



Making a scene at Christmas



An online display of nativity scenes from around the world

The first-ever Nativity scene recorded in history was created by St Francis of Assisi who was concerned that the meaning of Christmas was becoming lost. To him, people appeared focused on ritual of gift giving instead of the true message of Christmas. Determined to remind people what Christmas is really about, he set about creating the world's first known Nativity scene to help tell his people of the nativity story. Created in a cave near Greccio, Italy, it involved real people and animals, making it a living nativity scene. Although this tradition still continues today in some countries, the nativity scene has over time become an ornament which can be displayed in homes, churches and other sites throughout the world.

The sight of a nativity scene can constantly give us time to reflect on the deeper truths and mysteries contained in the simple scene. Often giving us the opportunity to experience a calm silence, even if just for a moment. It can make us also reflect on the importance of how we should set aside our worries and challenges which we face on a daily basis both as individuals, as a state and as a nation so that we come unite as one.

Bishop Paul highlighted this thought during his 2020 Christmas message when he stated:

“As we recognise that we share a common problem, we might also recognise that we need to work together to find a common solution. Pope Francis has encouraged us to dream together for a better future. He wrote, “Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of our beliefs and convictions, each of us with our own voice, brothers and sisters all.”

These nativity scenes are just a few taken from Fiona Tonkin's private collection and have been collected from various parts of the world. Some of these nativities are "artistically beautiful, some are challenging, some invite you to ask questions, some tell different parts of the Christmas story, some have their own fascinating story to tell." Yet all highlight the importance of family and the care and support which we should give to one another during this time of year.



Handcrafted and hand painted paper flower with nativity scene.
Peru. 2017.



Handcrafted nativity scene
pendant made of plastic clay
and watch parts.
America. 2016.

Handcrafted
miniature
nativity scene
for a doll's
house.
Unknown
maker.
2014.





Pewter brooch with
zircon nativity scene.
America. 2014.

Pewter brooch with
brass highlights
nativity scene.
America. 2014.





Pewter brooch with blue enameled sky nativity scene. America. 2014.

Bullet shell art of a nativity scene. Liberia. 2014.





Handmade pottery oil lamp. Similar to the type used during the time when Jesus was born.
Possibly Roman or Egyptian. C. 10 BCE.

Hand carved bone nativity scene.
Bali. 2021.





Handcrafted Mongolian
nativity scene.
Mongolia. 2021.

Hand painted nativity scene on board set in wooden support. Ukraine. 2018.





Hand painted ceramic nativity scene with pink highlights.
Loreto, Italy. 2017.

Cork nativity scene.
Portugal. 2015.





Hand painted ceramic
blue nativity scene.
Canterbury, UK. 1995.



Nativity scene made of straw and grass and hand painted.
Nepal. 2018.

Hand carved wooden nativity scene.
China. 2016.



Hand carved wooden nativity scene. Joseph wears side curls (traditionally called Payos) and a beard. Germany. 2014.





Hand carved
from olive wood
this nativity
scenes sits on a
woven mat from
Druze.
Bethlehem.
1982.

Hand carved nativity scene showing Mary with a crown highlighting her as a Queen of heaven. Norway. 2016.





Ceramic nativity scene
and painted with
metallic colours.
Barcelona, Spain.
1995.

Hand painted nativity scene.
Spain. 2012.





Shell design nativity scene.
Greece. c. 2000.



Greek icon of nativity scene.
Greece. 2017.

Nativity scene
from Chartres.
France. 2015.



Hand painted ceramic aboriginal baby Jesus with feathers sleeping in a wooden basket.
Australia. 2014.





Handcraft felt
nativity scene.
Bethlehem. 2010.

Handmade ceramic
nativity set from Nagasaki.
Japan. 2015.





Joseph, Mary and
Jesus on a bus
travelling to Egypt.
Peru. 2016.

Metal and hand painted
nativity scene held within
an elaborate shelter.
Unknown location. c. 2010





Hand painted nativity set.
Unknown location. c. 2015.



THE BRIDGE MARKET

PRESENTS

MAKING A SCENE AT CHRISTMAS

One of the earliest traditions of Christmas is the Nativity which dates back to the 13th century.

This year, for the second year running, the people of Ballarat and district can visit Bridge Mall and see ***Making a Scene at Christmas*** - a unique display of over 500 Nativities owned and collected by three passionate Christmas people - Andrew, Fiona and Kay. For over ten years the three have been combining their growing collections to provide an alternative view to the commercial Christmas. They will be in a shop in the Bridge Mall from 4 - 5 and 11 - 24 December, open from 10:00 - 5:00 daily. There is no cost to come and visit the display though we welcome gold coin donations which go towards covering costs. The only restrictions are those that the Government stipulate in managing the COVID 19 pandemic.

Over the last ten years ***Making a Scene at Christmas*** has grown as the individual collections have grown. The display has been mounted in the many towns, large and small, of the Western District, in Melbourne and in Canberra where ***Making a Scene at Christmas*** was invited to join with a resident collector there and mount an even larger display which attracted quite an amount of interest for the residents there. ***Making a Scene at Christmas*** regularly hear comments: This is amazing! I have never seen so many Nativities! I have really enjoyed this and I will bring the Grandchildren to see it tomorrow!

Making a Scene at Christmas usually travels to schools with an engaging learning program for students attending Foundation to Year 10. The powerful question of: What would the Nativity look like if it happened in your time and town? has provoked some amazing learning and responses. Our favourite had the Nativity being on the sixth floor of a high-rise in Flemington, with the shepherds being replaced by the homeless and the Magi being replaced by the doctors and nurses from the big hospitals.

These Nativities come from all around the world - every continent and over 60 countries. Some Nativities are artistically beautiful, some are challenging, some invite you to ask questions, some tell different parts of the Christmas story, some have their own fascinating story to tell. There are nativities made of bone, bread, wood, car parts, glass, bullets and paper. There is even one made of potato chip packets! Many are hand-crafted. Many answer the question, if this event happened in my time and place what would it look like?

Our personal highlights include a pregnant Mary hand painted by widows of the drug violence in Columbia, one hand made by a refugee Moslem woman in Palestine, and the fierce large Herod that came off a carousel in New York State.

Also included in the collection are interesting artefacts that date back over the centuries to the time of the Birth of Jesus. There are coins from the time and place that Jesus was born, and a coin that shows the star event that was evident at the time of the birth, and a Roman hand-made oil lamp.

Andrew, Fiona and Kay are happy to share their knowledge, passion and enthusiasm at any time. For further details please contact Fiona 0418 643 196

Music: We Wish you a Merry Christmas Kevin MacLeod (incompetech.com), CC BY 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>>, via Wikimedia Commons

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