



Walkway  
Gallery

WALKWAY GALLERY  
8 March - 3 June, 2018

43 Woolshed Street  
BORDERTOWN, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Monday to Friday 9am-5pm  
Saturday 10am-4pm  
Sunday 11am-4pm  
Public Holidays 11am-4pm

[www.walkwaygallery.com](http://www.walkwaygallery.com)



@walkwaygallery  
@nellartist  
#nellbordertown

#### Acknowledgments:

The Walkway Gallery wishes to acknowledge a number of key individuals and organisations who have contributed to NELL.

We would like to acknowledge the support of Tatiara District Council in the development of this exhibition and ongoing commitment to providing a dynamic exhibition program that challenges, engages and invites locals and visiting audiences to be curious about contemporary art.

Special thanks to Tatiara District Council staff Dino, Nigel & the field staff, Adrian Packer, Heather Mewett, Kingsley Green and Rocky Callisto.

We also acknowledge Country Arts SA for their unwavering support throughout the project.

Our wonderful installation team of Ingrid Goetz, Gabi Lane and Kelly Semmler.

This project would not have been possible without the wonderful staff at the Art Gallery of South Australia. We thank each of them for their trust, generosity in time, ongoing enthusiasm and commitment to the Walkway Gallery.

Art Gallery of South Australia:  
Nick Mitzevich (Director), Leigh Robb (Curator of Contemporary Art) and Vicki Petrusевич (Associate Registrar, Exhibitions and Loans) and any other staff who have lent a hand along the way.

Lastly and most importantly, we also acknowledge Nell, for not only creating this beautiful and challenging work, but for kindly taking the time to visit, support and work with the Walkway Gallery. That opportunity has been magical.

Thank YOU for visiting!

Naomi Fallon  
Director  
Walkway Gallery

# NELL





# I'm rolling thunder pouring rain I'm coming on like a hurricane My lightning's flashing across the sky You're only young but you're gonna die

Hells Bells lyrics from AC/DC's 'Back in Black' album, 1980

It's with great pleasure that we welcome you to the Walkway Gallery, Bordertown. We are very proud to be collaborating with the Art Gallery of South Australia to present another of Australia's foremost contemporary artists - the artist known simply as Nell.

Born in 1975 in Maitland, NSW, Nell has a signature style that is instantly recognisable: a fusion of religious iconography with a rock 'n' roll aesthetic.

Recent major works and collaborations include The National: New Australian Art 2017, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2017); WORDS + CROSSES, Ramp Gallery, Wikato Institute of Technology, New Zealand (2017); Namatjira Project Auction, Tarnanthi, Art Gallery of South Australia (2017), Adelaide; NE/LL, Shepparton Art Museum, Victoria (2016); commissioned performances and installations at MONA FOMA (2012), Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) and La Maison Rouge, Paris (2013); and The Oracle, Spring/Summer collaboration with Romance Was Born for Australian Fashion Week (2012).

Nell is a 2018 Carriageworks Clothing Store Studio Resident and is represented by Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery Sydney and STATION, Melbourne.

Nell, known simply by her first name only, fearlessly tackles the tough topics of life, death and rebirth. Informed by her Buddhist understanding, as well as her great love of Australian rock band, AC/DC, her far-reaching practice spans drawing, sculpture, installation, video and performance. A leading Australian artist, Nell has been exhibiting for twenty years.

Commissioned for 'Magic Object: The Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art', **The Wake** is Nell's most significant sculptural installation to date. Comprising of forty-one hand-built mostly ceramic figures made over two years from 2014 to 2016, she created the majority of them in her Sydney studio and four at Ernabella Arts in Pukatja country, the oldest Aboriginal art centre in Australia, in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands. Materially eccentric and gleefully idiosyncratic, Nell has drawn from this experience and purposefully collapses old and new techniques by glazing stoneware or earthenware, applying gold or silver leaf, coated her ceramics in a reflective metallic varnish or used spray-paint.

Nell's cheeky chorus of figures are animated with her signature motifs of smiley faces, and are etched with tears, lightning bolts or crosses, emotive and universally recognisable symbols. A touchstone for the wake are **Haniwa**, the human or animal terracotta tomb ornaments which guarded burial mounds in Japan in the 6th century, as well as death rituals across cultures. Nell's installation also speaks to the traditions of **memento mori** in art history, the Latin for 'remember you must die'. Extending back to the 17th century, skulls, clocks, or dying flowers were depicted in paintings, and popular during a period when one's time on earth was considered a mere preparation for the afterlife. Nell has embellished her figures with similar objects including dried flowers, cockatoo and owl feathers.

However, rather than a fear-inducing reflection about our inevitable demise, Nell's figures cheerfully mock mortality. Poised on wooden stools, they appear like a vast, eccentric choir, a multiplicity of different voices and languages paused in song at an unusually lively wake. **The Wake** concentrates on a shared, but fleeting moment of transience; each figure is in mid-breath, in a moment of collective meditation.

Leigh Robb  
Curator of Contemporary Art  
Art Gallery of South Australia

Nell, born 1975, Maitland, New South Wales, dark DEATH, 2015, earthenware, underglaze, wooden stool (2 parts).  
Courtesy the artist, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, and STATION, Melbourne. Collection of Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide