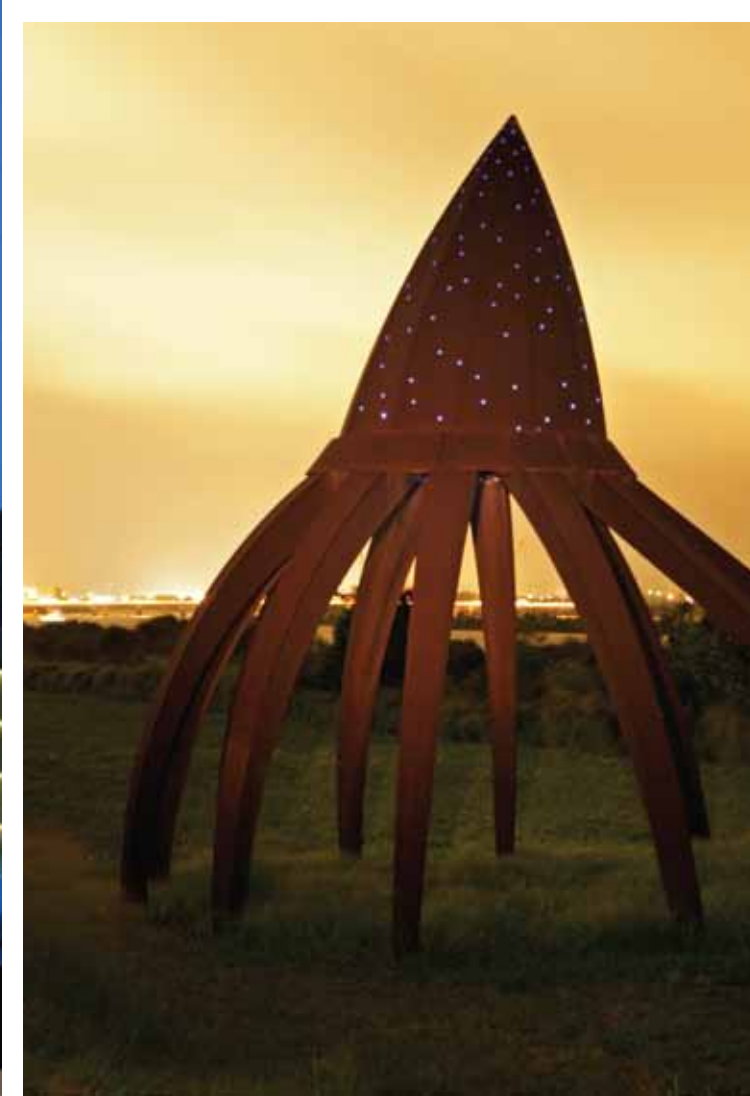


INFORMATION MAP

Bluewater Trail Public Art



MORE INFORMATION.

To read Louise Martin-Chew's full essay regarding Fiona Foley's public art in Mackay, visit [Artspace Mackay's website](http://artspacemackay.com.au), www.artspacemackay.com.au. For more information on the Bluewater Trail in Mackay, visit Mackay Regional Council's website, www.mackay.qld.gov.au.

WHAT'S ON AT THE GALLERY

To be the first to find out what's on at Artspace Mackay, Mackay's Regional Art Gallery, including exhibitions, workshops, activities & special events, visit www.artspacemackay.com.au and sign up to receive monthly eNewsletters. Call 4961 9722 to receive updates, invitations and more via post.

ARTSPACE MACKAY

Civic Precinct, Gordon Street, Mackay QLD 4740
Phone 07 4961 9722 Fax 07 4961 9794
artspace@mackay.qld.gov.au | www.artspacemackay.com.au
FREE ENTRY: 10am - 5pm Tuesday - Sunday



artspace
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Bluewater Trail Public Art

Mackay Regional Council and Artspace Mackay proudly present one of the most significant public art developments in Australia - six art installations by Fiona Foley highlight the Bluewater Trail beside Mackay's beautiful Pioneer River.

Fiona Foley is amongst Australia's most experienced public art makers and this commission for Mackay sees a regional city earn its place on the world map for contemporary public art. Foley's research and discussions with local communities in the Mackay region, the Indigenous Yuibera people and the Mackay-based South Sea Islander communities, inform and infiltrate these works. Her incorporation of local indigenous narratives, their exploration of some of the difficult histories of Mackay, has brought air and recognition to the dispossessed.

Foley was awarded this commission in 2008, the year of the Apology to the Stolen Generations from the Rudd Government. These works are prominent in Mackay, visible along the riverfront to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic in Mackay's city centre. It is expected that they continue to relate narratives past, present, and to become part of the future to those both local and visiting in one of Australia's most vital and growing cities.



CROWS

This work is installed above head height at Mackay's Bluewater Lagoon. On sunny days, its shadow extends the work onto the ground and water.

On one level this work operates in a playful and whimsical fashion with the use of animals and birds that are commonly known and seen in all parts of Australia. The children's playground close-by allows this reading to be dominant. However the concepts that underpin the work also cast a shadow. In the 1800s South Sea islanders were "black-birded", a colloquial term used to describe the forcible removal of people from their islands to Mackay where they were forced to work as slaves in the sugar industry. The crows, the black birds, now have as their companions the willie wagtails and flying foxes which live close-by, and evoke change with the movement of the shadows throughout the course of the day and the changing seasons.

1 Fiona FOLEY *Crows* 2009.
Laser cut stainless steel.
Bluewater Lagoon, Mackay, Queensland.



YUWI

This two metre high text names local Aboriginal people and their lands. The letters are created so as to be narrow from the front with depth of field visible from the side. There is a poetry in this akin to the reputation of Aboriginal people, and their ability to melt into the bush, to be seen and unseen. The text is foregrounded with a bronze ring (or wreath) inlaid into the ground as a symbol of a sacred land.

Places in and around Australia had names when settlers arrived in colonial times. While some of these were adopted, others were misheard, or romanticised, so as to render them palatable and legible for the incoming Europeans. By rendering the local name for place in large red letters along this thoroughfare in Mackay, Foley gives the first inhabitants of this land visibility and honours their memory. The wreath laid in front of these letters remembers those lost, killed and dispossessed, and notes the sacred qualities of these lands.

2 Fiona FOLEY *Yuwi* 2009.
Fabricated aluminium, wetspray finish.
Bluewater Trail, Mackay, Queensland.



FISHBONES

Located the other side of the bridge from YUWI, Fiona Foley's *Fishbones* are like wings, lined up, evoking the fish spine. These artworks honour and evoke memories of Mackay's maritime history and act as a marker to the wharf precinct.

Inspiration for these works was drawn from history - the Yuibera people were noted by early settlers for their fishing prowess. However, bones necessarily evoke death - those who have passed on, or were 'dispersed'. Mackay's history includes incidents in which local Aboriginals were killed.

However this work also describes current activity on the Pioneer River. Foley suggested, "What struck me about that area now was the wharves and the fish market on the Pioneer River. Fishing is still a big part of the recreational life in Mackay, and there is craft in the bush poles that people use to tie up their boats and to devise walkways out onto the river."

3 Fiona FOLEY *Fishbones* 2009.
Cast aluminium and mosaics.
Bluewater Quay, Mackay, Queensland.



SHIELDS

In this work, historic shield designs that belong to the Yuibera People were sourced at the Queensland Museum and brought back to the area, inlaid into the pavement, to become part of the permanent structure of this populous area in Mackay. Their installation in the fabric of the stone adds a cultural layer to the Bluewater Quay development zone. In this busy area, they are a gentle reminder of the original owners and the traditions that have been enacted on these lands in times past. They are subtle yet powerful additions to this artwork narrative.

4 Fiona FOLEY *Shields* 2009.
Water jet cut stone inlaid into paved surface.
Bluewater Quay, Mackay, Queensland.



SUGAR CUBES

This circular installation beside the Pioneer River represents the complexity of history involving the sugar industry. Sugar cubes are stacked like pillars. This industry has been one of Mackay's most significant successes, yet these works also acknowledge the historical importance of South Sea islanders to both this industry and to Mackay. This city is home to Australia's largest population of South Sea Islanders.

Detailed on the surface of the sugar cubes are thumb prints of the South Sea Islander's descendants and the names of transporting ships in recognition of the history of their human cargo. A weathered Leichhardt tree marks the site of the original port of Mackay, and the etched sugar-cane plantations represent the connections between the South Sea Islanders and the greater Mackay community - past present and future.

5 Fiona FOLEY *Sugar cubes* 2009.
Box-formed sheet stainless steel with acid-etched lettering.
Bluewater Quay, Mackay, Queensland.



MANGROVE CAP

The monumental mangrove cap (some nine metres tall) that Foley designed sits beside the Pioneer River in an open grassy landscape. The health of our rivers, fish and environment is nurtured by the quality of our mangrove stocks, and in creating this giant statement, in steel designed to visibly age in the salty environment, and giving it an other-worldly stary ambience by using solar-powered lights which glow through and beneath the cap in pricks of light, Foley extends the natural phenomena of the mangrove in the public imagination.

In Mackay generally and the Pioneer River in particular, the mangrove is a dominant element within the ecosystem. Foley has created, for this site, a mangrove on an unimaginable scale, a size translating their importance. While this is one of the largest public artworks created in Australia, it goes beyond the Queensland tradition of 'big things', creating an object with aesthetic presence and integrity in keeping with its size.

6 Fiona FOLEY *Mangrove cap* 2009.
Weathered Corten-steel, solar-powered LED lights.
Bluewater Trail, Mackay, Queensland.



Fiona Foley Public Art Map

Bluewater Trail, Pioneer River, Mackay

- 1** Crows
- 2** Yuwi
- 3** Fish bones
- 4** Shields
- 5** Sugar cubes
- 6** Mangrove cap