

BLOCK WORK

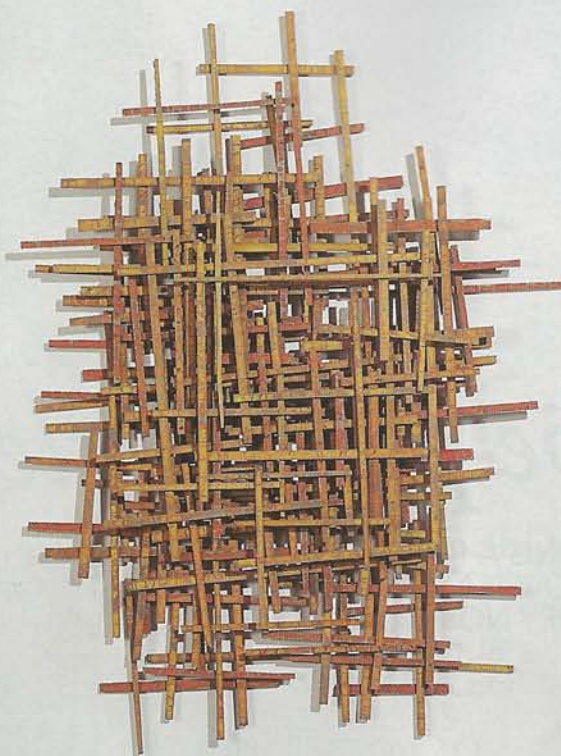
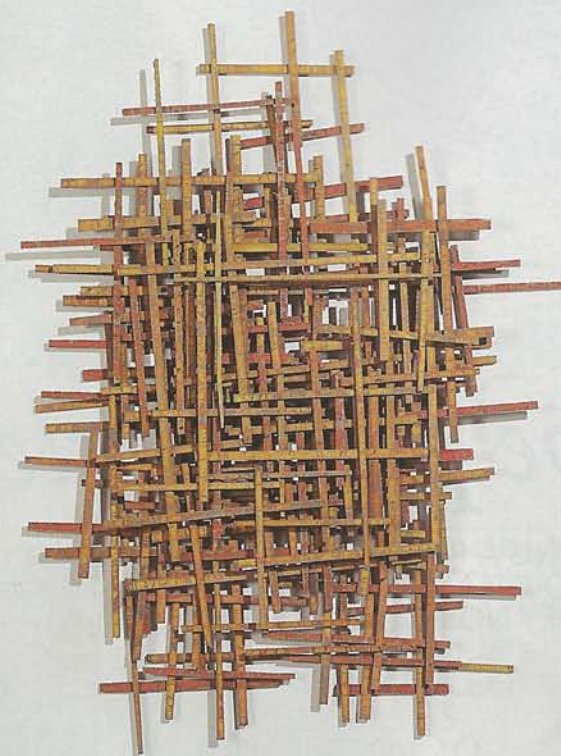
Emerging artist Jason Fitzgerald seeks inspiration from the furniture-factory floor, shape-shifting and sculpting wooden scraps into innately abstract forms.



Fragile strips of timber are woven together in nest-like webs in Fitzgerald's Brisbane studio for *Sunset Rookery* and *Arctic*. Cubes are sliced, shaved and prematurely aged and scoured before assemblage in pixelation-like patterns, above, that represent

A photograph of Jason Fitzgerald sitting on the floor in his studio. He is wearing a black t-shirt with the text 'TRIPLE SPD' and blue jeans. Behind him is a large, complex sculpture made of many thin wooden sticks and beams, some painted in various colors like blue, green, and red. The background is a wall covered in a dense, colorful mosaic of small wooden pieces.

Fitzgerald takes a rare breather among works for his first solo exhibition at Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane. The professional French polisher and cabinetmaker uses timber offcuts from his workplace to recreate lost worlds that suggest intricate natural patterns of infinite scope.



SINCE BEING OFFERED his first solo exhibition earlier this year, Jason Fitzgerald hasn't taken a day off. The cabinetmaker and French polisher-turned-artist doesn't hanker for holidays and leisure time, but is instead consumed by passion for his art.

"I knock off work at three o'clock, have a coffee and go straight to the studio," he says. Fishing trips to Moreton Bay and other once-favourite pastimes are on hold, as is the final year of his degree at the Queensland College of Art. "I'm in no rush to finish my formal studies. I get a huge amount from my interaction with fellow students, but I just love doing the work. It's developing all the time."

Such contented commitment results in an intense production schedule. Mesmerising sculptural assemblages are created from pine offcuts gleaned from the floor of the factory where he works. Notions of recycling aren't part of the agenda – the little blocks and sticks are simply a means for creating abstract worlds of mysterious pattern and repetition. "As a kid, I loved exploring the natural environment," Fitzgerald adds. "I grew up near a creek and was always finding little inexplicable, unidentifiable things. They fascinate me, and I love broken things – seeing the decay, the fading, the scars."

The frail building blocks of the work are subject to a five-month ageing process of stripping, painting, sanding, slicing, and shaving, before being dipped into 'dirty old paints', then connected in beautiful, abstract arrangements of colour and shape.

It comes as no surprise that Fitzgerald was a Lego addict as a child. He thinks of the works as 'lost worlds' and the nomenclature sometimes references mysterious landscapes from the world of gaming. "I love the landscapes of architectural ruins that you see in computer games," he says. Epic battles and plagues also seem to have their place, with names such as *Colony* and *Swarm Warning*.

Some pieces have a more natural derivation and quieter demeanour. Their surface planes ripple into a strange topography of crevasses and peaks, hinting at a deeper universe at play. As Fitzgerald notes, "I like to let the viewer decide what they're looking at."

MARGIE FRASER
Jason Fitzgerald is represented by Jan Murphy Gallery, 486 Brunswick Street, Brisbane; (07) 3254 1855, janmurphygallery.com.au.