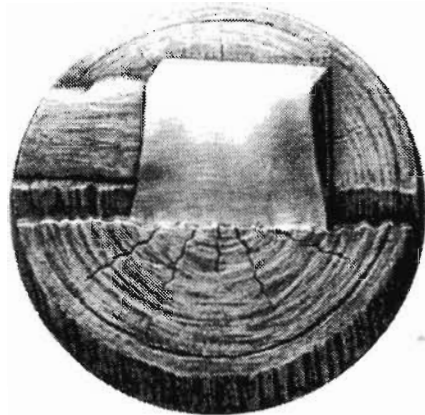
111mm. 1998 bronze cast



### **Purdah**

The other extreme of feminine exposure is the veiled woman, composed of circles, but showing only the eyes which are made up for maximum effect.

113mm. 1995 bronze cast



### **Split**

A polished axe splits a log which creates the medallion's circle.

102mm. 1997 bronze cast