

THE DIARY

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Scaled down ... Dominique Sutton surrounded by works in her new exhibition, showing at the Tim Olsen Gallery. Photo: Ben Ali

A BIG DAY FOR ... A NEW START IN ART

YOU remember them, don't you? The steel sculptures of athletes appearing to strain and swing off the top of Sydney Tower, commissioned to celebrate the Sydney Olympics in 2000? Apart from the buzz the enormous figures created, they also made headlines for the controversy of the commission being offered to the sculptor Dominique Sutton after a competition had failed to find a winning proposal and snubbed artists were left fuming. "They didn't like any of the works put forward and contacted me through my foundry, and I got the job that way," said Sutton, whose first private show in a decade opened on Wednesday at the Tim Olsen Gallery. "There were a lot more established artists [who didn't get it] and it caused

a bit of friction. And it was a little tricky afterwards as people were nervous commissioning me. They thought anything I did would be too big." Sutton, who has continued in the past dozen years to create large works for public spaces from Tamworth to Macau, agreed the move to a smaller domestic space was a long time coming. "I've been reluctant but it was an instinctive, personal thing to move into the art arena." The show features a series of elegant boat shapes fashioned in different materials: stone, leather, lead. "It's a very emotive thing, the boat symbol," Sutton said. "It's suggestive of danger, threat and life-changing circumstances." Such as those involving sunken cruise liners? "Yes. And immigration."