

ATTACHMENT TO AGENDA ITEM

Ordinary Meeting

16 June 2020

Agenda Item 8.1 Tony Albert - Artwork Acquisition

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SAM Advisory Committee Meeting: Wednesday 22 April 2020

For Discussion

Donation and display of public artwork by Artist TONY ALBERT at the new SAM Forecourt

Recommendation:

That the Advisory committee support the acquisition by cultural bequest of House of Discards, 2019, by Tony Albert, to be displayed in public at the entrance of New SAM

1. Opportunity

Shepparton Art Museum has been offered the donation by cultural bequest of a major public artwork by Indigenous artist Tony Albert, *House of Discards*, 2019. The work is of a scale and material that it should be presented as a major public artwork in an external site. A large outdoor steel and acrylic sculpture reaching nearly 5 metres, the work is being offered to SAM by Sullivan + Strumpf, Albert's gallery, working on behalf of the artist.

The opportunity fulfils one of the original design briefs for the new SAM building, which was originally conceived as having a major public work at SAM's entrance. Budget considerations meant that this part of the project was eliminated at a very early stage. The potential acquisition of this work and display at the entrance of new SAM would fulfil this part of the new SAM business case and concept scope.

SAM's continuing commitment to work with our indigenous community and reflect, acknowledge and celebrate First Nations culture is reflected in our ongoing work. SAM is developing an Aboriginal engagement plan that will underpin our work. The opportunity to work more closely with Kaiela Arts, SAM's local Aboriginal art centre which will be co-located in SAM, is one we welcome.

Featured so prominently at SAM's entrance, and located within the SAM Collection, the proposed artwork demonstrates another tangible example of reconciliation in action.

2. The Artist



Tony Albert is currently represented in the SAM Collection with an early photographic work *We Can be Heroes*, 2013, acquired with the assistance of the Robert Salzer Foundation.

SAM has also recently worked with Albert to present a major text work as part of *Collector/ Collected*, a series of contemporary artists' responses to collecting and why we collect.

Albert's practice explores contemporary legacies of colonialism in ways which prompt audiences to contemplate elements of the human condition. Mining imagery and source material from across the globe, Albert draws

on both personal and collective histories to explore the ways in which optimism might be utilised to overcome adversity. His practice is concerned with identity and the ascribing of social labels; unpacking what it means to judge and be judged in the absence of recognition or understanding.

3. Artwork

House of Discards is an extension and progression of previous works made by Albert since 2011, that explored ideas around the 'play' of cards as metaphor and structural symbol relating to colonial and indigenous Australian histories. *House of Discards* speaks of unresolved pasts and futures to be told through its dual black and white card faces. Albert is also referencing the imagery that often appears on the cards themselves, often featuring the artwork of Indigenous artists such as Albert Namatjira, or appropriated abstracted designs in the style of Indigenous art. Albert has called this kitch treatment and appropriation 'Aboriginalia', and directly references these uses and histories. The very structure of the card stack also refers to precariousness, as a house made of paper, that can also – stacked well – hold up quite substantial weights.



House of Discards, 2019, steel, acrylic. Image courtesy the artist and Sullivan and Strumpf © The artist. Photograph: Zan Wimberley. Displayed 2019 at Carriageworks.

3. Provenance

The work was originally commissioned work by Carriageworks in Sydney as part of the major exhibition *The National*, 2019. The exhibition, presented concurrently at AGNSW, MCA and Carriageworks, attracted significant critical acclaim as a major national First Nations led exhibition. See [http: the national](http://the-national) for further details.

Should the work enter the SAM collection, this major public work by an internationally recognised Indigenous Australian artist would be the only other permanent public site of Tony Albert's work. In May 2012 Tony Albert was commissioned as an official war artist and spent two weeks training with the North West Mobile Force (NORFORCE). As a result of his experiences in the Northern Territory Albert created a significant body of work celebrating the contribution of contemporary young Indigenous Australians to the defence of Australia.

YININMADYEMI Thou didst let fall, 2015 is located in Hyde Park, Sydney, and was commissioned by Albert to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who served in the nation's military.

The artwork features four standing bullets and three fallen shells, alongside a series of coolamins, or traditional holding vessels. The bullets reference global conflict, while their arrangement - with some standing and some fallen - represents those who survived and those who were sacrificed in the name of war and nationalism.

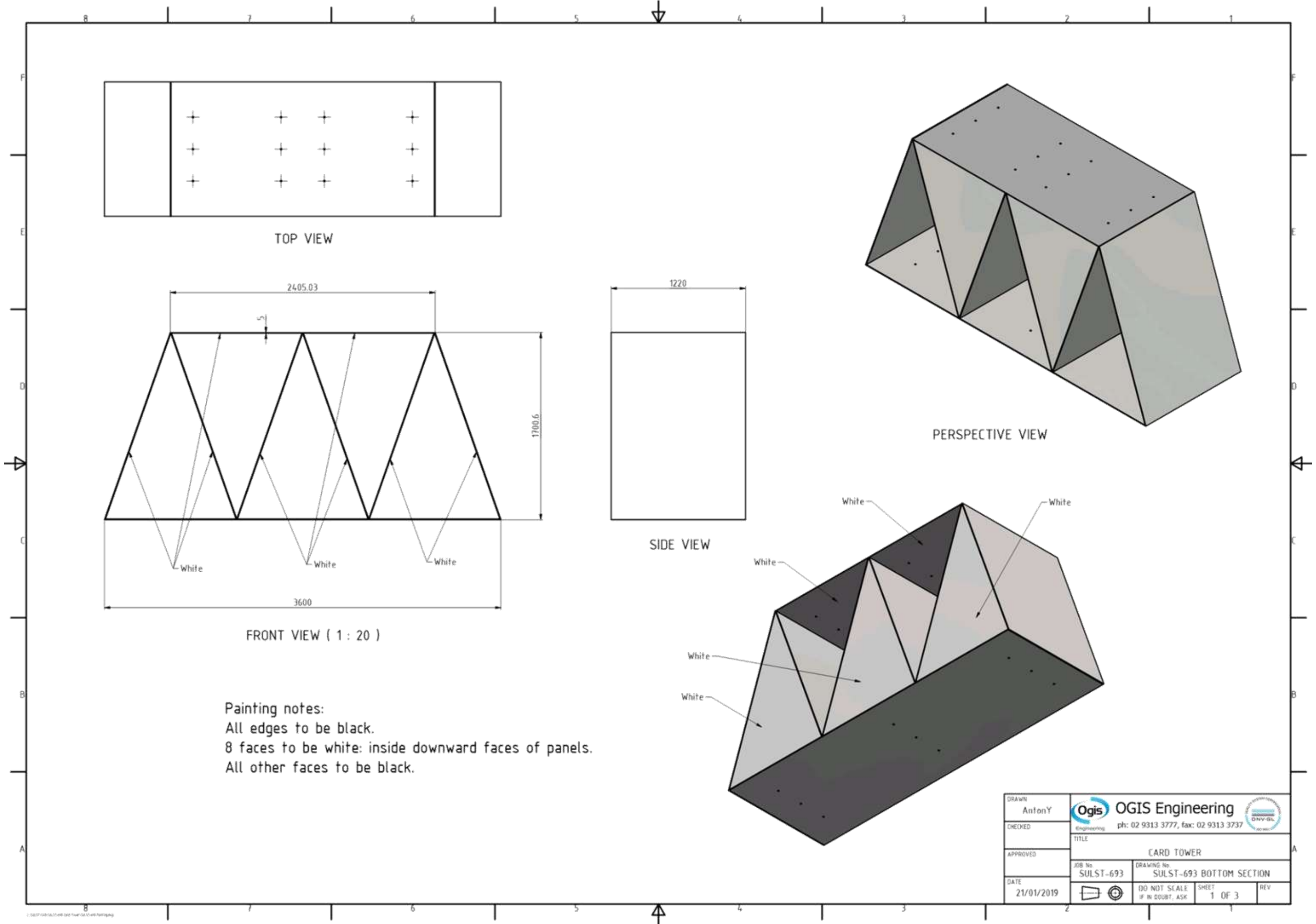


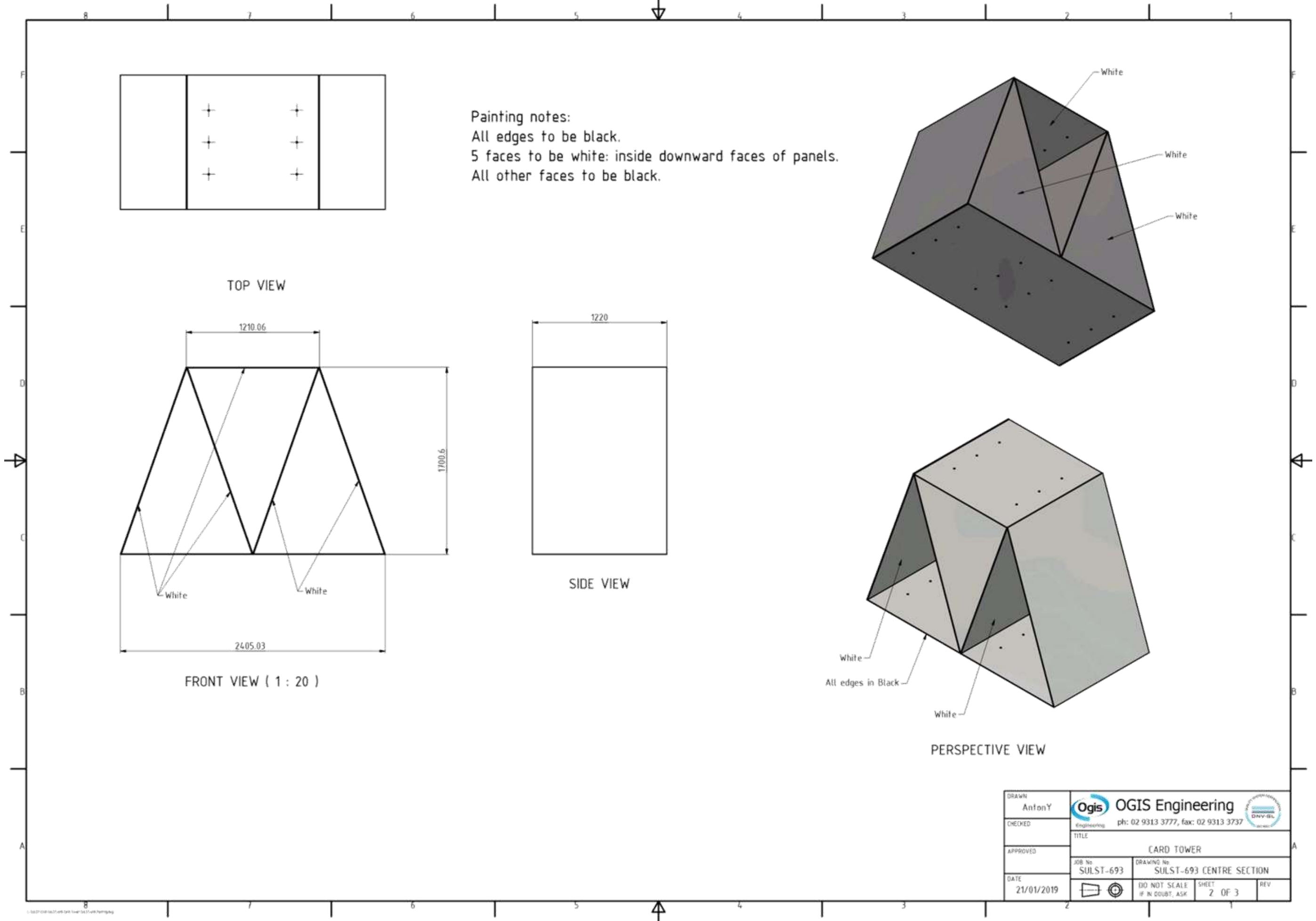
Photo: City of Sydney Paul Patterson.

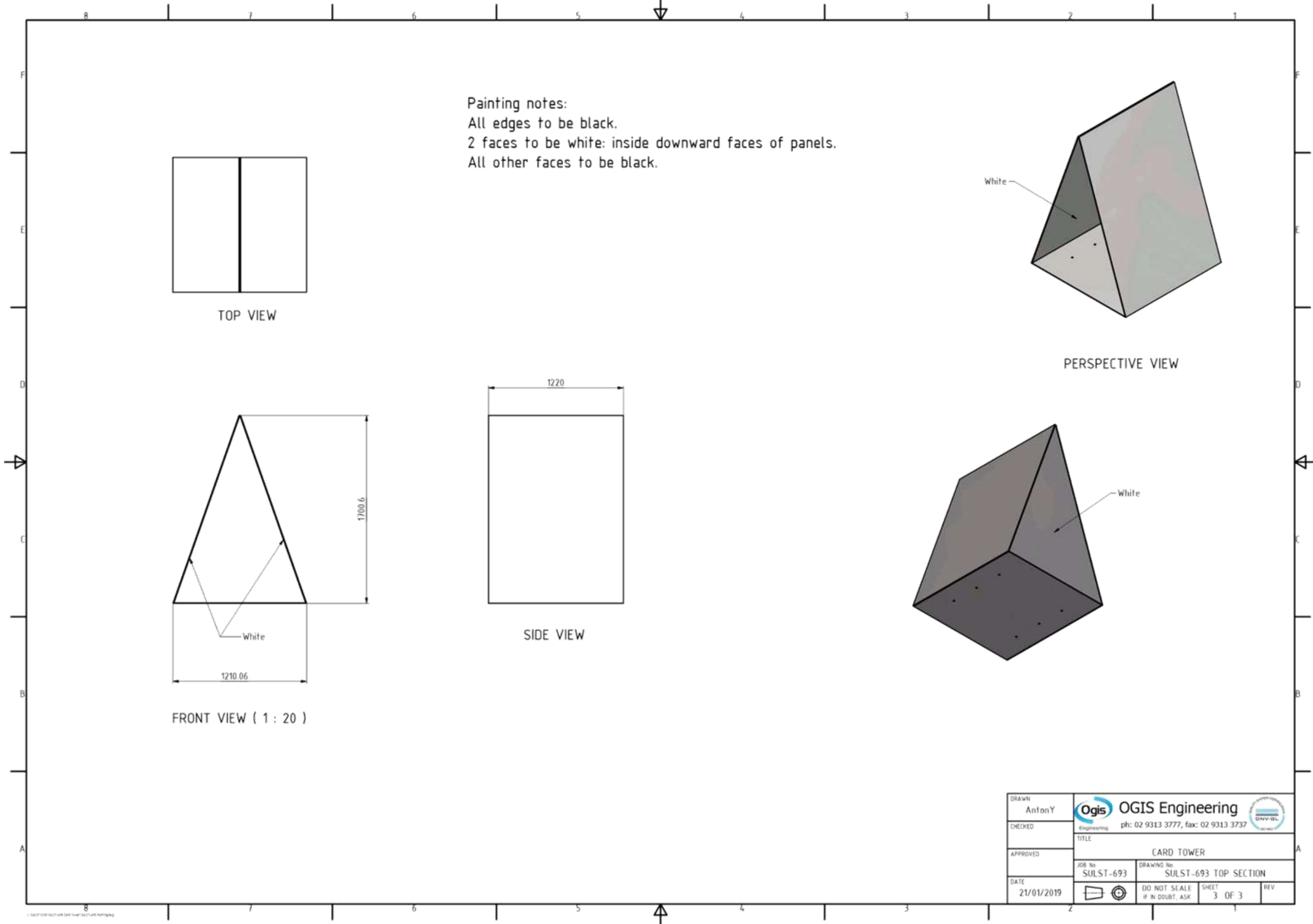
4. Considerations

- The work is currently being stored as a flat-pack in the warehouse in Sydney
- To install this public art work we would use our team of professional installers, working alongside professionals with suitable skills from the construction team
- We are currently working with the gallery to ascertain further information about duration of install, however, we do not envisage great time or difficulty in relation to installation
- The work is of a robust nature, and would lend itself to the proposed context and site
- The subject-matter, by an Indigenous artist with a history of working in our region, would be appropriate for the context and site
- The work would require appropriate lighting for illumination at night. Budget would need to come from the SAM Construction budget.

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