



Ben Reilly

## Burghers

1997

Steel

202 x 90 x 70 cm

Glistening in the shadows at the far end of a dark corridor lined with pre-Christian markers of death and destruction, Ben Reilly's wild creatures await us. Friends or foes? Who are these swirling forms, these nameless dervishes - horsemen of some apocalypse? Less Rodin's *Burghers of Calais* than Tolkien's faceless black riders, Macbeth's witches, Maurice Sendak's wild things? From what dark forest or sinister swamp in *Mittleuropa* have they travelled? Or have they emerged from the deep forest of our unconscious? What would Bruno Bettelheim make of them, survivor of the nightmare world of Buchenwald and Dachau, psychoanalyst of the ogres and untamed creatures that crowd our unconscious and, hence, our mythologies, our stories, the narratives we fashion to tell ourselves in a search for understanding. They would have been at home in his classic study, *Kinder brauchen Marchen (Psychanalyse des contes de*

*fee/The Uses of Enchantment)*. It is fitting that these liminal creatures should now have found a resting place in a seat of learning. They serve to remind us that the purpose of a university is to repel the darkness through knowledge, enquiry and fearlessness. But lighting the darkness can be a perilous venture, for in so doing how do we know what we have started or where it will end, this quest for knowledge - exciting, risky, mesmerising. So do they know something we don't know? Or are they trapped in a metal shell, mute, beyond language, unable to look back or go on, caught in time and space, awaiting understanding or, perhaps, deliverance?

*Professor Grace Neville*