



For immediate release

...SMASHING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS...

...A compelling illustration of artistic activism...

From the whaling and refugee controversies, to her own opus of fine art, Australian artist Penny Byrne makes many debateable statements in her latest exhibition, *Political Porcelain*, which opens at the Museum of Australian Democracy on Friday (July 1).

With a background in human rights law, Byrne's latest showing demonstrates her satirical viewpoint and confronts a number of contemporary political issues, presenting an ongoing inquiry into popular culture and international politics.

Featuring in the exhibition are pieces which include; *Hiroshi and his friends having a whale of a time* – a piece on environmental vandalism; *It's beginning to look a bit like Christmas* – a focus on refugees cramming onto leaking boats bound for Australia; *How much can a polar bear?* – addressing climate change on the Arctic icecaps; and more.

Political Porcelain conveys Byrne's concern, anger or amusement and voices her views on social justice, the war and environment. It is a compelling illustration of the artist as activist.

Byrne, known around the world as a conservator of fine art, continues her controversial approach in her latest exhibition, which sees her partly destroy damaged antiquated ceramic objects and manipulated figurines and reconstruct them into works depicting a political message.

This art form is ironic when juxtaposed with her profession as conservator of high-end ceramic art, where she normally spends her days conserving, repairing and restoring such pieces. And it was a struggle for her in the first instance.

“The first time I felt really terrible. As a professional conservator you’re trained to respect the sanctity of an object and here I am with a hammer and chisel about to chop the head off a figurine,” says Byrne.

Byrne’s experience as a conservator however is the key to her success. The knowledge and expertise she’s gained as a conservator is integral to the quality of her artwork and leads to creations which are seamlessly executed and appear effortless.

Political Porcelain opens at the Museum of Australian Democracy, Old Parliament House, 18 King George Terrace Parkes, Canberra, from Friday July 1, 2011. The exhibition will be open to the public daily, from 9am to 5pm until July 2012. Visit www.moadoph.gov.au

Penny Byrne is represented by Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney.

For further information or to speak with artist Penny Byrne, please contact:

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