



Maudie Brady

Born 1974, Australia
Mother Teresa, 2022
bronze, edition 1/1
H 125 × W 46 × D 67 cm
ACU Art Collection
Commissioned 2021



E artcollection@acu.edu.au
W artandculture.acu.edu.au

Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building
174 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy
ACU St Patrick's Campus Melbourne

MOTHER
TERESA
MOTHER
TERESA
MOTHER
TERESA





Of humble origins, Mother Teresa (1910–1997) was widely recognised for her benevolent work with the “poorest of the poor”, the suffering and dying in eastern India. A missionary, teacher and selfless servant to the poor, she possessed great compassion and humility. Her deep respect for the individual was free from discrimination and condescension. Her charitable work was acknowledged with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, and it was intrinsic to her canonisation in 2016. Saint Teresa embodies the central messages of the Catholic faith and represents a nexus between the lived and spiritual realms.

The newly constructed flagship building on Australian Catholic University’s Melbourne campus honours this most recent of saints. The Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building (STKB) pursues the university’s practice of naming buildings after saints and prominent Catholic leaders, creating

a connection between Catholic heritage and the built space. The familiar name of Saint Teresa will resonate with students and broader university community alike, the modern saint exemplifying a message of compassion, humanity and respect.

The university has an abiding commitment to culture, which includes commissioning works of art. In 2021, award-winning artist Maudie Brady was commissioned to create a likeness of Mother Teresa for the STKB.

Maudie Brady graduated from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Arts and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Fine Art (Sculpture), before honing her sculpting skills in art and construction departments in the film and television industry. In 2013, she attended the Florence Academy of Art, Italy, where three years later she completed the Diploma of Figurative Sculpture; she now

teaches sculpture at the academy. As a mid-career artist, Brady has produced a series of engaging, sensitive and adventurous sculptures that capture the essential characteristics of her subjects, just as she has done with Mother Teresa. Of her vision for the STKB commission, Brady has said:

When one enters a large modern building full of strangers busily going about their day, it can feel intimidating and alienating. To combat this sense of displacement, [my] proposal is to place a welcoming larger-than-life bust of Mother Teresa in the ground-level foyer, her hand extending out to personally invite one to join the community. The portrait will convey a feeling of warmth, generosity, empathy and understanding. Most of all, the presence of the bust of Mother Teresa will serve to remind and inspire those who see it of a life lived in the name of compassion and service.

The process of creating the artwork was challenging for numerous reasons, not least because Brady lives and works in Florence and the commission was for a site-specific work in Melbourne. Distance and time zones were ever-present factors, and Brady and the curator relied heavily on photographs, video meetings that were often at a late or an early hour for one or the other, and a course of review and agreement at each stage of the project. Besides this, Covid-19 created great anxiety about delays, with the threat of Brady losing access to her studio during lockdowns.

Settling on a concept for the sculpture occurred through several iterations of clay maquette, which visually considered Mother Teresa’s age and pose, and the sculpture’s composition. Initially, it was thought that Mother Teresa would be portrayed as a young or middle-aged woman; eventually

it was agreed that she became widely recognisable much later in her life and this was important. Once the concept was developed, Brady recreated the maquette at full size in clay. She was keen to produce a larger-than-life bust, from the waist up rather than a full-length figure, for she wanted to draw the viewer’s attention to the kindness, empathy and compassion etched into her subject’s facial expression, evident also in her direct gaze, extended arm and welcoming body language. The mould for the final sculpture was then created in silicone and resin in Brady’s Florence studio, before being freighted to Fundere Fine Art Foundry in Melbourne for casting in bronze.

And why bronze? Brady originally considered creating the bust in white statuary marble. However, she didn’t want Mother Teresa to appear consumed by billowing white sari cloth; also, due to the size of the sculpture conceived, marble was considered too heavy. The perils and costs of transporting the precious work of art halfway around the world were also on the minds of all involved. While the pouring was successfully executed without issue, the application of the patina proved a tougher proposition. Again, the artist, foundry and curator were reliant on photography to achieve the shade of green that Brady ultimately envisaged. The result: a striking dark jade.

While the sculpture of Mother Teresa was the result of painstaking transnational collaboration, the vision and creative brilliance behind this work of art undoubtedly belongs to artist Maudie Brady.

Caroline Field
Curator, ACU Art Collection



TOP Water clay sculpt in progress
Silicone mould application
BOTTOM Resin case for silicone mould
De-moulding in progress
OPPOSITE Mother Teresa, 1986.
Photo Jean-Claude Delmas © AFP