



*Handwritten signature or mark.*



VIDA  
SOBOTT  
&  
The 7  
Deadly  
Sins

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER  
I have been entranced by worlds secretly  
contained within worlds. As a child I was  
transfixed, by the stick cocoon and what it  
contained, the other world writhing with  
life beneath a rock, the blood and bone of  
my own finger revealed beneath my skin as  
I held it up in a ray of light piercing through  
a nail hole in a tin clad shed. Revelation,  
secret, sacred and precious.





transfixed by a preserving jar containing a fully formed embryonic baby floating timelessly in formaldehyde.

I have a natural inclination to lift and look below, prod and peer. I love discovery and have a need to understand, to make sense of. I am a terrier; I hold on and shake furiously. The human condition is my greatest resource, and my own lived experience equally as worthy of investigation as that of others. If I am not being led by Ariadne's thread of intuition, I am chasing rabbits down internet holes. Ritual, religious metaphor, history, philosophy, human psychology; if these were trades, I would be Jack.

My most recent exhibition 'Remains to be seen' shown at The Basil Sellers Exhibition Centre in Moruya, returned me to my first loves. Delving into my angst around climate change, I aimed to venture on a pilgrimage. By metaphorically emptying out the traditional relics of sainted body parts, fragments of clothing or possessions from reliquaries, I was left with a powerful contained space that projected sanctity onto its contents, to inspire personal and communal devotion. Referencing these historical reliquaries, I shifted the concept of holiness and projected it back onto ourselves, our psychologies and the worlds within and the world we live in. Nature as the everyday and ordinary became rarefied and venerated, the order of things as we knew them, suspended under glass, beautifully strange and quiet in their bone whiteness.



The exhibition series 'Vice and virtue' refers to the seven deadly sins and the counter-balancing seven virtues, relevant in the context of climate change. It consists of seven wall pieces each featuring an animal symbolic of one of the deadly sins. Pride is represented by the Peacock, Envy the Dog, Greed by the Frog, Gluttony by the Pig, Lust by the Snake, Wrath by the Bear and Sloth by the Goat. A ribbon with a Latin inscription naming the corresponding virtue accompanies the animal and is contained within a heavily carved decorative frame.

The sin of Pride is viewed as the psychological equivalent of narcissism, a sense of entitlement. Elevating our importance on the earth above all else. Humility, the Latin Humilitas, the corresponding virtue. Envy's worst form is regarded as the desire for symbols of status, traits, or situations that others have, a keeping up with the Joneses. Kindness the virtue. The Latin Humanitas. Greed, the desire to have more for yourself in whatever way you can accomplish it. Charity or the Latin Charitas being the counteracting virtue. Gluttony, my personal favourite, covers addiction and obsession. Worshipping at the altar of more. Gluttony partners with Temperance or the Latin Temperantia. Lust is regarded as a loss of control, when personal values are sacrificed for gratification. The use of others for one's pleasure followed by their cruel disposal. Everything is commodified: food, money, possessions, jobs, network contacts, all become

My teenage crush was with the contents of glass domes, museum cases, and cabinets of curiosity. Adolescence saw me living in Africa, pondering carved bones, pouches of strange objects and sometimes dark rituals and even darker politics. From Africa, I was relocated to Athens where I lurked in museums and wandered the maze of back laneways following beyond the tourist tracks of the Plaka. Small windows beckoned the voyeur for a private viewing. I remember being deeply shocked and yet strangely

objects. Chastity or Castitas, a purity of heart is the accompanying virtue. Wrath refers to uncontrolled anger that dominates thinking and inflicts your emotions on others. Dominion over and the power of the privileged. Wrath is regarded as the cause of violence and war and the sin from which discrimination arises. Patience, Patientia, is its virtue. Sloth is procrastination, an avoidance of doing what needs to be done, a willingness to benefit from the work of others without contributing. Diligence, the Latin Industria the virtue.

While the seven deadly sins as we know them did not originate with the Greeks or Romans, there were ancient precedents for them. The Virtues are creating a tension that in balancing creates a middle way. Aristotle argued that at each extreme of a virtue was a vice. For example, Courage is a human virtue in facing fear. Too much courage can make one rash while, at the other end of the scale, too little makes a coward. The middle ground between excess and deficiency is where Aristotle's golden mean is found. Perhaps it is a middle way we now need to be exploring.

It is a grand irony that an exhibition titled 'Remains to be Seen' was on show in Moruya, a town home to the Eurobodalla Shire Council chambers, when the South Coast of NSW burst into flames.

The Eurobodalla Shire was the most highly fire impacted region in the state. For seventy days it was under direct threat from three different directions with the remaining being the sea. The Currowan, Clyde Mountain and Badja fires burnt over more than 271,000 hectares of the Shire's 343,000 hectares. 79% of the Shire was directly fire impacted. 90.5% of our State Forest and 90.5% of our National Parks burned. Over 2,000 buildings burned and there was catastrophic loss of wildlife and stock. Three people lost their lives. Floods followed the fires and the Corona virus has followed the floods. The exhibition is distant to me, a disconnect behind a line of fire. Some profound shift in values and priorities occurs when what is valued in your life is threatened. But just as fire frees seeds to sprout, concepts have been released to unfurl.

As the red right hand of Milton's vengeful God from Paradise Lost is making itself known to us and the smoke and mirrors of our daily diversions have disappeared, our consumption halted, a space has opened for us to contemplate possibilities in the quietness. To feel the tension between sin and virtue, the tussle between soul and ego, to hold and feel our grief for the losses we are threatened with. To acknowledge that we ourselves are a part of the problem and a part of what might be possible and to seek our own golden mean.

**Vida Sobott**



**Vida Sobott's 'Remains to be Seen' was at The Basil Sellers Exhibition Centre, Moruya in 2020**

Opposite page:

Top Caritas, Frog, ceramic, engobe, 410x320x70

Patientia, Bear, ceramic, engobe, 380x370x70

This page:

Top Humanitas, Dog, ceramic, engobe, 350x300x65

Humilitas, Peacock, ceramic, engobe, 340x290x75

Photographs Lachlan Callender