

FROM THE ARTIST

“YOU STAND THERE FLYING”

Quietly making sculpture out of found natural materials in an exquisite outdoor setting, is like trying to hear the song of a nightingale only just glimpsed as a faint dot high above in a blue sky. You strain to grasp and connect with something at first only fleetingly glimpsed- you stand there flying.

Working at all hours of the day on the land, riding out the heat or getting wet in times of rainbow light, I'm held in place by rhythmic meditative activities like gathering, weaving, binding. Sometimes it's long enough to be transported by the joy of fresh realisations.

Sculpture-making is my way of exploring the world. By handling unfamiliar materials and experimenting with their properties in different seasons and weather conditions, I find out what they will allow me to do, and discover things I never knew about life processes and eco-interactions. Through the making process I get a space of time to build up an intimate relationship with place; observing and listening closely; slowly uncovering subtleties and secrets.

I try to share this knowledge with you by embedding it in the work- as multiple layers of meaning, or perhaps as a method of structuring. It could be in special effects of rhythmic volume and line that resonate with hills and trees close by. Or of colour, texture and shadow-making as the work ages in a particular way, over a lifespan dependent on unplanned interactions with rain, wind, heat, creatures and people.

Interested people often come to visit or work with me on-site and the most frequent questions they ask are: “Where do you get your ideas

from?”, “How do you decide where to put the sculptures?” and “What made you choose that material?”. I have also had a few times: “So, is this Art then?”

My work sits within the stream of “Land Art” begun in the Western world in the nineteen sixties by a long line of artists who also sought to break out of the current paradigm of art as commodity. Artists like Alfio Bonano, Richard Long, David Nash, Andy Goldsworthy, Chris Drury and Wolfgang Laib used the great outdoors as their working studio and gallery space, and have been instrumental in redefining what sculpture is- its materiality, longevity and where you might find it. In Australia, Rosalie Gascoigne and Hossein Valamanesh inspired me with their ability to use found materials to “speak” in abstract metaphors about the inner world of feelings.

I have evolved my body-place intuitive methodology by going for “wander walks” on an open search, an alert and attentive visual listening to the unique life of a place. My body is set and tuned to this task, responding like a divining rod to the kinaesthetic hum all around. At this time I can't explain- and don't ask- why falling in love with the beetroot colour of newly grown eucalyptus twigs, wanting to set the sculpture on a mossy floor or to work with the wind, is a valid responsive basis for choosing. Making the work will teach me. It can take days or months after the experience to understand its significance and develop some conceptual clarity.

Strength, sensory qualities and virility of materials guide most structuring techniques and partly “mother” the forms. There will be cracking, shrinkage, fading and desiccation as variable natural processes leave their mark. And this is where I can enter into a creative partnership with nature, inviting and manipulating changes in the knowledge that my intervention is but a brief part of a forever

ongoing process, which is itself as much the “artwork” as an object based fixed outcome.

Making ephemeral work is congruent with my current mindset in a changing world-I’d rather leave no toxic waste, commodity or attachment. I am excited by the challenge of experimenting with the slow quality of a movement based dynamic based in the creative restructuring of ageing forms. Such as recycling parts of other works. Or including an “unmaking” phase- its slumping, loss of fragrance, the slow brittle shattering of delicate leaves, the undressing of a form over time to its skeletal and poignant framework- all respectful metaphors for the life of mind and body.

I like to explore some possibilities for movement and change by maximising and layering shadow textures and the complex moods of different lights- the day, moon and starlight. The electric transformation of rain wet material colours and reflections at different times of day; the cool dawn and warm dusk lightings; shadows of one form thrown against another with the comings and goings of sun and cloud. From my landscaping background I learned the skill of borrowing in the power and movement of the environment in which the installation is nested- its exposure and sensitivity to wind, for example. Usually the installation is composed of several forms which may imply the action of a family, herd or flock in transit.

Movement created through the social impact of audience participation is also very important; both during the making phase and then as the experience ripples on orally and via images. What intangibles have been formed as people look on or work together at the sculpture site? The installations are like a theatre set waiting for the actors- you and your friends- to move amongst the forms with your curiosity and

responsivity, watching the relationships change and move as you move. Your imaginations have activated everything and the soul stirs.

People often say to me on-site: “My eyes are opened to things I never saw before”, or “I’m seeing the world in a different way”. By extracting the evidence of my material observations and weaving them into these visual poems about being here in this place, I am telling a story. It’s about the humbling realities of an actual meeting between me and other sentient beings.

At Hanson Bay a wallaby sat for fifteen minutes, deep-eyed and with arms crossed, watching impersonally from one meter away as I struggled with the work and my egoic impatience. There was not a whisper of movement in Ilker’s forest near American River, as I worked my way along the rows of trees in the early morning with a piece of blue chalk, marking the branches to be cut from each one for the making of “Forest House”. Not one bee stung me at Clifford’s Honey Farm as I bound their favourite honey foods into small shapes- my fingers sticking together from the nectar- and the bees crowding, attracted by the scent.

The sculpture making is a gift of time- learning how to waken to the living world.

Evette Sunset - July 29 2013

Written for the book “Ephemeral Sculpture-Kangaroo Island Art Feast 2012”, a collaborative photographic documentation of four installations made in four different KI locations over a period of one month.