

A sculptor with the heart of a Lyon



Award-winning sculptor Jon Dixon has spent 20 years creating the Lyons Sculpture Park, near Heywood, in an organic and creative project that has no end.

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[/dropcap]f sculptor **Jon Dixon** had his way, this story would contain only a single sentence: "art is important".

"That's all you need to write," he says, as we start our tour of the 15-acre **Lyons Sculpture Park** that he and his wife, Chris, have created on their bush property 21km west of Heywood.

After walking just two or three minutes through what is a combination of sculpture, gardens, raw bush, and farmland it is patently clear, however, that one sentence is not going to cut it. Sorry Jon.

Indeed it is difficult to describe the park, because it refuses to slot into any simple category.

It is a “park”, but not a manicured one. It is a gallery, but without an entry fee or labels on any of the works. And it is full of stone, wood and metal sculptures, some of which are obvious to the eye, but also others that are tucked in nooks and crannies: up a tree, behind a bush, attached to a fallen log.



The natural bush on the 15 acre property is studded with gorgeous sculptures, including this one from pink dolomite.

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[/dropcap]he sculpture park – and the Dixon home – sits on what was once the township of Lyons and covers 30 individual titles: all half acre blocks that were once occupied by the small community built around the timber industry.

Jon and Chris bought the property 20 years ago, after Jon decided to quit his executive lifestyle and return to his first love of art.

“I was running my own industrial door company (in Melbourne) and I watched all of the company executives I knew climbing up the corporate ladder, stepping on heads along the way, burning people off along the way...and they were all miserable,” he said.

Once Jon and Chris, who is a secondary school English teacher, found the Lyons property, they knew it was the perfect place to stretch out and exercise their creativity.

Born in England, but raised in working-class New Zealand, Jon was immersed in the artistic and cultural symbols of the Maori people and this influence is clear in his style today.



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[/dropcap]ost of Jon's sculptures are worked from local limestone and bluestone, sometimes paired with "found" objects such as a recycled milk vat or a cemetery headstone, or the remnants of industrial farm machinery, equipment or tools. He also creates large metal sculptures, the most striking of which is a life-size silhouette of a rearing horse placed among the tall, yellowing grass of the property.

[box] **Jon has generously donated a gorgeous sculpture valued at \$600 to be given away to one lucky paid subscriber. [Click here for details](#) on how to win this wonderful piece.**[/box]

One of the engaging things about the park is that there is no particular theme and it moves easily from the abstract – an overgrown field full of female torsos – to the spiritual, such

as the “Stonehenge” style installation in a perfectly mown circle of a grass, to the political. The lack of labels or interpretive notes lets the viewer see what they want to see.

The raw bush, which Jon clearly loves and is slowly restoring to its native state, also contains a range of works, including a simple stone disc punctured with numerous holes.

Jon tells the story of a visiting Asian family who were captivated by this piece after he invited them to find “the most beautiful leaf” from the many gum leaves on the ground and place it into a hole.

“This was a family that, at home, had to drive two hours to find open space and here we have beautiful, natural bush. They stood here for a long time, just picking up leaves – dead ones, green ones – and placing them into the holes,” he said.

You are right, Jon. Art is (so) important.



[box type="bio"] Jon Dixon has received numerous accolades for his work, including winning the prestigious [Montalto Sculpture](#)

[Prize](#) in 2003. You can see more of Jon's work at his [website here](#) and find him on [Facebook here](#). The Lyons Sculpture Park is at 4143 Princes Highway, Lyons. Ph: 0437 000 433. Open daily 9am – 5pm. Free. [/box]



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