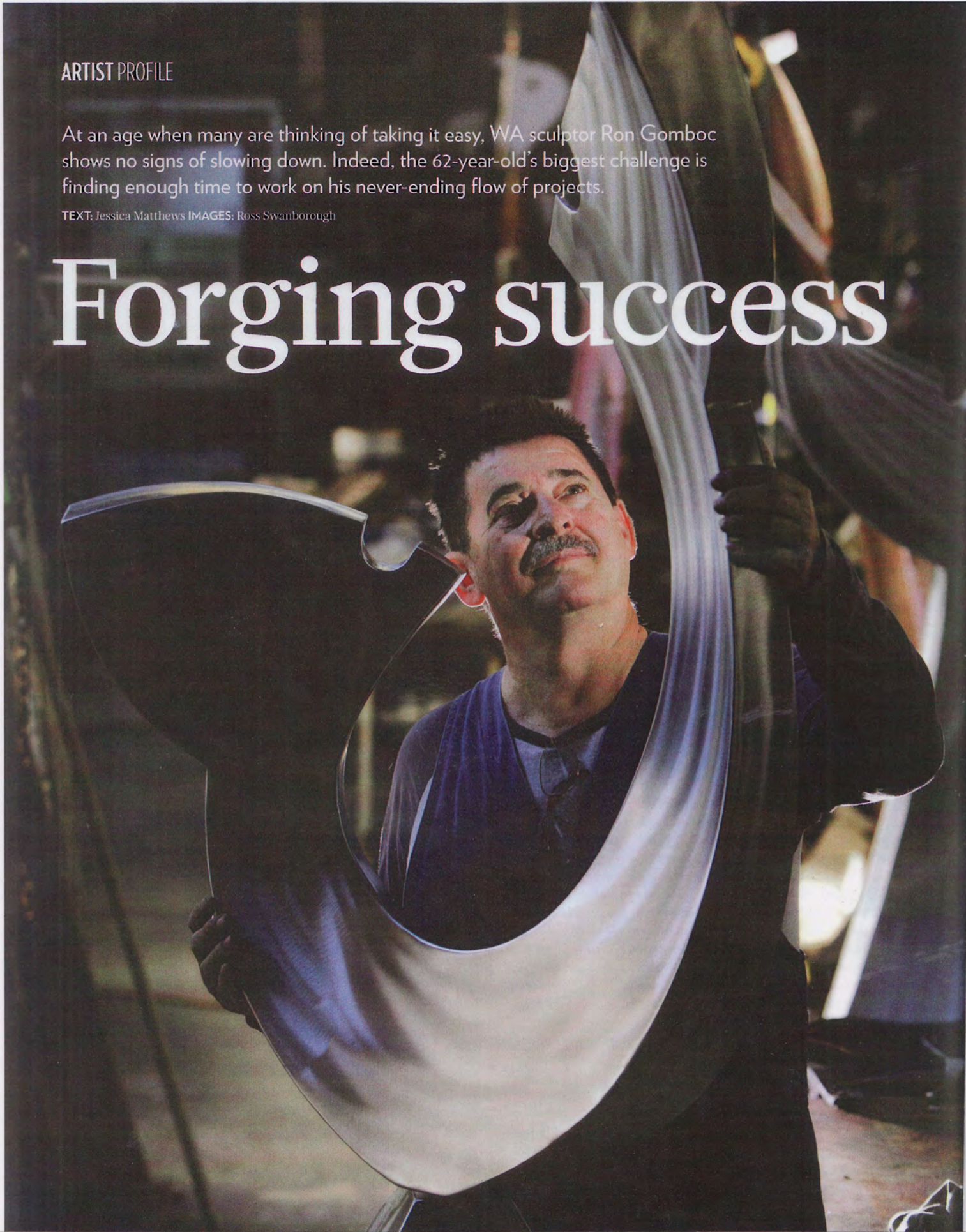


ARTIST PROFILE

At an age when many are thinking of taking it easy, WA sculptor Ron Gomboc shows no signs of slowing down. Indeed, the 62-year-old's biggest challenge is finding enough time to work on his never-ending flow of projects.

TEXT: Jessica Matthews IMAGES: Ross Swanborough

Forging success



Catching up with Ron Gomboc is a tricky task. The WA sculptor and owner of Gomboc Gallery in the Swan Valley has an international agenda to rival Kevin Rudd.

Since his work was selected for exhibition at the Beijing Olympics, the 62-year-old has had shows in Japan and France, and created works for Sculpture by the Sea in Cottesloe and Bondi.

"Sometimes when I flick through the photos I find it hard to believe just how much I've done," Ron says. "But at the same time, I honestly feel like I haven't even scratched the surface of what I want to do. I mean my body sometimes feels the age, but mentally I'm always going."

Indeed, the only things fuller than Ron's schedule are his sentences, which bubble with thoughts and enthusiasm.

"I've never been short of ideas, my biggest problem has been being short of time. Because before I even finish one piece, I want to start another. I have to discipline myself to finish one thing before I start the next."

Ron is winding down from the launch of the 2009 Sculpture Survey at his gallery, an annual showcase of work by students from Curtin, Edith Cowan and Swan TAFE, along with established local and international sculptors.

Alongside the myriad glass and wooden creations which fill the grounds, Ron's own metal sculptures stand out for their fluid lines and wing-like arms; a style that evolved from an emphasis on figurative art early in his career.

"I was very focused on the human form but wanted to take it to a totally new level," Ron explains. "To create designs that could really be enlarged, I had to keep them very minimal. But I wanted their essence to portray a spiritual and emotional content."

The sense of hope in Ron's work has made him a popular choice for local commissions.

In 2008 he completed a piece for the new Royal Flying Doctor



Reaching for Balance Stainless steel Sculptor R.M. (Ron) Gomboc Cit.WA



50 James Road, Middle Swan Western Australia 6065
Telephone (08) 9274 3996 | Facsimile (08) 9274 2665
rm@gomboc-gallery.com.au | www.gomboc-gallery.com.au

Gallery Hours: Wednesday to Sunday 10am - 5pm

Member of The Association of Western Australian Art Galleries and
the Preferred Provider for the State Government of Western Australia.

ARTIST PROFILE

SMOOTH OPERATOR: Ron's elegant and lyrical pieces are featured throughout his Swan Valley property.



Service headquarters in Broken Hill, commissioned by British businessman and philanthropist Sir Michael Bishop.

Ron also recently completed a 12m rust-red iron sculpture, the centrepiece of the South Hedland memorial for Cyclone George victims, for Fortescue Metals CEO Andrew Forrest.

Perhaps his most memorable commission though is the double bronze horse castings he and artist William Rees completed for the Sultan of Brunei in 1995.

"We didn't know who the client was until we got the down payment," he laughs. "It was an enormous highlight in our careers, not just because of the scale of the work but also the timeframe. We created two horses in seven weeks. I hardly slept and we had about nine people in to help us."

Ron's flourishing artistic career seems a

long way from his first job in construction as a 13-year-old.

After migrating to Australia from Croatia, Ron's father believed he was too old for school and sent him to work in the family business.

But tragic family events caused Ron to re-evaluate his career in his early twenties.

"I realised life is too short to let things go," he says. "You should do what you want to do now and not leave it until you retire. My passion for art was so strong that I knew I had to do this."

Ron and wife Terrie purchased their 4.6ha Swan Valley property with the intention of building a studio and gallery for Ron's own work.

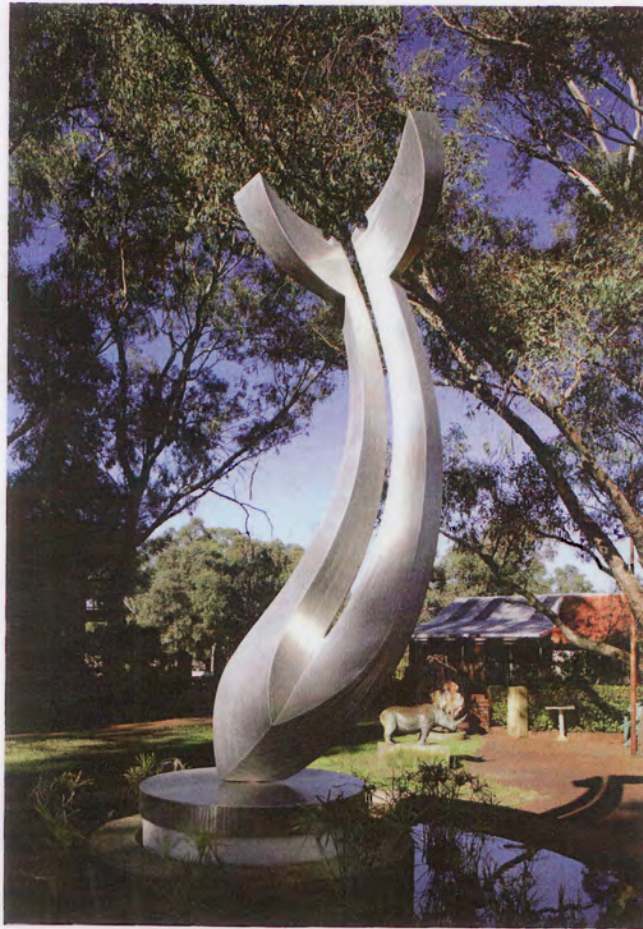
But it wasn't long before the picturesque outdoor gallery caught the attention of other local artists.

"It evolved from being a place just for my work to a public gallery where friends could exhibit as well," Ron says. "In those early days there was no sculpture awareness in Western Australia. From our first sculpture survey in 1984 we felt we could promote and showcase a lot of WA sculpture artists."

Now approaching its 30th anniversary, the survey gives many young sculptors an ideal start to their careers. The \$6000 in prize money is distributed between the winning artists, who get to keep their work and enjoy priceless exposure.

Ron's hard work in establishing and maintaining the event was recognised when he received the 1993 WA Citizen of the Year Award for Arts, Culture and Entertainment.

Despite growing recognition of sculpture artists across Australia, Ron says it's still an under-appreciated art form.



“You should do what you want to do now and not leave it until you retire...”

“Australia doesn’t have the culture of collecting sculpture that exists in Europe,” he says. “There are maybe five or six serious collectors in WA, but the only way to support an artist is to buy their work.”

Perhaps this is why a focus on international markets has proved so successful for Ron.

He is currently preparing for an exhibition in Paris this September, with the help of good friend and prominent French sculptor Jean-Pierre Rives, a former international rugby union star. It follows from a successful debut exhibition in the city two years ago.

But Ron maintains the most crucial element to success is hard work.

“I don’t see myself as being superior to any other sculptor,” he insists. “I know a lot of people who are a lot smarter or stronger or younger than me. I don’t possess any special powers; anyone can do what I’m doing but you’ve got to have the passion and the determination.”

rm@gomboc-gallery.com.au; 0412 611 715