

# Sculptor forged home spirit

**A LIFE IN ARTS:  
SOME HIGHLIGHTS**

An artistic legend from Campbelltown will be remembered at a funeral service today. **Soraiya Gharahkhani** reports.

A PIECE of Tom Bass will forever remain in Campbelltown – his bronze sculpture of Elizabeth Campbell in Mawson Park.

The legendary artist and teacher died on Friday at the age of 94.

He described the Campbelltown artwork, unveiled in 2006, as a labour of love.

Bass's life began in the local area in the 1940s when he moved to Minto with his first wife, Lenore.

He married Margo in 1985. The pair had worked and studied together since 1983.

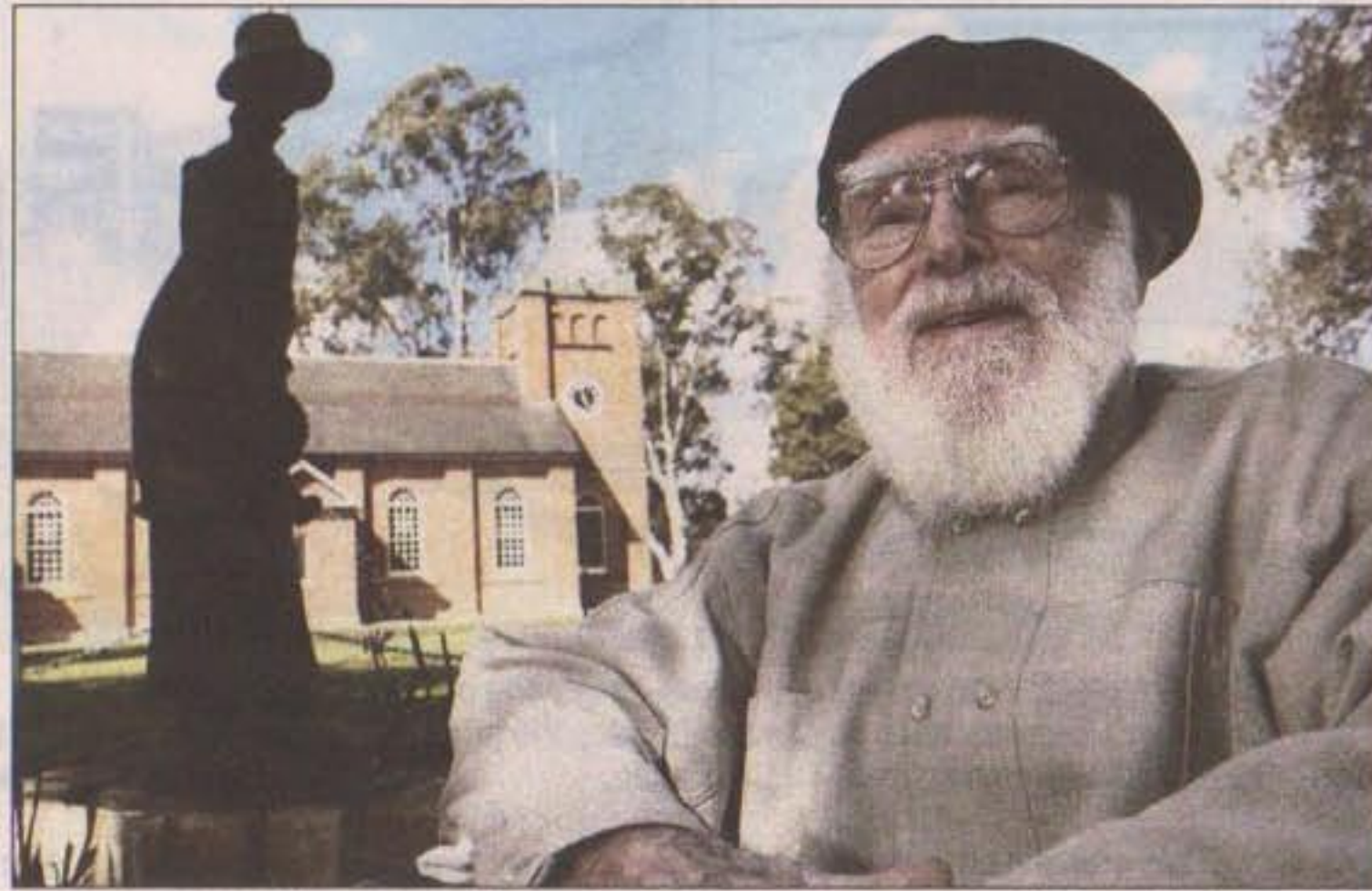
Bass's sculpture in Mawson Park was unveiled in August 2006.

He said at the time that he wanted the local sculpture to bring the community together to remember Elizabeth Campbell.

"This sculpture will be what I call a totem, expressing the things that were conferred on this place when Governor Macquarie called it Campbell Town [after his wife]," he said.

"People will gather round it to look at it and be reminded of her qualities of refinement, her love of flowers and her feminine capacity for nurturing.

"As her spirit pervades this place, the community will begin to take on her special qualities – she will be the spirit of Campbelltown."



**A great artist:** Tom Bass left a lasting legacy to our community with the unveiling of his Elizabeth Campbell sculpture in Mawson Park. It was supported by Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society and Campbelltown Council.

Picture: Jonathan Ng

When Bass moved from Minto in the 1970s, he took a load of his favourite local clays from a hillside near Campbelltown Road. His students have been using and reusing this clay for the past 40 years.

Arthur Jones of Campbelltown, a friend of Bass and a former principal of Minto Public School, said Bass was "a thinker".

"Myself and my wife Muriel in the 1960s knew Tom as a family man," he said. "His [first] wife Lenore – an artist in her own right – nurtured and inspired Tom and their five children and even though they were separated, I could see her influence in the sculpture of Elizabeth Campbell.

"Tom was a good communicator because he could express his ideas very well and he also spoke well to children. He was a great friend of the school and I liked him very much – I would call him a nice bloke."

Bass's work can be found in almost every state in Australia as well as in Washington DC in the United States.

One of his most famous sculptures was *Ethos* for the National Library in Civic Square, Canberra.

Bass is survived by his wife and six children.

**The funeral service will be held this morning, March 3 at 9.30am at St Mary's Catholic Church, Concord.**



**In 1968:** The east Minto artist talking to local school students about his work.

Arthur Jones Collection/Campbelltown Library

## Bass grasped Minto's uncommon ground

"It is a great hope of mine that people will come to love it," said Bass in 2006 of his Elizabeth Campbell statue in Mawson Park. "I did all my major work in Minto and my mind goes back to that period."

Although he moved away in later life, he always said he felt inspired by the local area. Bass also loved the local clay and used it for all his draft sculptures. "I dug a dam for an old neighbour of mine and he got the dam and I got the clay," he once told the *Advertiser*. "Minto clay is very special. The supply of it has gradually shrunk, although we can do everything we can to conserve it."

– Jessica Mahar

**1916:** Tom Bass is born.

**World War II:** Serves in army.

**1948:** Begins career as a sculptor after graduating from the National Art School.

**Early 1950s:** Earns praise for artworks including *The Tea Drinkers* and *The Student* at the University of Sydney.

**Early 1960s:** The iconic sculpture *Ethos* made from copper in Civic Square, Canberra.

**Late 1960s:** Sculpts an emblem from bronze for the Australian Chancery Building, Washington, DC. Also completes the *Lintel Sculpture* at the National Library in Canberra.

**1974:** Tom Bass Sculpture School founded in Sydney.

**1989:** Bass made a member of the Order of Australia.

**1996:** Publishes *Tom Bass – Totem Maker*.

**2006:** Sculpture of Elizabeth Campbell in Mawson Park.

**2006:** First major retrospective staged at Sydney Opera House.

**2009:** Receives an honorary doctorate, University of Sydney.

**2010:** Bass dies, aged 94.