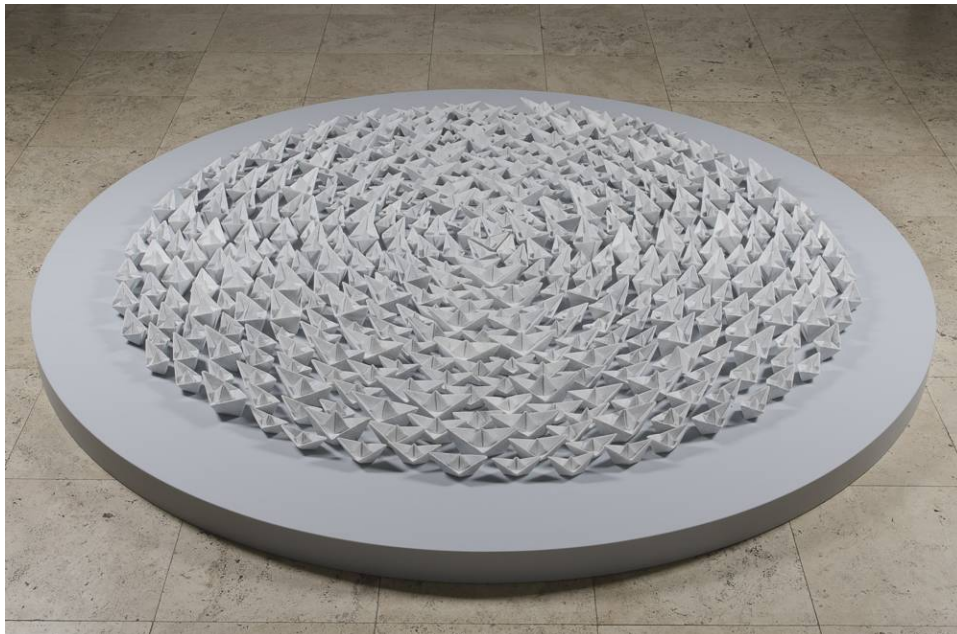


Public support helps Newcastle gallery acquire Paper Armada

AUGUST 15 2018
MATT CARR



Paper Armada. Picture: Newcastle Art Gallery

A FLOTILLA of paper boats has become part of the Newcastle Art Gallery collection after a flood of donor support.

The gallery has acquired Alex Seton's Paper Armada 2015 more than a year after the Newcastle Art Gallery Society backed calls for community help to buy the artwork.

Lord mayor Nuatali Nelmes said private donors from around the country pitched in alongside the council, the gallery society, the gallery foundation and gallery guides.

"This was truly a community effort," she said.

"The work itself is stunning - both in its beauty but also in representing the perilous journeys refugees often take in unseaworthy boats, risking their lives to escape persecution."

The work consists of a marble installation of 400 carved 'origami' style boats.

Seton, a nationally and internationally exhibited artist based in Sydney, chose that figure to represent the approximate number of refugee boats forcibly turned back during Operation Sovereign Borders.

His major solo exhibition *The Island* was developed with Newcastle Art Gallery in 2017.

Gallery director Laretta Morton said the gallery had kept an eye on *Paper Armada* since then.



Paper Armada. Picture: Newcastle Art Gallery

"We've coveted this work since it was first installed in the Gallery as part of *The Island* exhibition," said Gallery Director Laretta Morton.

"It was the star of the show. I am so proud that Newcastle has secured it for future generations to view and appreciate.

"People gave so willingly, some donors 'bought boats' on behalf of their grandchildren and partners, with several donors visiting the Gallery from interstate. The community support was a huge indicator to me that this was a nationally relevant work of art that we had to keep in Newcastle."

The flotilla installation is the fourth Seton work in the Newcastle collection. It joins *Bake a nice cake - pram* 2008, which was donated by the Newcastle Art Gallery Foundation in 2008.

Video work *Left Turn at Albuquerque* 2017 was purchased with funds raised through the gallery's voluntary coin donation box. Seton most recently donated *Oilstone 04_Saturated* 2016, made of Bianco Carrara marble, engine oil and a transparent acrylic tank.