

INGRID BURKETT

FEATHERS AND FINGERPRINTS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12



FEATHERS AND FINGERPRINTS

1



A Year of Birds, A Year of Reflection

In 2024, I set out on a year-long artistic journey—one that became an exploration of environmental grief, quiet protest, and meditative practice. Every day, I shaped a small porcelain pinch pot and painted or scratched the image of a bird onto its surface, creating a flock of 365 Australian birds over the course of the year. What began as a daily discipline soon became a deeply personal exploration of the intersection between art, nature, and human responsibility.

The Artistic Process: A Meditation on Nature

In a world increasingly detached from the rhythms of the natural environment, I sought to slow down and truly observe the world around me. By focusing on a single bird each day, I engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the land, its inhabitants, and my own evolving understanding of the fragile ecosystems we share. Through this repetitive, intentional act, I discovered that art has the power not only to document and bear witness but also to transform the way we see and respond to the world.

At the core of this project is the pinch pot—one of the most ancient and fundamental ceramic forms, requiring only the hands, the clay, and the simple act of shaping. This technique invites an intimate connection with the material, as the clay carries the imprint of each touch, recording every movement and decision. Unlike wheel-thrown ceramics, which can create precise symmetry and control, the pinch pot retains a rawness that mirrors the organic, unpredictable nature of life itself.

In leaving each pot unglazed, I allow its rough edges and imperfections to remain visible, much like the scars left on the landscape by human intervention. Each vessel, fragile yet resilient, became a metaphor for the birds depicted upon it—creatures navigating a world increasingly altered by habitat destruction, climate change, and human encroachment. By firing only once and using underglaze without a protective coating, I minimized energy consumption, aligning the process itself with the environmental message of the work.

The use of sgraffito—a technique that involves scratching through underglaze to reveal the lighter clay beneath—added another layer of meaning. This method of carving away at the surface is both an act of creation and erosion, mirroring the delicate balance between presence and loss that defines our relationship with the natural world. Each etched line became a way of paying attention, a way of acknowledging the intricate relationships between species and their habitats.

As the year progressed, the ritual of shaping, painting, and scratching became more than a technique; it became a meditation. The process of observing a bird closely enough to render its likeness deepened my appreciation for its form, behaviour, and character. In turn, I hoped that viewers would also pause—if only for a moment—to consider the beauty and vulnerability of these creatures.

Evolution of Practice and Connection

At the outset of this project, I imagined it as a discipline in endurance and observation, but I had not anticipated the depth of connection it would foster. As I created, I found myself not only learning about each species—its habits, markings, and ecological role—but also developing a profound emotional attachment to the birds themselves. The more I observed, the more I saw: the tension in a wing before flight, the intelligence in a gaze, the delicate interplay of feather patterns.

This deepened attention transformed the way I experienced my surroundings. I became more attuned to the calls of birds outside my window, the shifting seasons, the silent presence of species that too often go unnoticed. The practice of daily making led to a heightened awareness—one that extended beyond the studio and into the world around me.

While most of the birds depicted in this collection are native to Australia, a few 'visiting' species—often known by other names elsewhere—found their way into the flock (which a few of the Twitchers amongst you may notice!).



2

3



4



5



6



7





- 1 **Red-winged Fairy-wren — 18 April**
2024
Ceramic
~ 7 cm
- 2 **Currawong — 8 November**
2024
Ceramic
~ 8 cm +
- 3 The single biggest cause of bird extinction in Australia is habitat loss and degradation, primarily driven by human activities like agriculture, urbanization, and deforestation. She-oaks, particularly Black She-oaks, are a crucial food source for Glossy Black-cockatoos, as they feed almost exclusively on the cones and seeds of these trees.
- 4 **Glossy Black Cockatoo — 1 October**
2024
Ceramic
~ 8 cm +
- 5 Tree hollows are a critical part of many habitats for birds. They provide shelter and nesting sites — around 114 species of Australian birds rely on tree hollows for nesting or shelter and secure refuges from predators. Deforestation, development and fire/climate change have reduced the number and variety of trees and tree hollows.
- 6 **Black Throated Finch — 4 November**
2024
Ceramic
~ 4 cm
- 7 The Black-throated Finch, already endangered with an 80% population decline in the last 20 years, is further threatened by habitat destruction. The Adani Carmichael mine has decimated one of the key remaining populations, putting the entire species at greater risk.
- 8 **Star Finch — 16 December**
2024
Ceramic
~ 5 cm

Ingrid Burkett is a 3D mixed-media artist who uses art as a tool for understanding and transformation. With a background in graphic design, her work retains a strong graphic quality, blending artistic precision with the craftsmanship of making. Her choice of mediums is rooted in storytelling, evoking empathy, and inspiring action.

Committed to social and ecological justice, Ingrid's practice fosters deeper dialogue on sustainability and ethical creation. She actively challenges unsustainable production methods, opting for lower-energy firing, repurposed materials, and donating proceeds to habitat rehabilitation initiatives.

Her graphically inspired works explore interspecies relationships, inviting viewers to engage with other sentient beings and reimagine their connections through empathy and mutuality. Drawn to both performative and contemplative mediums, she works across puppetry, masks, craftivist events, and reflective art forms that encourage new ways of seeing, doing, and being.

Ingrid has exhibited widely in community exhibitions, is a regular participant in Art with Altitude (Mt Glorious), and is a founding member of Upatree Arts Cooperative, which focuses on making and performing with giant puppets. She is also a contributor to Range Made, a mobile gallery based in Mt Nebo. *Feathers and Fingerprints* marks her first solo exhibition.

All sales proceeds from the exhibition *Feathers + Fingerprints* will be donated to 'Birdlife Southern Queensland' to continue to support their conservation efforts



Back Ingrid Burkett in her studio
Photography Robert Lachowicz

Northern Scrub Robin — 17 May
2024
Ceramic
~ 5 cm

Above Install view

Design Designfront



sidegallery.com.au

We acknowledge the Yuggera and Turrubul people as the Traditional Custodians of the Country we live and work on at Side Gallery. We recognise their continuing connection to the land, waterways and skies, and thank them for protecting this region and its ecosystems since time immemorial. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all First Nations people, acknowledging too that they never ceded sovereignty of the land, skies and waterways.

