

# BRUNO GIUGLIARELLI

PRESENTED BY THE CITY OF FREMANTLE ART COLLECTION



## FREMANTLE ARTS CENTRE

# BRUNO GIUGLIARELLI: ART AND LEGACY

This exhibition acknowledges the generous donation of five sculptures by Italian/Australian artist Bruno Giugliarelli (1908-1996) to the City of Fremantle Art Collection by his youngest daughter, Elena Lumsdaine/Giugliarelli in June 2021.

This consequential and timely donation makes a lasting contribution to the City of Fremantle Art Collection in retrospectively building upon the representation of WA/Fremantle artists who enjoy a strong association with Fremantle's cultural history.

Bruno Giugliarelli was an academically trained Italian artist who with the financial support of his brother, migrated to Western Australia in 1949. He trained in Perugia and Rome and enjoyed a successful career as a monumental sculptor producing numerous significant public commissions for the Italian Fascist Government in the 1930s. As an émigré artist in WA in the 1950s he survived separated from his family for a decade, and largely worked without professional recognition, producing minor sculptural works for the Catholic Church, department stores and 'Aboriginal' figurines for Darbyshire Pottery while working as a milkman. His significant contribution to WA art was in his longstanding role as a teacher of modelling and carving at Fremantle Technical School Annex (1950-1972), at the former Fremantle Lunatic Asylum. It was in this role that he introduced academic techniques to local art students and shaped the traditional values of sculpture in Fremantle for a decade. Privately, and after his retirement, Bruno worked in an abstract figurative style reclusively from his home studio in Fremantle. It is fitting that Bruno be given recognition in the city and in the Arts Centre building where he made a significant contribution to Art in WA.

Two of the sculptures donated and exhibited here, were included in Bruno's only exhibition at Fremantle Arts Centre in 1989, when the artist was 80.

The City of Fremantle Art Collection has benefited substantially from gifts and donations of artworks since its inception and received significant artworks through the Commonwealth Cultural Gifts Scheme, which provide a taxation deduction to the donor.

## CHECKLIST



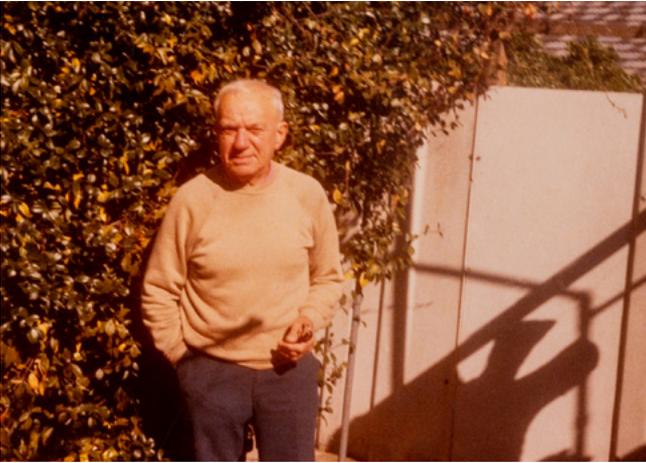
Artworks are by Bruno Giugliarelli from the City of Fremantle Art Collection. Dimensions are H x W x D

*Portrait of Elena as a young woman*, undated  
cast cement  
35 x 22.5 x 23 cm  
City of Fremantle Art Collection no. 1574

*Embrace*, undated  
sandstone  
32 x 15.5 x 15 cm  
City of Fremantle Art Collection no. 1577

*The Mother*, undated  
sandstone  
28 x 24 x 14 cm  
City of Fremantle Art Collection no. 1578

# BIOGRAPHY



Bruno Giugliarelli was born in Perugia, Italy in 1908. Perugia was a beautiful historical city before WWI, renowned for its fine Etruscan and Roman Architecture, an epicentre for the fine arts and a draw card for seasonal tourists.

Bruno's father was an accomplished photographer and printer and worked in a business producing postcards for the tourist trade. Together with his brothers Dagoberto and Gino, Bruno lived in relative poverty and was brought up by their stepmother. Early hardships and limited opportunities fostered a resilient and enterprising character in Bruno, who as a youth laboured on farms and worked at a local pottery factory. It was here, that the owner, impressed with his initiative and interest in drawing and modelling, recommended that he take an apprenticeship with a local monumental sculptor Giuseppe Frenguelli (1856-1940). It was under his tutelage that Bruno learnt many practical skills working with stone alongside trained artisans. Following this foundation, when he was 18, Bruno gained a scholarship to study sculpture at the Accademia Di Belle Arti in 1926, and was nominated as academic in residence, under the supervision of Pietro Vannucci until 1931.

Entering into a cultural hierarchy created significant momentum for the emerging artist, which heavily influenced Bruno's developing style and taste. His politics may have been ambivalent, but his work reflected his formal training in carving and modelling and experience in producing conservative figurative works, and notable public commissions for the Italian Fascist Government (1922-43).

Bruno compulsorily enlisted in the Coast Guard for national service for 18 months and later transferred to the air force in 1933. He was granted lenient conditions of service and enjoyed good relations with his superiors to continue attending to his civilian sculptural projects outside of his regular duty (sentry and canteen duties). He also undertook various decorative and figurative projects at a military aerodrome, gaining praise for carving a pair of eagles for the front gates.

After national service he was invited to advance his career and move to Rome as professor at Accademia de Belle Arte de Roma. He was now situated at the centre of Italian political influence. Bruno worked under sculptor Aroldo Bellini (1902-1984) for two years, who had numerous lucrative Government commissions, under the Fascist regime's comprehensive national program of public works.

In addition to producing competition maquettes of his own, he worked on a series of colossal marble figures for the Foro Italico, sport stadium (design by Enrico Del Debbio and Luigi Moretti) on the slopes of Monte Mario, Rome directed by the Fascist Minister Renato Ricci. It was in Rome that Bruno also worked for Angiolo Mazzoni, the prominent Fascist Architect. Other significant projects included a WW1 return servicemen's memorial, head stones for the Pincio Garden at the Villa Borghese and work on a 107m monumental bronze figure of Benito Mussolini (with inbuilt elevators) in 1932, of which a head and lower leg was completed before fall of the regime. Bruno worked for 3 years making the scaled plaster forms for the monument. It was hazardous work for which Bruno was poorly treated and underpaid, which undermined his work relationships and self-esteem.

After leaving Bellini's studio his work diversified and he took work where he could, producing 'romantic' scenery and set decorations for the Italian film industry including historical dramas like *Ettore Fieramosca* (1938) directed by Alessandro Blasetti.

During an uncertain period after 1940, when Italy entered WWII, Bruno won a number of important commissions including production a 3.6m statue of St Francis and relief for the church at the basement of the Termini Railway Station in Rome. He also received an award for a figurative wax model representing the *Victory of Fascism over Communism*, which gained him public recognition. The work portrays a heroic classical male youth standing over an octopus, with two tentacles coiled around the figure's ankle. This piece generated interest in Bruno's work and is indicative of his mature sculpture, being a combination of academic classical style and modernist influences, common to the output of leading Italian Futurist sculptor, Arturo Martini (1889-1947). A major figurative work depicting the *Stations of the Cross* and *Foundation of Rome* intended for the International Exposition in Rome in 1942, was progressed with Government backing but was incomplete before being destroyed by Allied bombing and German occupation of Rome in 1943. After the fall of Mussolini and the Italian armistice, commissions and 'bread and butter' work for Bruno ceased.

Prior to WWII, Bruno was highly regarded, enjoyed recognition and benefits of a regular income and support of his family. However, the destructive impact of an enduring post war recession, widespread unemployment and poverty forced Bruno to labour in Perugia while supporting his wife Isolina, and young daughters,

Emerenziana and Elena who continued to live in Rome. It was a desperate time; without regular patronage his career went into a decline.

It was not until the financial support and encouragement from his brothers, particularly Gino, who resided in WA after being interned as a POW, that Bruno, migrated to Australia, arriving in Fremantle without his young family in 1949. With the hope of rekindling a career as a sculptor in Australia, he struggled to establish a new life while preparing a pathway for his family. He worked two jobs, as a hotel night porter and milkman, sending a portion of his income home to his family. Later he gained a job carving baroque mirror frames while maintaining a role as a stonemason with Paganini Masonry Works, producing monumental items for Karrakatta Cemetery.

However, the transition from monumental commissions to labouring for wages in WA was a demotion for a mature artist. Without the necessary introductions and opportunities and the barrier of language and cultural prejudices, he felt undervalued and underpaid. Even after exhibiting in Perth at Newspaper House with Czech migrant George Tauchman and establishing a small business producing shop decorations for Boans and Aherns department stores and a design for a poster for Pirelli Tyres, his situation changed little. He enjoyed some success acquiring a number of small commissions in Perth for the Catholic Church including a statue of The Virgin Mary for the Home of the Good Shepherd (orphanage), in Leederville. He also gained regular employment at Darbyshire Potteries working four nights a week from 1952-1959. He modelled items for mass production, crafting most of the classical 'Aboriginal' figurines for the firm, examples which are now held in the AGWA State Collection.

Recognition of his production work led to an invitation to teach clay modelling and pottery at the Fremantle Technical School Annex, operating out of the derelict Fremantle Lunatic Asylum in 1958. Bruno, now 50 years of age, was encouraged by students and senior staff, in recognition of his abundant skills and academic training, to expand his teaching role.

It was almost a decade after Bruno migrated to WA, that his eldest child, Emerenziana, arrived at Fremantle followed by his wife and youngest daughter, Elena, a year later, in 1959. With his estranged family united, they rented an apartment in William Street, Perth before establishing a permanent home in Solomon Street, Fremantle in 1962.

At the Fremantle Technical School, Bruno was respected and worked alongside other European emigres, including influential Hungarian artists Peter Gelencsér and Ferenc Kotai. He was instrumental in developing a sculpture program based upon his classical training, built kilns and casting facilities and later set up a copper enamelling class and trialled the establishment of a foundry at the old asylum, with Furness, fired with charcoal and coking coal.

Bruno enjoyed conducting classes for many years at Fremantle Technical School before being transferred to work for 4 more years at a purpose-built campus at Grosvenor Street in Beaconsfield in 1969. Unfortunately, his wishes to furnish the new school with improved facilities were unfulfilled. A large workshop and foundry for casting metal was abandoned and later replaced with a fibreglass studio.

In 1970, Bruno won his first significant commission in WA, to produce a public work for the newly established Commonwealth Centre in Perth. For this he used Italian marble and employed a stone mason to fabricate much of the work, producing a monumental abstract figure. Described by the arts writer for the West Australian, as a 'striking columnar form' of white Carrara marble, it was installed in 1971 and weighed 8 tonnes. An 'investigation of the interrelation of planes and concavities' and 'standing in splendid isolation' it was situated at the riverside entry of the St Georges Terrace building with 'polished and textured areas which harmonise with pleasing effect'.<sup>1</sup> The commission was a highlight of his career in WA and earned him \$8,000.

A few years later the work was relocated when the Commonwealth Centre site was sold, and controversially, the massive sculpture fell into private hands, away from public view.

In 1972, Bruno retired from TAFE after 15 years and pursued his own work full time, applying himself to a new direction of a different character. In the 1980s he produced primarily domestic scale abstract forms from his home studio in Solomon Street. In 1988, he was invited to exhibit 45 pieces in a survey of sculpture spanning 20 years in marble, wax, wood and plaster at Fremantle Arts Centre, with painters George Haynes and Roy Churcher. It was important recognition in his new home and a sign of appreciation when a piece titled *Contemplation* 1984, was acquired by the Art Gallery of WA, under Director Betty Churcher. However, Bruno was a retiring and insecure person in his mature years, he did not attend his own exhibition opening, to avoid unnecessary scrutiny, according to his daughter, Elena.

In 1989, when Bruno was 82, he exhibited his last body of work in an exhibition titled *Stone Flowers*, with his daughter Elena Lumsdaine/Giugliarelli, at Matilda Gallery in Fremantle.

Bruno, having migrated to Australia after WWII, was disconnected from his Italian homeland and felt disenfranchised from his early achievements. In his last interview, Bruno expressed sadness and disappointment about his experiences. He seemed embittered and frustrated, lamenting his struggle, lack of success and opportunities in WA.

Bruno Giugliarelli died in Perth in 1996 at the age of 88 years.

**Andre Lipscombe**  
**Curator, City of Fremantle Art Collection**

<sup>1</sup> *Sculpture Addition*, Murray Mason, *The West Australian*, Saturday, 23 October 1971, p.19

## AWARDS

**1932:** Award for best apprentice work for *Repose* in his first solo exhibition

**1938:** Statue portraying *The Victory of Fascism over Communism*

**1939:** First prize for *The Walker* at the San Remo *Dynamics of Sport* exhibition

Nominated by the Accademia Di Belle Arti, Pietro Vannucci, as Accademico Di Merito Residente

## COMMISSIONS

**1932:** Statue of St Francis of Rome and church font for a church proposed for construction at basement of Rome Railway Station. The work was completed but the building was not completed.

**1939:** Bas relief in plaster of 32 Kings of Italy for Rome Railway Station (not completed)

Worked with Aroldo Bellini to produce a 107m bronze statue of Mussolini. The work was abandoned when WWII broke out.

**1940:** Italian Fascist Government commissioned a Bas Relief of the History of the Roman Empire for 1942 international exhibition *Esposizione Universale Roma* (EUR) to celebrate 20 years of fascism.

**1959:** Statue of the Virgin Mary, Home of the Good Shepherd, Leederville, WA

**1970:** Commission to produce a sculpture for the Australian Government Centre, Perth WA (completed in 1971)

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- Colin Macliver, Interviews, February – June, 1984
- Erickson, Dorothy (Dr), Australian Design Online, 2011
- Lumsdaine, Elena, biographical notes, 2021



Fremantle Arts Centre is situated at Walyalup on Whadjuk Nyoongar Boodjar. We acknowledge the Whadjuk people as the traditional owners and custodians of these lands and waterways and extend our respect to their Elders, past and present.

We offer our heartfelt gratitude to the Whadjuk community and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who continue to care for Country and share their knowledge – this generosity and wisdom helps us to understand and navigate Country safely and respectfully.

1 Finnerty Street, Fremantle, Western Australia | [fac.org.au](http://fac.org.au)