

TIMEOUT

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Bugged by bugs



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Maria Hildrick's mantelpiece is full of curious collectables.

Her finds include trinkets, ceramics, dead bugs, butterflies, shed skins, bug wings, skeletal limbs, feathers and a dried-up suicidal fish that had jumped out of the pond.

But the bugs are what capture her attention.

She loves them. She has always loved them, but when Dublin-born Maria came to Australia she was overwhelmed by the variety and size of them.

And now her living room in Woodlands is full of giant bugs.

For this year's Sculpture by the Sea on Cottesloe beach, Maria has made 15 huge black-and-white bugs that will crawl up and perch on the branches of trees near the surf lifesaving club.

Objects have always been a source of fascination for Maria, who moved between England and Ireland as a child and then back-packed her way to Australia, never having the chance to gather and collect the oddities children always love.

"I see so much in those little things that other people miss," Maria said, describing how her paintings detail tiny, seemingly insignificant details.

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Painting has always been at the core of Maria's art practice, and she says of her sculptural bugs, "I think of them as 3D drawings".

The bugs have skeletons of chicken wire strengthened with cardboard, and bodies fashioned from papier-mache and then pulped paper – which she makes in the blender.

Painted with black-and-white enamel paint, each bug has its own identity, its own unique markings and its own personality.

Maria said she was thinking of naming each one after the friends who had helped at her papier-mache parties to make the 90 bugs legs.

Her bugs will be climbing trees at Sculpture by the Sea from March 7 to 24.