

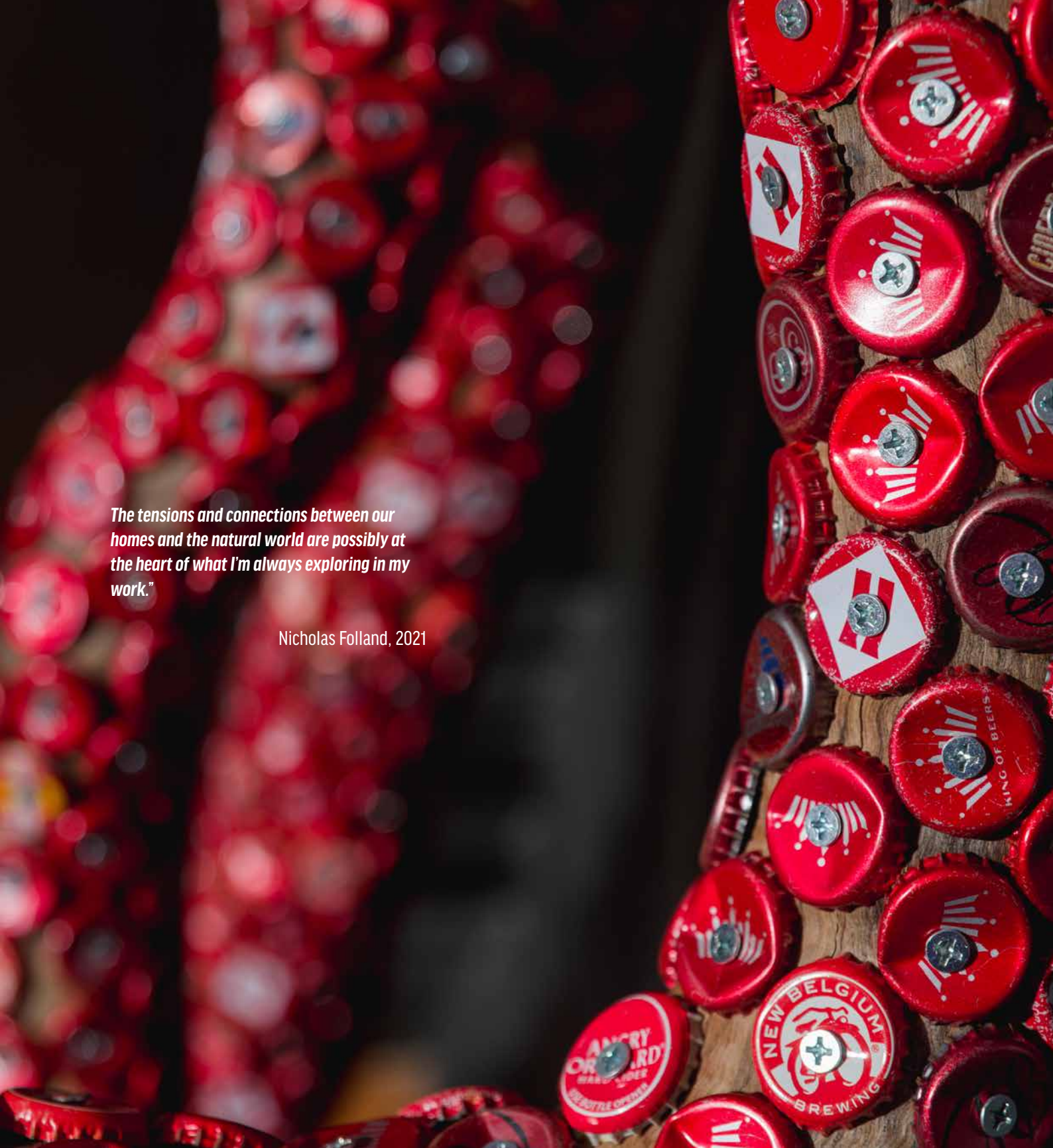
# NICHOLAS FOLLAND

*Burn Down the House*



---

IMAGE > [Front cover] Nicholas Folland, *House Party* [installation view], 2021, found furniture, bottle caps, enamel paint, dimensions variable. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.  
> [Left page] Nicholas Folland, *S-O* [detail], 2021, 12v motors, Tasmanian oak, movement sensors. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.



*The tensions and connections between our homes and the natural world are possibly at the heart of what I'm always exploring in my work."*

Nicholas Folland, 2021



# NICHOLAS FOLLAND

## *Burn Down the House*

---

### NICHOLAS FOLLAND IN CONVERSATION WITH JULIETTE HANSON

**JH:** Let's begin by talking about the title of the exhibition, *Burn Down the House*. Given that the gallery is a heritage listed Victorian home, it may seem somewhat risky to make that demand. Can you explain a little bit more about the meaning behind it?

**NF:** It's an idea that's been with me for a long time. I think of it in a psychological sense, rather than something you would physically do. We can think about the 'house' as being a whole stack of different things, but the idea of burning the thing down is fundamentally about making a dramatic shift.

I think given the year that we've just been through, when we've been stuck in our homes, they've become a different kind of place for many of us, in the way we occupy

them and the way they function in our worlds. It's not just a place where we come home and rest and eat, it's a place where we work, it's a place where we learn, but it's a place where we've been trapped a lot of the time too. Sometimes it's been our entire world. So, the title reflects that conflict and maybe that slight resentment at being forced to be within this place for extended periods.

I've been listening to a lot of old tracks during this time, and Talking Heads has made a few playlists. I was reading about their track *Burning Down the House*, and David Byrne says that it's "a metaphor for destroying something that entrapped you ... as an expression of liberation, to break free of whatever was holding you back." They recall going to Parliament gigs in the late 70's, where the audience would chant "burn down the house!" before the band came on stage, so it definitely comes with a heritage of resistance.



---

IMAGE > Nicholas Folland, *House Party* [installation view], 2021, found furniture, bottle caps, enamel paint, dimensions variable. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.



---

IMAGE > Nicholas Folland, *Track 1* [installation view], 2021, Adelaide pink gum branches, bottle caps, dimensions variable. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

Burning down the house might be seen as a highly aggressive act, particularly given recent US politics, but it might also be a new beginning. That's something that I think we can all relate to. The burning of an infected thing as a way of cleansing. We burn down to rebuild. It's a state of mind, and should involve music, dancing and lagerphones.

**JH:** *Let's talk about lagerphones. This is one of the most striking and unusual visual references in the show. Can you tell me a bit more about your attraction to this instrument?*

**NF:** I have an ongoing interest in obscure folk arts, especially those that recycle or upcycle materials, as many of them do. Bottle caps have been employed for a range of practical and creative ends, such as decorative surfaces and signage, or jewellery, but they have a particular advantage in the making of percussion instruments such as tambourins and lagerphones. There are similar instruments in virtually every culture, but lagerphones are a specifically Australian instrument made from crown bottle caps.

The lagerphone is made by loosely screwing bottle caps to a wooden stick, and this is where I pick up on it. I've applied the caps to antique furniture, so they have the potential to rattle and make sound, and nearly all of the work could be 'played', but on mass they

also become a fantastic surface treatment. There are around 7,000 caps packed onto the furniture alone in this exhibition.

The work might not initially read in relation to lagerphones, because I severely stylise and shift this stuff with excess. When I look at the work now, I find myself thinking of bees swarming, and the encrusted surface of lamingtons. But I also have a desire to tickle the bottle caps – to bring them to life and confirm my suspicion.

**JH:** *The idea of experiencing the potential for sound is really interesting, and it has a big effect on how people feel in the space. Can you tell me a bit more about that, and also what sounds can actually be heard in the show?*

**NF:** The majority of the work does not make sound once installed, however the potential is present. There's a precariousness built into the installation of the furniture, such that collapse is possible. So, the work has potential for a tremendous thunderstorm of sound. However, this is something that we have to imagine. This might create a slight sense of anxiety when you're around the work – if you're not careful it could collapse, causing chaos! Perhaps like me there's even the temptation to trigger it, but hopefully the idea of the sound can have a significant presence in itself.



The sound that does exist in the background of the show is a rhythmic and layered tapping, generated by two small mechanical contraptions that hang on the wall. Each unit taps three beats at either a slow or faster pace, the rhythms flowing over one another like cicadas, and I like to think of them communicating across the landscape – hidden and hard to ignore. The beats mimic the tapping out of the letters S and O in Morse Code, so there's potential for tension in the signal too. Something trapped, something trying to escape.

**JH:** *The show builds a kind of tension between sound and silence, stillness and movement, and also between the natural and the man-made. The combination of the tree branches and the stripped-back wooden furniture blends the natural with the man-made, for example. How did you conceive of this mixture of materials, and how do they relate to this sense of tension?*

**NF:** Our homes tend to be these places that protect us from the wilds of nature, from storms and from heat and from random critters that might come crawling through. Or at least they do to the best of our ability,

but at the same time we bring a kind of representation of sanitised nature into our homes. We'll have floral curtains or we'll have timber surfaces, or more often in fact pseudo kinds of timber surfaces. We have running water and we have flames for cooking and things like that, so we bring in all those natural elements, but we have them in an extremely controlled and stylised kind of fashion. I think that's really interesting. The tensions and connections between our homes and the natural world are possibly at the heart of what I'm always exploring in my work.

A lot of my early research was around the shifts that happen between the safety of our home and those really wild aspects of nature and the kind of steps that get us from one place to another - that fence around our property that demarcates a kind of controlled garden where there are no weeds, and we prevent things from eating the leaves and the flowers and the fruits and things like that. But the further we move away from the home and towards the edge of the cities and on further into the bush or the desert or the ocean, the wilder nature becomes. I'm interested in how we reconcile this tension.



IMAGE > Nicholas Folland, *House Party* [detail], 2021, found furniture, bottle caps, enamel paint, dimensions variable. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.



For this exhibition, the furniture has been completely reduced to its most minimal form, and stripped of anything that can be removed or unscrewed. All that remain are timber skeletons with no practical function – no cushioned seats or table-tops. At the same time the branches have also been reduced, and the larger logs have been completely stripped of all forking branches, becoming simple, winding, snake-like forms. So, in this way the furniture and branches become more similar – both become refined and decorated timber forms.

**JH:** *Given your interest on the natural versus the man-made, and that your practice is often guided by recycling or upcycling, it's easy to interpret your work as having an environmental focus. How do you feel about that reading of your work?*

**NF:** People do often read my work as having an environmental message. These are not things that I focus on consciously within my practice, because they're just things that we should consider when we do anything in the world today. I think the work is part of a broader desire that we all increasingly have to reconcile our lives with the environmental impact.

I feel some guilt that only about 30% of the 10,000+ bottle caps that I've used in this show are recycled. I've always had this kind of guilt around art making - that we already make so much stuff in this world so how can I justify extravagance like sculpture. Wherever I can possibly reuse stuff or value add to existing stuff I like that opportunity. The other thing about the found object is that it comes so imbued with a history and with a function and with all of that touch and all of that purpose that it's had in previous lives.

A lot of the furniture that I've used for this show is quite old. The kitchen table, for example, is an old cedar table that could well be 100 years old. It's definitely had a few lives. The top had a classic burn mark where someone had left a hot iron on it at some stage, and you could see all around the edges that something like a meat grinder had been clamped onto the table. One corner was shredded where I guess someone sharpened knives. The tabletop was removed to make the work but I just love those traces of history that remain all over the furniture. I haven't repaired it, I haven't bogged cracks or anything like that, it is what it is. I like that it gives the thing a kind of vitality that you don't get from something that's completely new or something that's manufactured for rarefication.

What I like to do is to stop things from functioning in their usual or expected way, to open up other ways of seeing. The furniture in my work can no longer function in a practical way, the vessels I've used in the past can never hold water because they've got holes in them. So, there's a subversion of the known function that forces you to consider those really familiar objects as something else, that often in my practice has a relationship to the natural world. But I hope that when you go home, you start to look at everything around you with new potential.

**January, 2021**



# NICHOLAS FOLLAND

---

Nicholas Folland's practice explores the relationship between domestic objects and materials, natural forces and historical references. His intricate and complex sculptural installations override the common or banal uses of objects to give them a heightened meaning, often relating to the source of their substance or the cultural practices and identities they hold. His work speaks to uncertainty, ecological fragility and our perception of time.

Folland is currently the Department Head for both Contemporary Studies and Sculpture at the Adelaide Central School of Art. He recently exhibited work at the Art Gallery of New South Wales as part of The National 2019: New Australian Art, and

he presented a survey exhibition of his work at the Art Gallery of South Australia in 2014. Folland's work is represented in the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of South Australia and the Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney, as well as numerous Australian university and regional gallery collections and private collections across the world.

Nicholas Folland is represented by Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne.

IMAGE > Portrait of Nicholas Folland. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.



# LIST OF WORKS

---

*House Party, 2021*

found furniture, bottle caps, enamel paint, dimensions variable  
POA

*S-0, 2021*

12v motors, Tasmanian oak, movement sensors  
POA

*Outside-in, 2021*

Adelaide pink gum branches, bottle caps, dimensions variable  
POA

*Track 1, 2021*

Adelaide pink gum branches, bottle caps, dimensions variable  
POA



---

IMAGE > Nicholas Folland, *S-0* [detail], 2021, 12v motors, Tasmanian oak, movement sensors. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.



# LINDEN NEW ART

Director: Melinda Martin

Curator: Juliette Hanson

Development Manager: Lyn Johnson

Design & Marketing Coordinator: Mathieu Vendeville

Events & Community Engagement Coordinator: Linda Studena

Gallery Administrators: Chloé Hazelwood & Hana Vasak

Volunteer Officer: Ada Coxall

Gallery Assistant: Clare Niere

FREE ENTRY  
OPENING HOURS  
Tuesday to Sunday  
11AM to 4PM  
Closed Mondays  
& public holidays

26 ACLAND STREET,  
ST KILDA VIC 3182  
[www.lindenarts.org](http://www.lindenarts.org)  
[gallery@lindenarts.org](mailto:gallery@lindenarts.org)  
Phone: 03 9534 0099

Trams: 12, 16, 96  
(3A weekends only)  
Buses: 600, 606,  
623, 246

 /LindenNewArt  
 @linden\_new\_art  
 @LindenNewArt

LINDEN NEW ART  
IS FUNDED BY



GOVERNMENT  
SUPPORTERS



PROJECT PARTNER



PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS



CORPORATE SPONSORS



EDUCATION PARTNERS

