



# MERRICK FRY

'IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOON'  
ASSEMBLAGES

TUESDAY 7 - SUNDAY 26 JUNE 2022  
11AM - 5PM DAILY

OR BY APPOINTMENT

OPENING DRINKS  
SATURDAY 11 JUNE  
11AM - 5PM

**ARO GALLERY**  
51 WILLIAM STREET  
DARLINGHURST 2010

merrickfry.com  
mob: 0428 433 090

Ocean  
Mixed media assemblage in cigar box. 26 x 20 x 7 cm. 2021.



SCAN ME

## Artist Statement

*The work started late in 2019 with the idea of a single candle in the cosmos representing my son Luke's departure. I had picked up the fact that we are all made of stardust and return to the stars at the end of life. It is a huge comforting idea and I needed one for the grief I had. I started looking at the moon at night and the idea of being 'in the shadow of the moon' came not as a literal idea which is hardly possible, but as humans we know very little about the complexity of the universe and are insignificant, watching from the shadows. I have just read that about every 750 years the moon, sun and the earth line up in a total solar eclipse, and we are in the shadow of the moon, only for a few minutes. The works are diorama assemblages. I have used many materials with some having lights which come on with a remote.*

June 2022

Materials used: wood, cardboard, bark, glass, ceramic, shell, bone, wax, feathers, leather, various cloth, various metals, various plastics, various paints, and many found objects containing the above.

1  *PAPER SKIES* \$500.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
16 x 8 x 3 cm. 2022

2  *COW UNDER FULL MOON* \$2500.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
49 x 28 x 10 cm. 2021

3  *THE GROWTH OF MUSIC* \$2000.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
38 x 20 x 11 cm. 2021

4  *PULSATING STAR WITH HIDDEN MONK* \$2500.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
53 x 44 x 14 cm. 2021

5  *STONES CONVERSING WITH THE MOON* \$900.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
21 x 15 x 8 cm. 2022

6  *CELESTIAL CANDLE* \$4500.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
109 x 62 x 6 cm. 2020

7		<i>MAN UNDER THE MOON</i>  Mixed media - assemblage 46 x 15 x 4 cm. 2021	\$1300.00
8		<i>CORAL HOWLING AT THE MOON</i>  Mixed media - assemblage 43 x 33 x 8 cm. 2021	\$1800.00
9		<i>NOCTURNAL ROOS</i>  Mixed media - assemblage 31 x 19 x 8 cm. 2021	\$1000.00
10		<i>MOON WHISPERING TO A FOREST</i>  Mixed media - assemblage 60 x 26 x 6.5 cm. 2021	\$2200.00
11		<i>MOON MANDARIN</i>  Mixed media - assemblage 26 x 19 x 3 cm. 2021	\$750.00
12		<i>MOON DAM</i>  Mixed media - assemblage 27 x 20 x 3 cm. 2021	\$750.00

13



*ICE-CREAM MOON*

\$1400.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
38 x 25 x 8 cm. 2021

14

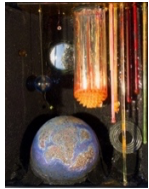


*BLACK HOLE WITH DARK MATTER*

\$2500.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
42 x 26 x 16 cm. 2021

15



*JURASSIC STAR SHOWER*

\$2600.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
45 x 34 x 19 cm. 2021

16



*KANDINSKY'S BLACK HOLE*

\$2400.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
33 x 33 x 12 cm. 2022

17



*GONDWANA CATHEDRAL*

\$2600.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
64 x 24 x 11 cm. 2021

18



*WHITE RABBIT DARK PLAGUE*

\$2600.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
53 x 44 x 14 cm. 2021








19



*STAR BIRTH*

\$1000.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
23 x 22 x 8 cm. 2021

20		<i>HOOT</i>  Mixed media - assemblage 30 x 16 x 8 cm. 2022	\$1200.00
21		<i>THE FOX WENT OUT</i>  Mixed media - assemblage 35 x 26 x 14 cm. 2021	\$2000.00
22		<i>DOMESTIC BIRD</i>  Mixed media - assemblage 44 x 38 x 9 cm. 2021	\$2400.00
23		<i>OCEAN</i>  Mixed media - assemblage 26 x 20 x 7 cm. 2021	\$750.00
24		<i>APPLE TREE</i>  Mixed media - assemblage 27 x 20 x 8 cm. 2021	\$750.00
25		<i>SATYR ANNOYING ANGELS</i>  Mixed media - assemblage 43 x 34 x 10 cm. 2021	\$1900.00
26		<i>SMOOCHING UNDER THE MOON</i>  Mixed media - assemblage 33 x 24 x 6 cm. 2021	\$1400.00

27



*RISING MOON WITH BOWER BIRD*

\$2500.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
54 x 30 x 9 cm. 2021

28



*MOON BOY*

\$750.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
27 x 20 x 9 cm. 2022

29



*ADRIFT*

\$4000.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
51 x 59 x 10 cm. 2022

30



*MOON REFLECTIONS*

\$4000.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
63 x 39 x 16 cm. 2021

31

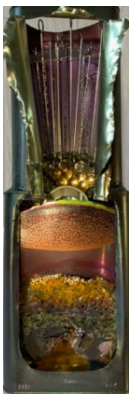


*DESERT FURNACE*

\$2400.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
53 x 21 x 12 cm. 2021

32



*COSMOS OVER ORCHARD*

\$2600.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
58 x 19 x 14 cm. 2021

33

*MOON FIRE*

\$2500.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
66 x 37 x 8 cm. 2021

34

*MIDDLE EARTH TO MOON*

\$2600.00

Mixed media - assemblage  
86 x 23 x 11 cm. 2021

## Biography

Merrick Fry was born in 1950 in Bathurst. He studied at the National Art School between 1971 and 1973 winning the NAS Drawing Prize (1972) which was judged by Lloyd Rees. He has been recognised with various articles/magazines and reviews.

He is a painter, sculptor, and draughtsman. He has had 27 solo exhibitions since 1978 and his work is part of many collections including:

*National Gallery of Australia  
National Art School, Sydney  
University of Sydney  
University of New South Wales  
University of Western Sydney  
Macquarie University  
University of Newcastle  
University of Wollongong  
Charles Sturt University*

*Bathurst Regional Art Gallery  
Dubbo Regional Art Gallery  
Goulburn Regional Art Gallery  
Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery  
Maitland Regional Art Gallery  
Manly Art Gallery & Museum  
Tweed Regional Gallery  
Wollongong Art Gallery*

*Fletcher Challenge Collection, Auckland NZ  
Westmead Children's Hospital, Sydney  
St Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst, Sydney*

*Private collections in Australia, England, Korea and the USA.*

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## 'IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOON' (an essay by Joy Murray)

I bought my first Merrick Fry work<sup>1</sup> in 2008. It was a kindly case with most of the front cut out and replaced by a perspex window. Inside was a long low boat with a row of white sails made of parchment or horn or false fingernails. It seemed perilously low on the stormy sea. Above the ship was a midnight sky lit by a brilliant star, with many small stars caught in the deep blue mesh of the sky that hung over the boat and melted into the ocean. It stirred a world of childhood poems and stories, echoes and memories – memories conjured by this artist who allows his curiosity free range and invites us to join him.



*'Starry Night' 21 x 25 x 10 cm. 2008 mixed media*

And now I look at it again. I hold a torch to the back of the box and see stars shining through. I hold it to the top of the box and see the huge glass diamond casting light on the boat, and six or seven small stars casting their light on the sea. I shine the torch into the box and notice something I'd never seen before. Is it an island rising up out of the sea, black against the sky? Is that the silhouette of a tree on the island? It's too hard to see – maybe it's a smoking volcano. And the mirrors inside the box at either end – I'd forgotten them – endlessly mirroring each other, the blue-black sky with its stars and the deep grey sea and the boat; but I can't see the boat I only know that it will be there, infinitely reflected.

And now it's dark outside the house and I hold the box up to the soft ceiling light. I tilt it and twist it. The many facets of the huge central star cast patterns of light across the sky. The diamantes that dangle from the top of the box create shimmering rainbow-tinged ray that appear to be swimming just below the surface of the sea. And the boat ploughs on through the dark.

And that's the art of this artist – Merrick Fry – creating wonder that reveals itself slowly – memories of my childhood mixed up with memories of first encountering the work; and then memories of its familiarity; and then discovering it again, and seeing a different work unexpectedly revealed when I thought I already knew it. But I didn't know it and won't ever because there is no *it*. This wonder is created somewhere in the space between us – between me and this magic box of possibilities sent sailing off into the world by an artist of great intellect and skill. And that's what he does – he creates possibilities.

And now it's 2022. We are into our third year of COVID lockdowns, restricted travel, and an almost total lack of government support for the Arts. Even so artists have found ways to nourish our souls. They have kept us going with online concerts, plays and operas. They've created music and dance, each player from their home, coming together as an ensemble online to inspire and make us laugh. And Merrick – creating wonders in his attic studio, the world locked out and the vastness of the night sky streaming in – creating for us this feast of infinite possibilities in the shadow of the moon.

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<sup>1</sup> *Scored Moments* exhibition, Manly Art Gallery, 2008.



## A tantalising glimpse of those possibilities

But what shadow does the moon cast? Who or what can ever be in its shadow? Like us it is lit by the sun, as we cast shadows so must the moon. Yet the more I wonder about it the more its meaning seems to melt away. The artist says that he doesn't know if the moon has a shadow, he's never seen it but is constantly "looking for it with delight". And the energy of that delight has found its way into every one of these boxes.

Merrick Fry presents us with a feast that deals with massive themes of endless creation and the continuity of all things through transformations of scale and time. In one of our many discussions he said that his "boxes are made of many materials that are in the process of entropy, they like us are returning to the cosmos. They are made of star dust and will return to their origin".

There's a play on this idea throughout the whole of these works. Nothing is lost; matter is indestructible, its shape shifts in a constant state of becoming. The particles that make up these assemblages – that moon – could have been part of distant galaxies come together to make this moon here, now.

But there's something else as well, something more grounded, tactile, and familiar, making for us a platform from which to take-off into the unknown territory of black holes, dark matter and dark energy. The particles that make up these assemblages have come together – or been brought together – into earth-bound, recognisable stuff. The artist takes this stuff from its familiar surroundings – driftwood from the beach or a disk of red plastic from the bottom of a bucket – and with it creates something new. Like particles of star dust organising themselves into worlds, Merrick takes earth bound objects and organises them into his worlds, magic boxes, making maps of cosmic territory to help us on our way.

In doing so he creates new territory, which we in discussion, map again in words. Thus, we become part of this endless creation. When Korzybski said the map is not the territory<sup>2</sup> he was talking, in part, of this infinite circularity of abstraction and recreation. In Merrick's work we see, and become part of, a microcosm of the circularity of all things.

We are also reminded in these works that we are part of this circularity in other ways too. The artist provides visions of endless time and the vastness of space while reminding us that in our current form we are a fleeting speck in time and space and will soon be gone. In *Moon Fire* we see a moon that looks on as we go about our business carelessly destroying our planet. The playfulness of the artist and the carefree lives of the tiny figures conspire to distract us from what's really happening. And while we're intent on destruction the other creatures with which we share this planet go about their business: the cow waiting patiently under the glow of the full moon in *Cow Under Full Moon*; the horses *Smooching Under [the] Moon* oblivious to the destructive potential of human life surrounding them; the kangaroos comfortable in the moonlight (*Nocturnal Roos*); and the fox, off being a fox in *The Fox Went Out*.

Then there's the slightly startled, slightly worried *Domestic Bird* still on its perch with the window wide open. Does it realise there's something more than its own reflection, something outside itself, to be wondered at; all the ancient mysteries of the moon hanging in an infinite cosmos with its myriad cultural and philosophical manifestations. Maybe it's satisfied that the books on its bookshelf hold everything it will ever need to know.

In other works, we see the continuity of time and space, heaven and earth. There's the mysterious pipe organ revealed by the heavy satin curtains peeling back above the orchard – the mighty music of the cosmos towering above the fragile and transitory beauty of the earth in *Cosmos over Orchard*. Then I look again and notice there are sharp edges to this fantasy and a brutality enclosing the magical pipes with their sharp points and baubles. Is it the big bang of our beginnings or is there a future bombshell awaiting us? After all everything is transitory. Nothing remains the same. In the *Gondwana Cathedral* a different pipe organ presides over a different time, a different land – Gondwanaland which took around

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<sup>2</sup> Bateson, Gregory (1970) Alfred Korzybski Memorial Lecture: Form, Substance, and Difference. Address given 9 January, Harvard Club, New York

500 million years to form and then break up again. Now shift scales in time and space to the *Moon Mandarin*, what could be more transient than this mandarin in its current form.

Everything is connected. We are all parts of a whole that is always more than the sum of us. And so it goes: from *Middle Earth to the Moon* and beyond. From the core to the mantle and the fragile crust with its tiny figure balanced precariously on the edge of the abyss, then on through merging layers of the earth's atmosphere and beyond into outer space where the moon sits like an all-seeing eye, everything is connected. We see this in the *Desert Furnace* with its delicate bones layered through the earth's crust as the blood-red moon presides over the desert. Is this a warning of times to come or a picture of the natural settling of things – the transformation that has gone on for millennia and will continue long after our bones take their place in the substratum. Is the *Man under the Moon* a part of this grand settling, soon to be transformed by the rich loam of the forest floor and the trees that shelter him? Nothing is ever lost, but always transformed in a continuous process of becoming.

And yet, as the artist points out, while we might know a lot about what happens on earth when it comes to the universe, according to CERN<sup>3</sup> “[T]he matter we know and that makes up all stars and galaxies only accounts for 5% of the content of the universe”, which allows Merrick's vision free range as he leaves the earth behind entirely making his own maps of black holes, dark matter and dark energy. *Black Hole with Dark Matter* made me think of CERN's Hadron Collider, the world's most powerful particle accelerator that sends particles whizzing around a 27-kilometre ring of superconducting magnets at close to the speed of light looking for clues about dark matter. They need look no further. As for *Kandinsky's Black Hole*, the folk at Quanta magazine<sup>4</sup>, struggling to map all particles and forces only need speak to the artist.

### **The map may not be the territory...**

...But maps create new territory to be explored. They carry with them their own heft. When asked the meaning of dance Australian dancer, Philippa Cullen<sup>5</sup> defined it as “an outer manifestation of inner energy in an articulation more lucid than language”. Merrick's inner energy is powerfully present in all of these works: occasionally darkly present but more often joyously, making visceral our experience of each work that words could never match. Thus whatever words I have used here are simply an attempt to recreate in a different medium the visceral experience of being in the presence of this vibrant, and sometimes vibrating, collection of surprises; this feast of infinite possibilities.

Returning to where I began, this experience for me is created somewhere in the space between me and the work. There is no *it*, all possibilities exist for all of us to explore for ourselves and delight in.

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<sup>3</sup> European Council for Nuclear Research: <https://home.cern/science/physics/dark-matter>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.quantamagazine.org/a-new-map-of-the-standard-model-of-particle-physics-20201022/>

<sup>5</sup> Cullen, Philippa (Spring 1989), 'Towards a philosophy of dance', in *Writings on Dance*, 4. *Making History*, pp. 18-25.

QR Codes to short films about this exhibition



*Artist Statement:*

About 'IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOON'.

Includes: *CORAL HOWLING AT THE MOON, DOMESTIC BIRD, STAR BIRTH & BLACK HOLE WITH DARK MATTER.*



*Short film #2*

Whimsical use of illumination within certain assemblages.

Includes: *THE FOX WENT OUT, STONES CONVERSING WITH THE MOON, PULSATING STAR WITH HIDDEN MONK, MIDDLE EARTH TO MOON & MOON REFLECTIONS.*



*Short film #3*

Fascination in materials and how each recycled piece collected has its own quality and will do something to the eye.

Includes:  
*SMOOCHING UNDER THE MOON, WHITE RABBIT DARK PLAGUE & GONDWANA CATHEDRAL*



*Short film #4*

The making of *ADRIFT* and the magic of using unique objects from years of collecting.



*Short film #5*

The making of *CELESTIAL CANDLE*. The first work created that led to this exhibition.