

Savaad Felich & Genevieve McLean

Flourish

24 March – 26 April 2017

Official Opening: Saturday 25 March 6.00 – 7.45 pm



Genevieve McLean, *Take a Walk in the Wild*, Pen and watercolour on paper, 66 x 100 cm

'Flourish' brings together two Australian sculptors whose paths have crossed regularly and profitably since they first met nearly twenty years ago. Savaad Felich, who curated the annual Yering Station Sculpture Exhibition and Awards for fifteen years, and Genevieve McLean, who is the only artist to win the Yering Station Sculpture Award on two occasions, have combined their creative visions in a collaborative exhibition that is as transporting as it is playful.

From recycled timber and found objects, Felich has created a veritable pantheon of archetypal figures; all breathtakingly present and intent on their own business, they hold the space they occupy with a nobility of posture and gesture that draws us effortlessly into often familiar narratives that are here transformed and made

deliciously strange. A sense of the otherworldly links Felich's art to that of McLean's whose hyper-candied colour palate unfurls a path to a place at once optimistic and unsettling. Like a psychedelic King Midas let loose in a wunderkammer, McLean has created a body of work within which distinctions between plant and animal, interior and exterior, landscape and mindscape have either been dissolved or reformed according to the changeable dictates of a young god. These two bodies of work enact a curious exchange, sometimes mirroring, sometimes merging and sometimes eyeing each other with interest.

Savaad was born in Melbourne to European post-war immigrant parents. He embraced the counterculture of the 1960s and 70s and with it the anti-Vietnam War movement. At this time he also travelled overseas, living in both Switzerland and Poland for brief periods, to connect with his European heritage. After returning to Melbourne, Felich discovered a latent talent for woodcarving while working as a horticulturalist at the Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens. Sculptors such as Paul Juraseck, Bruce Armstrong and Gunther Kopietz, then students of the VCA, used to visit Savaad's work section to obtain timber cut down by the garden's tree crew.

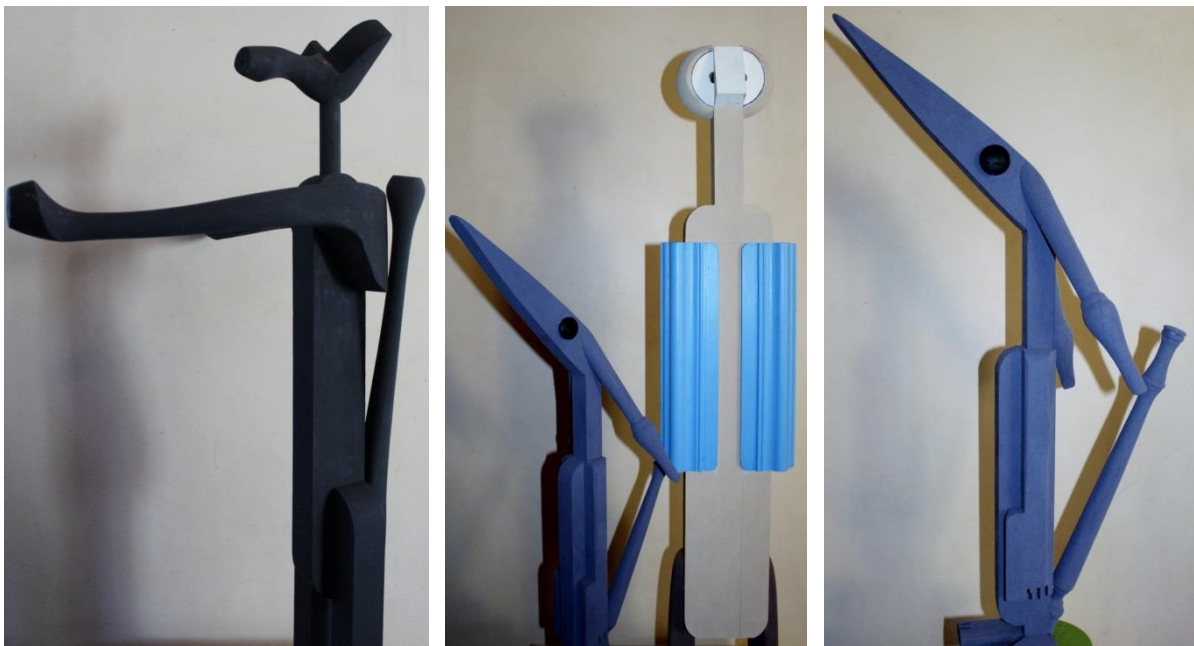
Over the thirty-five years that have since passed, Felich has worked mainly in timber, while steadily moving from direct carving with a chainsaw and chisels to construction, lamination and assemblage of timber and found wooden objects. This progression has entailed a concurrent movement through meticulous and methodical processes toward a more immediate, loose and unconstrained approach. Savaad's current work utilizes an array of furniture parts assiduously gathered from hard rubbish along with found objects from market stalls, bric-a-brac shops and second hand stores. The subjects of his sculpture arise where personal experience vivid imaginative activity and playfulness of process combine.

In addition to exhibiting regularly and working as an arts administrator, Savaad has been awarded commissions for public artworks, participated in Artists in Schools Residencies, judged exhibitions and hosted and spoken at art forums. He currently lives in Toolangi, where he works from his handmade mudbrick studio: a sacred

space where creation and meditative states prevail, and within which frustration, fulfilment, joy and elation all play a part. For Felich this is home.

McLean is new to country living, and the change of environment has involved embracing a more 'hands in the earth' way of life. Observing every hole in the ground, watching the play of light over plants and landscapes, exploring texture, colour and pattern in the garden as the seasons come and go: all of these activities work to draw McLean into the unknowns of a magic world.

Freed from the circumscribed lines of inner city living, McLean's art has broken out across open country. McLean creates sculptures and paintings within which proliferating flora and fauna weave intriguing portholes and wildly playful botanical imaginings rich in decoration and display are free to mimic, morph and mutate. An applied honesty of narrative evolution has resulted in works at once open, expressive and joyful that invite us to inhabit a vast world of delight.



Savaad Felich, *Kangaroo Dundee*, Recycled timber, 102 x 49 cm
Savaad Felich, *Blue Winged Owl* 108 x 27 cm, recycled timber
Savaad Felich, *Mauve Rodent* 82 x 40 cm, recycled timber