

Nicholas Charles Folland
(1967–)

Omen 1: The shape of this place

2023

spun polyester bunting

Commissioned with the support
of the Australian Government's
RISE Fund

Courtesy of the artist

OWI ST

**‘What to do then, when
our past is littered with
rumours of omens?
Accounts pieced
together that seem to
imply a foretelling.’**

**—Nicholas Charles Folland,
excerpt, Artist Statement,
2023**

**One of the artist’s
ancestors was Lieutenant
Charles French Robbins
(1782–1805) who
accidentally hoisted
the Union Jack upside-
down on King Island on
8 December 1802 when
claiming the land for
Britain. To fly your own
nation’s flag upside-
down is sign of warning,
which the bemused
French who were camped
nearby recognised. Three
years later, Robbins was
mysteriously lost at sea.**

CVVIST

Artist unknown

Portrait of Charles French Folland 1

nd

pastel on paper

Courtesy of the artist

CVWIST

Artist unknown

**Portrait of Charlotte
Folland (née Vickery)**

nd

pastel on paper

Courtesy of the artist

CVWIST

Nicholas Charles Folland
(1967–)

Omen 2: The shape of this place

2023

timber plinth, Tasmanian
dolomite

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NEWCASTLE

Shy Albatross
Thalassarche cauta

Tasmania, 1979

Preparator: Des Barker

B8721

ICWIST

Shy Albatross
Thalassarche cauta

Tasmania

Preparator: attributed to
Brian Looker

B8726

CVI ST

Mariners believed that an albatross was an omen of good luck – to shoot one invited disaster.

Growing up on stories of his adventurous long-lost cousin, in 1839 Charles French Folland (b.1814) sailed to Australia with his pregnant wife Charlotte and their baby girl.

On seeing a large bird – probably an albatross – Folland asked the captain to lower a row-boat if he shot it. The captain bluntly refused. Regardless, he and his friend fired at the bird, then Folland leapt into the ocean to retrieve the carcass. Tragically, before the ship reached port Charles and Charlotte lost two baby daughters.

WILST

Samuel Taylor Coleridge
(1772–1834)

Rime of the Ancient Mariner

London: Art Union: 1863,
illustration no. 7

Lithographic illustrations by
Joseph Noël Paton (1821–
1901)

Presented by Miss EE Morris, 1984

AG4404

WILST

Knut Bull (1811–1889)

Sketchbook

1846 unpaginated

pencil and watercolour

Plimsoll Bequest 1997

AG5951

CVI ST

**Wandering Albatross
chick *Diomedea
exulans***

Macquarie Island, 1987

Preparator: Kathryn Medlock

B4297

CVI ST

Shy Albatross
Thalassarche cauta

Clifton Beach, 1985

Preparator: Kathryn Medlock

B4258

CVI ST

The first European record of an albatross from 1593 tells us how the bird was captured, killed and eaten. Since then, albatross have been widely exploited for their meat and feathers, as well as falling victim to fisheries' by-catch and the impacts of introduced predators.

To help understand these birds, some specimens are prepared as museum 'study skins', which form a physical record of where species live. These are a valuable source of information about how populations have changed over time, with new research tools unlocking a wealth of information that helps us to conserve these remarkable birds.

—David Hocking,
Senior Curator, Vertebrate
Zoology and Palaeontology,
TMAG, 2023

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