

It was a pleasure to be a selector for the 2017 Small Sculpture Award, although very difficult to select 30 works from the 89 entries. Particularly because of the diversity of ideas, meanings, forms, techniques and materials each artist brings to their work.

I think you will agree with me that looking at the whole group of these varied works we could say that contemporary sculpture, even or especially on a small scale, *has a potent charge*.

This charge is so strong because it is an accumulation, it is the jostling together of each artist's spirit, thought and making.

Let me talk you briefly through the spirit of these works that you can see:

- **Emerita Baik** manifests her exploration of psychological struggle in the sculptural remnants of a jacket and concrete
- In **Patrick Barry's** carved *Sail Makers Daughter* there is a poetry and romance that crosses time and cultures
- **Karl Baxter's** glass *Shoreline* brings together materials and alchemy in order for science to meet nature
- And the other worldly light in the room is emanating from **Trish Campbell's** *Jordan Blue*
  
- The surrealists exploration of subconscious and games underlies **Jonathan Campbell's** tray of objects *Stratton Street* (also a type of self-portrait)
- And the elegant movements of the hand gestures of calligraphy and writing inform **Christine Cathie's** bravura glass *Signature*
- **Maria Colls's** *Untitled* stirs us with the precision required by hand *and* mind to create puzzling patterns
- And **Bronwynne Cornish** makes us stop and think how we respect, value and honour others, human or from the natural world, in *Claw*
  
- **Jonathan Cumming** rusted objects in *Double Happy* are cause to both smile and wince at the memories of growing up and human behaviour
- Quite differently, **Anah Dunsheath's** delicate *Kindling 2* is redolent with how the social conditions for books has changed across time and place
- Likewise, **John Ecuyer's** *Bottle Rocket* contains a local *and* global reference in its message about environmental disaster, consumer culture and responsibility
- Abstract ideas about built environments are key for **Kate Elder**, in the wooden *construction #3* which has a clear legacy in the futuristic ideas of avant garde 20<sup>th</sup> Century European artists.
  
- Coming back to the individual, **Wanda Gillespie** 's *Boy* demonstrates how figurative sculpture can also be otherworldly
- And *Soe #5* by **Natalie Guy** casts a stick and 2 rings into performing as actors forever negotiating how to remain in equilibrium
- **Fiona Lenore** stretches hand built clay almost to its limits into the intriguing biomorphic form *The Flowering Inferno*

- And **Graeme McKay's** *Emerging Patterns* celebrates the dynamism of designs in nature and culture in the Pacific
- An appreciation of the history of stone and its ability to hold significant form is well demonstrated by **David McGill** in *Lifeboat* and *Aquafact*
- While the human desire for beauty, adornment and living well and its toll on extinct species is clear in **Nicola McLaren's** jewellery-like *Memento Mori- Huia*
- The humorously title *We Can Never Accelerate to the Speed of Light* is integral to **Chris Mules'** paradoxical form that suggests a connection between analogue and hand crafted from, and digital and technological production
- And similarly in the contrasting materials of *E-um#S1\_112016* **Sena Park** generates analogies for relationships
- In his ceramic *Photographing my Ancestors* **Michael Potter** emphasises the preciousness of photographs while also asking us to think about the future of the image
- Items from furniture and the haberdashery are bought together by **Frances Rood** in her strange and uncanny baroque wig-like *Tress*
- **Deborah Rundle** quotes Donald Trump on work ethic in *Change your Attitude* and has sought out an obsolete employee time clock to critique neoliberal ideology in relation to labour
- And **Shelley Simpson** recreates remnants from the obsolete consumer technology, video, in her concern to encourage a rethinking of our attitudes toward the material and natural worlds

*All these works create energy through the questions they raise.*

- Are **Karin Strachan's** clay zoomorphic figures that take the poses of classic sculpture in *Sleeping Alone* your dream or nightmare companions?
- What is the balance struck between art nouveau, graphic design and futurism for **Dave Thomas** to suggest airstreams in his sculpture *Canterbury Winds*?
- Where does the boundary between design and chaos, beauty and commonplace lie in **Janna van Hasselt's** *Crimp*?
- Why does **Motoko Watabe** exert natural and feminine symbolism in her *Untitled* construction based in her fascination for everyday material?
- What end is there to the metaphors, for heaven and earth, up and down, contained within the weight and balance of **Melissa Young's** stairway *UP*?

The potent charge in sculpture derives from its capacity to articulate meanings that while being key for individual artists, *are also* things and ideas that actively participate in *our shared* environment of objects.

Rather than thinking of them as "*small*", these are sculptures with ideas on the move, that resonate largely and publicly.