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Tracey Emin's flock of birds make city home

The City has unveiled the latest public artwork in the City Art collection, *The Distance of your Heart* by internationally acclaimed British artist Tracey Emin.

The work features over 60 handmade bronze bird sculptures perched on poles, above doorways and awnings along Bridge and Grosvenor streets.

The Distance of your Heart reflects on the distance of Australia to other parts of the world and conveys feelings of loneliness and homesickness.

"The city's big, the city's massive, but the birds are small, tiny, delicate, fragile – just like we are as human beings," Emin said.

"Sometimes we can feel lost and sad, but the sight of a bird can give us hope."

The artwork was unveiled by Lord Mayor Clover Moore at a ceremony in Macquarie Park Place today.

"Tracey Emin's birds will delight and inspire both adults and children as they move through the city," the Lord Mayor said.

"*The Distance of your Heart* is a wonderful addition to the City's public art collection and is part of our ongoing work to transform and enhance the city centre with new public art and major public domain upgrades.

"As Circular Quay and the city centre continue to be transformed, these small and delicate birds will provide a moment for us all to pause and reflect."

The centrepiece of the work is a bird bath positioned in Macquarie Place, with the inscription 'The Distance of your Heart'. Emin chose this location because it is the site of the *Obelisk of Distances* designed by Francis Greenway from which the distance to various locations in NSW are measured, along the earliest roads developed in the colony.

"Just as the obelisk measured the distances of colonial roads and landmarks, my artwork will measure the distance of my heart," Emin said.

From a solitary bird placed on the Macquarie Place bird bath, Emin's birds fan out across the city, inviting people to slow down and think about those they love, whether close by or far away.

"Public sculpture can be about something really delicate, intimate and special," Emin said.

"A small bird on a window sill is a beautiful thing. It's very simple, it's not difficult, but it will make people's lives in the city go just that little bit slower."

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The project was curated by Barbara Flynn as part of the City Centre Public Art Program.

“Permanent and temporary artworks and support events are bringing a focus, distinction and richness to Sydney’s prime civic spaces,” Ms Flynn said.

“Tracey’s work is the first of a few important new commissions by artists for the area around Circular Quay.

“I’ve always thought of Tracey as a fearless artist. Her work for Sydney is extraordinary for the way it combines emotion with thought, providing richness for both heart and mind.

“One of its underlying messages seems especially important as we witness birds migrating amid a growing awareness that the rhythms they serve, innate and millennia-old, have been disrupted by the impact we as humans have on the environment.”

About the artist

Tracey Emin was born in London in 1963, and studied at Maidstone College of Art and the Royal College of Art, London. She has exhibited extensively internationally, including solo and group exhibitions in the Netherlands, Germany, Japan, Australia and America.

Most recently, Emin’s work has been shown in the following solo exhibitions: The Memory of Your Touch, Xavier Hufkens, Brussels (2017); Surrounded by You, Château La Coste, Aix-En-Provence, France (2017); I cried because I love you, Lehmann Maupin and White Cube, Hong Kong (2016); Angel without You, Miami MoCA, Miami (2013); and a major survey exhibition Love Is What You Want, Hayward Gallery, London (2011).

She has also entered her work into a series of acclaimed dialogues with the work of past masters she admires, most notably: Tracey Emin, My Bed / JMW Turner, Turner Contemporary, Margate (2017); In Focus: Tracey Emin and William Blake, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool (2016); Tracey Emin and Francis Bacon, Tate Britain, London (2015); and Where I Want to Go, with Egon Schiele, Leopold Museum, Vienna (2015). Tracey Emin represented the UK at the Venice Biennale in 2007 with the exhibition Borrowed Light, and was elected to the Royal Academy in the same year. In 2011, she was appointed Professor of Drawing at the Royal College of Art, London, and in 2012 Queen Elizabeth II appointed her Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for her contributions to the visual arts.

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