

# SAWTOOTH

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## Lifted & Shifted

Will French

FRONT GALLERY 28 June – 20 July 2013



'Lifted & Shifted' is a collection of recent works by Will French. Exploring a variety of themes including identity, nationalism, mortality, legacy and exchange. In these he seeks to propose questions that encourage the viewer to consider his perspective. After a period of extended travel overseas the artist's practice moved from kinetic and sculptural to a more restrained, transportable and conceptual manner, which he as followed and honed into the style shown here at Sawtooth. Including a diverse manner of production the works are 'lifted' in embossing, print or copy and 'shifted' in context, concept or hemisphere. The works follow a wry humour that articulates whatever concerns happened to be on the artists mind, be that personal or national or universal. Will French plays with constructions, appropriation and the 'ready-made', tweaking and twisting to read in manner that is both familiar and at the same time uncanny.

*Image Credit: CAUSE & DEFECT (2011) Appropriated Map: Courtesy of the Artist*  
[www.willfrench.com.au](http://www.willfrench.com.au)

**1: Message is the Medium (2011) Watercolour pencil on aquarelle block, first page.**

The cover of this iconic watercolour block has been sliced off and the first page painted to replicate the cover. The materials used to depict the cover are the aquarelle watercolour pencils it is intended for. The remaining unused 19 pages are hidden beneath the first never to be used. A reference to plein air painting it marks the lineage and the legacy of what has come before and the possibilities of what is yet to come.

**2: IOU (2012) Antique wool nautical flags. (letters I – O – U ) 3.2m x 1.8m**

This work is a nod to those who have and those who might lend a hand, offer advice or selflessly contribute to the path you take as an artist. Artists often need to ask favours of one others and there is a longstanding list of mutual indebtedness. IOU represents this unspoken area of gratefulness that artists hold, an attribute that unites and defines artists.

**3: WOW (Wild Oscar Wilde) (2011)**

Wax pigment (lipstick) on archival paper with embossing. Performance Remnants / Documentation.  
Performed at the tomb of Oscar Wilde, Père Lachaise Cemetery, Paris August 2011.

An unplanned performance at Père Lachaise Cemetery this work is a quiet moment with Oscar Wilde. Visiting the cemetery as a tourist I had just bought paper at the art suppliers. On seeing the grave in its grandeur and covered in lipstick kisses, I was inspired to engage with it. I had finished reading 'A picture of Dorian Grey' and his portrayal of an artist was still in the forefront of my mind as was the resurfacing debate about same sex marriage. My response was one of awe. The sentiment WOW is how I responded – registering the paper against the W of Wilde and the O of Oscar, I set about stealing some of his kisses as I embossed the letters.

Two months after this performance, the grave was acid cleaned and restored to its original condition, then a glass wall was erected around it. I see this work as a remnant of the performance but also of the graves former condition.

**4: This Will Never Last (self fulfilling prophecy) (2011) Performance Documentation. Performed at Laval de Pradinas, France. Archival digital photograph of chalk on concrete 42cm x42cm**

This work is a series of photographs taken over twelve days in Spring 2011 between two residencies in Europe. There was a five-week gap of 'homelessness', which was fortunately avoided by an old friend offering me a barn in the middle of nowhere in southern France to stay. It was incredibly beautiful as the season changed and the landscape quickly changed with it. Undoubtedly, this was a moment too good to last. I wrote the phrase 'This will never last' as a meditation on embracing the moment – filling every day to the brim while I could. The chalk text was on the concrete step of the front door, what is unseen is the view of rolling green hills and cows and valleys that it looked out on, although the words remind me of it everyday.

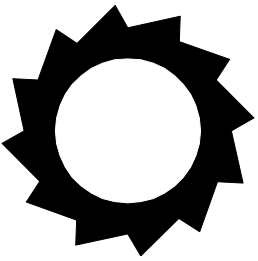
**5: xox sos (2013) Fabricated cocktail flags, on toothpicks. Archival colour digital print.**

Using a mix of semiotics and signals the flags here depict a form of communication that no longer is used or widely understood. The top three flags are black and white representations of X's and O's and the bottom three are the nautical flag letters S, O and S. Here it depicts a loss of understanding, a breakdown in communication and a universal method of displaying distress. Articulating the artists own attempts to depict despair as matters of the heart unravel uncontrollably.

**6: A Note On The Gate (2013) Embossed Rubbing of Kirribilli House Gates on Archival Paper. 830mmX630mm Framed**

After several attempts foiled by the Federal Police at Kirribilli House a dialogue and appeal to an officer for permission to touch the gate was hesitantly granted.

The gates are adorned with two Southern Cross icons cast into the historic iron gates. The embossing is of the southern cross from these gates. The work intends to readdress the icon itself as its current popularity as an image has obvious associations. It's historic placement on the gates has no association to its current trend in tattoo and t-shirt form, however it does pose a questions of current reading and poses, if there is a note on the gate, what does it say?



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**Picnic Table:**

**7: Context (Camouflage) (2011) 'Fishermans Friend' on marble floor, Stockholm Stadbibliotek, Sweden – Archival digital print.**

Accidentally dropping a 'Fishermans Friend' breath-mint whilst at the Stockholm Stadbibliotek presented a wonderful and simple realisation. Much like the wonders of nature that hide in their environment using camouflage to survive, so can a simple mint. It's just a matter of context. It took ten minutes to find and when I did I was amazed how perfectly it matched the marble floor of this iconic building. Photographed, it presented as an abstract and unrecognisable image, similar to an aerial or macro photograph of strange and unfamiliar places. In fact it's a moment of realisation – everything can hide somewhere – you just have to find the right place.

**8: Cause & Defect (2011) Found World Map, appropriated, 72cm x 52cm**

The audience is encouraged to consider what it would be like if London was a 2 hour train ride from Brisbane, and Paris; New York and Berlin only a further two. Imagine if you could drive from LA to New York, up to Canada and then take a ferry to Perth and continue across Australia and then another ferry to Spain and across Europe. Imagine the effect this would have on the cultural exchange?

**9: This Will Never Last (2011) Chalk on Slate.**

Written in 2011 during a period of grieving, the lipped edge of the slate has protected the chalk as it travelled round the world to be exhibited here in Launceston. It is a reminder that nothing lasts. It is a positive reflection upon this, in which the act of writing releases the concern from the psyche, allowing it to fade physically as well as internally. This continues the series in which the phrase is written in various ephemeral materials and documented as it fulfils its own prophesy.

**10: To Whom it May Concern (Infinite Unknown) (2011) Open letter in edition #3 of MONACO Magazine, London.**

**11: Self Portrait. (2011) Blackboard paint on Archival paper. 29cm x 42cm**

Using my face as a paint brush it's essentially a one stroke painted self portrait. A reduction to a single movement - pressing paper against my painted face.

**12: Letter to Qantas, (Proposal)**

**13: WOW (MoMA) (2013) Postcard with embossing.**

This work is a response to the holdings of the collection at MoMA in New York, where some of the greatest works of art of the modern era reside. An exclamation – articulated in relation to previous work that acknowledges a great legacy of culture. Here the text of a loading dock sign is embossed to a postcard that depicts one of its masterpieces. The text of MoMA upside down is now a WOW –

En route from America via the post - it is expected to arrive at Sawtooth during the exhibition.

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