

8 Nov 2019  
— 16 Feb 2020

Media Kit

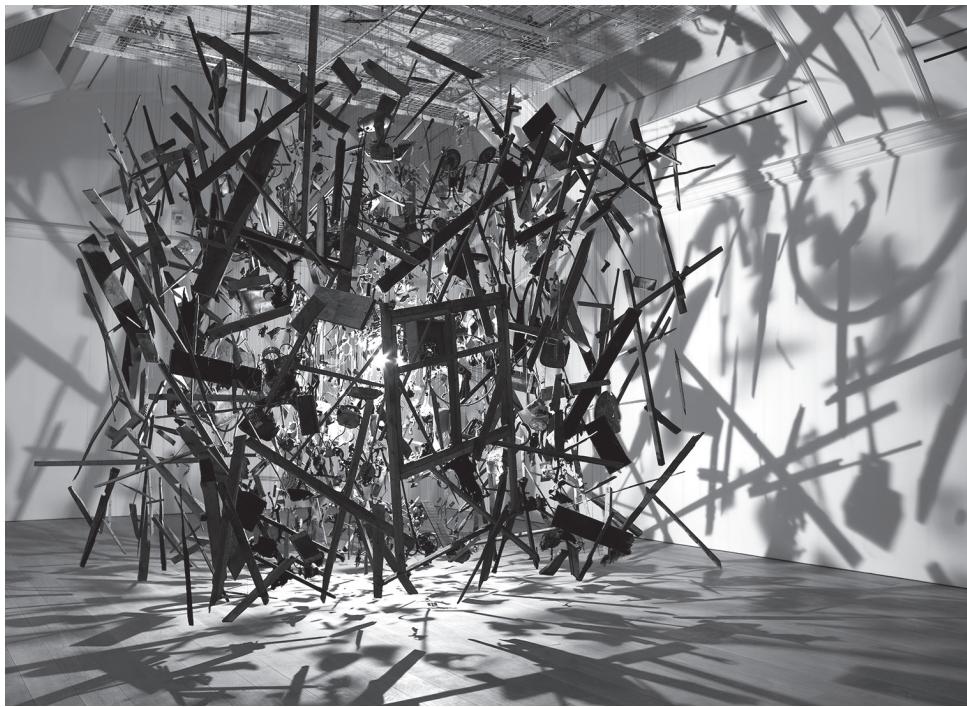


# CORNELIA PARKER

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MCA Australia

SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL **ART** SERIES



Her work can be intimate as well as spectacular. Even her smallest works can be little mind bombs...

– Adrian Searle, *The Guardian* (UK)

One of the most adventurous and innovative artists working today.

– Louisa Buck, *The Telegraph* (UK)

On November 8th, the first major survey exhibition in the Southern Hemisphere by acclaimed British artist Cornelia Parker opens at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, as part of the tenth edition of the Sydney International Art Series.

One of the most important artists working today, Cornelia Parker OBE is known for her transformation of everyday objects into unexpected, haunting scenarios – things are exploded, shot, turned back to front and rearranged in often surprising ways. Working with sculpture and installation, as well as drawing, photography and film, Parker subjects are presented at the very moment of their transformation, suspended in time and completely still.

Curated by MCA Chief Curator Rachel Kent, *Cornelia Parker* is the largest presentation of the artist's work in Australia and encompasses over 40 artworks from the late 1980s to the present. Spanning three decades of the artist's practice, this Sydney-exclusive brings together new and recent artworks with significant loans from major public and private collections, including two large-scale installations *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* and *Thirty Pieces of Silver* from the Tate Collection, UK.

MCA Director, Elizabeth Ann Macgregor OBE, said, 'We are thrilled to introduce Australian audiences to British artist Cornelia Parker, whose installations and sculptures have fascinated audiences wherever they have been shown. Her blown-up shed, *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*, is regularly named by visitors as their favourite work in the Tate Collection. Australian audiences will have the opportunity to see the work of one of the most important female artists working today.'

Exhibition highlights include the installation *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* (1991), an ordinary garden shed that has been blown up by the British Army and reconfigured by Parker into a mass of burnt wooden shards and household objects. Suspended from the ceiling with a single light bulb at the centre, it casts dramatic shadows across the gallery walls and floor.

## Artist biography

British artist Cornelia Parker (born 1956, Cheshire, UK) has presented numerous major commissions and solo exhibitions internationally over the last three decades, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2016), The Whitworth, Manchester (2015), British Library, London (2015), BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (2010), Museo de Arte de Lima, Peru (2008), Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (2007) and The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas (2006).

In 1997, the artist was shortlisted for the Turner Prize, Tate and the following year, awarded 'Best Show by an Emerging Artist' by the International Association of Art Critics. Parker was elected to the Royal Academy of Arts, London, and made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 2010. She was awarded the Apollo Awards Artist of the Year in 2016, and in 2017 was appointed as the first female Election Artist for the United Kingdom General Election.

Cornelia Parker



Other highlights include *Thirty Pieces of Silver* (1988–89), featuring thirty suspended pools of silverware collected by Parker from friends, car boot sales and charity shops, then flattened by a steamroller; and *Subconscious of a Monument* (2001–05) comprising thousands of dried lumps of earth excavated by engineers from under the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy.

In her installation *War Room* (2015), Parker salvages discarded strips of red paper from the Poppy Factory in Richmond, London, which produces Remembrance Poppies to memorialise the Great War of 1914–18. The paper is perforated by over 30,000 holes where the poppy shapes have been removed; signifying human lives lost in conflict.

Also included in the exhibition is *Magna Carta (An Embroidery)* (2015), a 12-metre long embroidery hand-stitched by over 200 individuals that recreates the Magna Carta Wikipedia entry, including British prison inmates and well-known individuals, such as Eliza Manningham-Buller (former head of M15), Julian Assange, Edward Snowden, Alan Rusbridger (former editor of the Guardian UK), musician Jarvis Cocker and Jimmy Wales (founder of Wikipedia).

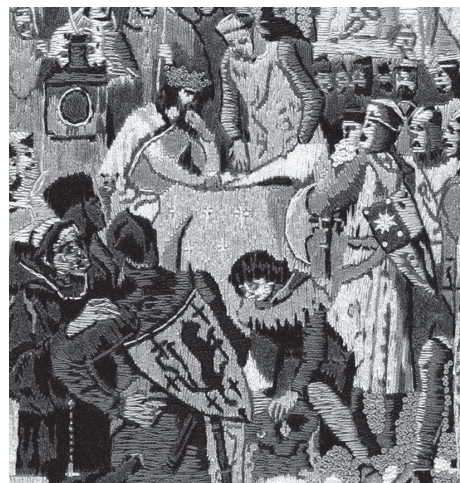
Politics is a key theme in many of the artist's recent works, and in 2017 Cornelia Parker was appointed as the first female Election Artist for the United Kingdom General Election. In this highly visible role, she observed the election campaign leading up to the 8 June vote, met with politicians, campaigners and voters and produced artworks in response. Three works feature in the exhibition including *Left Right & Centre* (2017), which was filmed by a drone at night in the House of Commons, Westminster; *Thatcher's Finger* (2018), a shadow-play featuring a sculpture of the former Prime Minister; and *Election Abstract* (2018), a visual journal of Parker's experiences of the snap election that were posted on the artist's Instagram feed.

A beautifully designed publication has been published by the MCA with contributions by the artist, Rachel Kent and Professor Emeritus Margaret Iversen, University of Essex. The publication will be distributed by Thames and Hudson in the UK and Europe and will be available to purchase from the MCA Store.

On the exhibition, Minister for Tourism Stuart Ayres said, 'This survey exhibition at MCA is an exclusive opportunity for Australians and international visitors to engage with this renowned artist's work.'

A cultural highlight for the summer months, it's fantastic that

King John signs Magna Carta



## Did you know?

### **Subconscious of a Monument**

7,800 lumps of earth excavated from underneath Leaning Tower of Pisa

### **Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded**

Over 2000 objects

### **Thirty Pieces of Silver**

30 x 30 squashed pieces of silver-plated objects flattened by a steamroller total of 900 items

### **War Room**

30,000 perforations in the red paper

### **Magna Carta (An Embroidery)**

More than 200 people have hand-stitched the work

### **Shared Fate (Oliver)**

This dolls head has been cut-off by the same guillotine that beheaded Marie Antoinette

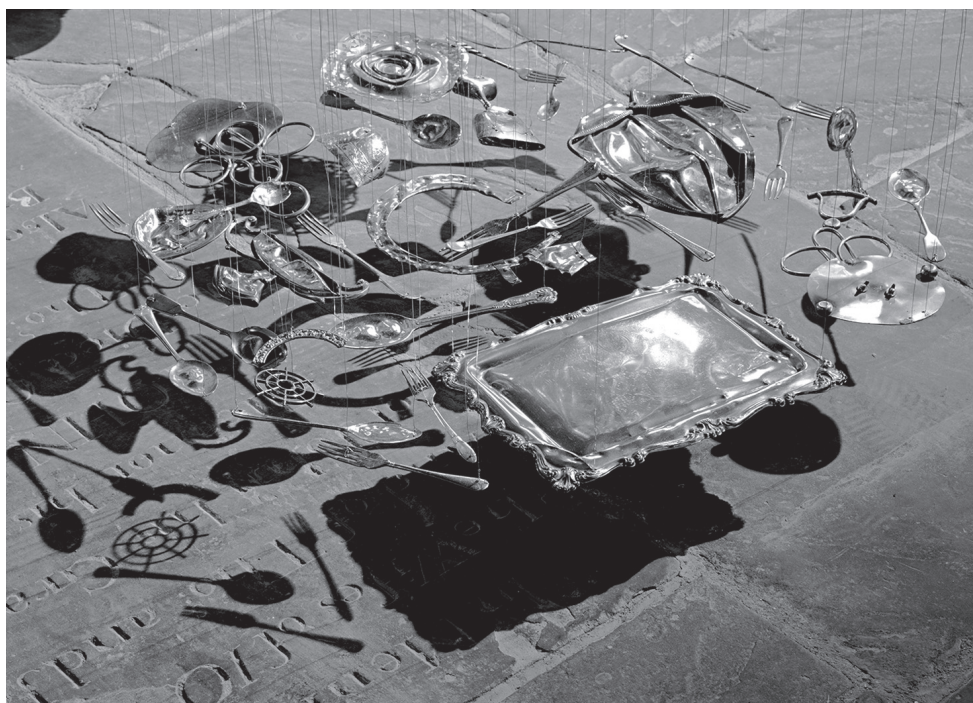
### **Poison and Antidote Drawing**

Inkblot works made from rattlesnake venom, anti-venom, black and white ink

### **White Cliff Drawing**

Painted onto the Museum windows using chalk from the White Cliffs of Dover

Thirty Pieces of Silver





Sydney is the only Australian city to hold such a comprehensive and ground-breaking exhibition of work by Cornelia Parker.'

Since the Sydney International Art Series was established in 2010 by the NSW Government via tourism and major events agency Destination NSW, the initiative has generated over \$149 million in overnight visitor expenditure for the State and attracted over 2.1 million attendees. Of these, more than 201,000 overnight visitors travelled to Sydney from overseas, interstate and regional NSW, specifically to view the exhibitions at the MCA and Art Gallery of NSW.

The MCA would also like to acknowledge the generous support of Catriona and Simon Mordant AM as Principal Exhibition Patrons of its Sydney International Art Series exhibitions.

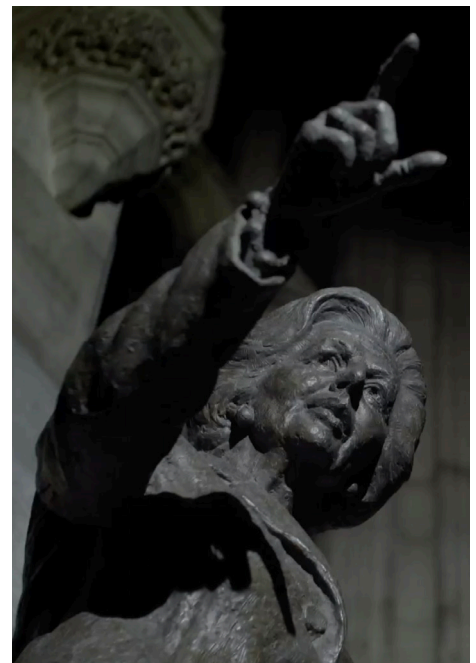
On Saturday 9 November, the MCA will host an in conversation with artist Cornelia Parker and MCA Chief Curator Rachel Kent.

*Cornelia Parker* is on display at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia from 8 November 2019 until 16 February 2020.

Tickets are available to purchase, visit [mca.com.au](http://mca.com.au)

# 'Parker is the maverick ideas woman of British art.'

— The Telegraph (UK)



# Cornelia Parker on Six Key Works

Thirty Pieces of Silver



## Thirty Pieces of Silver (1988-89)

I love the idea of the fragment, rather than the complete or whole thing. With *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, the objects were all broken up into bits by a steamroller. All I knew was that I was going to suspend them. I found myself thinking of coins, the actual thirty pieces of silver representing Christ's betrayal, so I cut metre-round pieces of paper and put approximately thirty objects on each. I drew around them and drilled a little hole for each wire, then hung all the objects horizontally.

Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View



## Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View (1991)

The exploded shed had objects within it which were encyclopaedic, the archetypal contents of a garden shed. The objects were bought at car boot sales or donated by friends ... I called it *Cold Dark Matter*, a scientific term which refers to all the un-quantifiable matter in the universe; and then *An Exploded View*, which is a diagrammatic term from, say, an instruction manual, where all the bits are labelled and organised. It's me trying to make sense of things that are unpalatable, like watching explosions daily on the news.

War Room



## War Room (2015)

In 2014 I was invited to make a piece of work about the 1914-18 Great War. I had always wanted to go to the Poppy Factory in Richmond, London and when I visited it, I saw this machine that had rolls of red paper with perforations where the poppies had been punched out.

The fact that the poppies are absent is really quite poignant, because obviously a lot of people didn't make it from the First World War, and other wars since. I decided to make *War Room* like a tent, suspending all the material like fabric. It was inspired by a famous Tudor tent called the 'Field of the Cloth of Gold', where King Henry VIII met with the French King to negotiate peace unsuccessfully.

Subconscious of a Monument



## Subconscious of a Monument (2001-05)

In *Subconscious of a Monument*, the earth from underneath the Leaning Tower of Pisa fills the room to a certain height. It's like it has exhaled all the earth that has been taken away to stabilise the tower, to rectify its lean. Engineers took the earth away in 2001, and through the process the tower sank a little, becoming a bit more erect.

The earth in this room has lain under a famous monument for over 1000 years; now it's getting its own chance above ground.



### Magna Carta (2015)

For my piece *Magna Carta (An Embroidery)*, I took an image of the Wikipedia entry of the Magna Carta to commemorate its 800th birthday and had it printed onto fabric. The fabric was cut into around 80 strips and all the words were embroidered by many contributors. That's what I like about Wikipedia; it's made by hundreds of people imparting their little bit of knowledge, rather than the definition being written by one authority figure. Multiple authors – other people's hands – embroidered the definition of the Magna Carta for me, from prisoners to judiciary to lords to MPs to well-known personalities and infamous whistle blowers. such as Julian Assange and Edward Snowden. The strips were sewn together at Hampton Court by members of the Royal School of Needlework.



### Left Right & Centre (2017)

I made a film *Left Right & Centre* in the House of Commons using a drone. I arranged newspapers (those that were read over the election period) on the table in stacks: the right-wing papers on right side and the left-wing papers on the other. We filmed the House at night, when it was pitch black, using a drone with a light. The light picks over the newspapers, captured in slow motion by another camera.

The imagery is very abstract so you don't know where it is shot or what's happening. But during the day, the drone comes back with a vengeance: flying through the door, scattering all the newspapers everywhere... the newspapers all merged together in a large mess, becoming a tangle of left, right and centre.

# Public programs

## Patrón Pop-Up

Wed–Sun | 31 Oct 2019–16 Feb 2020 | MCA Terrace  
A new pop-up bar, in partnership with Patrón Tequila, serving cocktails and Mexican dishes all summer. On the cocktail menu is a special Cornelia Parker tequila drink inspired by her popular work, *Cold Dark Matter*.

## In conversation

Sat 9 Nov | 1.30–2.45pm | \$38 General \$30 MCA Member | Lecture Theatre Level 2  
This event is a rare chance to hear directly from one of Britain's most renowned contemporary artists in conversation with MCA Chief Curator, Rachel Kent.

## Imagine... Danger! Documentary

2–13 Nov | 12–3.30pm | Free | Lecture Theatre Level 2  
Find out more about the artist at a free screening of the 2016 BBC documentary, *Imagine...Danger*. Step behind the scenes into Cornelia Parker's creative process and see the making of her MET rooftop commission inspired by Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* house.

## Boom, crash, stitch! | Family space

Weekends | Ages 4+ | Free | NCCL Level 3  
Drop by our weekend family space to mould, squash and stitch everyday objects into works of art. This program is designed for children aged 4 years+ and their grown-ups.

## Looney Tunes marathon

7 & 8 Dec | 11am–4pm | Free with exhibition ticket | Lecture Theatre Level 2  
Inspired by Cornelia Parker's fascination with cartoon violence, settle into this marathon screening of all-time favourite Looney Tunes characters.

## Ode: Sonata Project

16–18 Jan 2020 | 6.30–8pm | \$75 General & \$60 MCA Member | Level 3 Galleries  
Internationally acclaimed pianist Bernadette Harvey will premiere her new piano sonata *Ode*, set inside Cornelia Parker's installation, *War Room*. Experience an immersive approach to classical music performed in-gallery and after-hours for Sydney Festival.

## Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

### SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL ART SERIES

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*War Room*, 2015, installation view The Whitworth, The University of Manchester, 2015, perforated paper negatives left over from production of remembrance poppies, image courtesy the artist, The Whitworth, The University of Manchester and Frith Street Gallery, London © David Levene, 2019, photograph: David Levene

*Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*, 1991, installation view The Whitworth, The University of Manchester, 2015, blown up garden shed and contents, wire, light bulb Tate, presented by the Patrons of New Art (Special Purchase Fund) through the Tate Gallery Foundation 1995, image courtesy the artist, The Whitworth, The University of Manchester and Frith Street Gallery, London © David Levene, 2019, photograph: David Levene  
Cornelia Parker at the Parliament of the United Kingdom, image courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London © the artist, photograph: Jessica Taylor

*King John signs Magna Carta* (1902), stitched by Janet Payne, Embroiderers' Guild (Eastern Region) from Magna Carta (An Embroidery), 2015, half panama cotton fabric, pearl cotton thread and other media, embroidered by over 200 individual contributors, image courtesy the artist, British Library and Frith Street Gallery, London © the artist

*Thirty Pieces of Silver* (detail), 1988–89, installation view York St Mary's, 2011, silver-plated objects flattened by a steamroller, wire, Tate, purchased with assistance from Maggi and David Gordon, 1998, image courtesy the artist and York Museums Trust © the artist, photograph: Shannon Tofts

*Thatcher's Finger* (still), 2018, video, colour, image courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London © the artist

*Thirty Pieces of Silver*, 1988–89, silver-plated objects flattened by a steamroller, wire, Tate, purchased with assistance from Maggi and David Gordon, 1998, image courtesy the artist and Tate © Tate, London 2019

*Subconscious of a Monument*, 2001–05, installation view, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 2007, earth excavated from underneath Leaning Tower of Pisa (to stop it falling), private Collection, Turin, image courtesy the artist, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham and Frith Street Gallery, London © the artist, photograph: Jerry Hardman-Jones

Pope Innocent III, stitched by Anthea Godfrey, Embroiderers' Guild (Eastern Region), from *Magna Carta (An Embroidery)*, 2015, half panama cotton fabric, pearl cotton thread and other media, embroidered by over 200 individual contributors, image courtesy the artist, British Library and Frith Street Gallery, London © the artist