

Art and Nature/Nature and Art

By Robert Lindsay

The *McClelland Sculpture Park* exists as a commitment to a belief that art and nature have the capacity to provide for a better future. Art provides a sense of social identity, meaning and purpose, and is a bond that binds our complex social structure. Combined with knowledge, appreciation and respect for nature, this sense of who we are and our place in the universe is fundamental to our survival in this era of rapid change. The placing of sculpture in the landscape enables and fosters observation and commentary on these twin themes of art and nature and thereby enriches our knowledge of both.

History and tradition begins with a sequence of two or more; the **McClelland Sculpture Survey 2010** is the fourth in the series of biennial exhibitions focussing on contemporary sculpture displayed in the grounds of the McClelland Gallery+Sculpture Park. In its selection of young, mid-career and established artists working across a full variety of media, it provides and encapsulates a vision of contemporary sculptural practice within the Australasian region as a manifestation of cultural identity.

The **McClelland Sculpture Survey 2010** includes works in traditional bronze and fabricated steel, wood, and stone including marble; those that utilise recycled and alternative materials; others that focus on technology and industrial processes; and those that enlist nature itself. The themes of the works are as diverse as the materials employed by the 34 participating artists, or the styles ranging from abstract formalism to social commentary.

Stone is one of the earliest and most basic materials used for sculpture and is the sculptor Ashika's material of choice as an acknowledgement of nature. He sets natural unhewn sections of stone alongside highly polished areas which reflect the surrounding environment, so that the work both comes from the landscape and also reflects or mirrors it. For Ashika stone is a reiteration of tradition. It embodies his reverence for archetypal symbols, and provides a 'balancing [between] formal religion with an abiding faith in nature' and, as implied by the title *Philosopher and stone 2010*, it provides reference also to ancient myths and magic. Traditionally and symbolically the philosopher's stone provides answers to universal questions, and the reflection of landscape and sky in Ashika's work perhaps acknowledges that our future sustainability is inextricably linked to our knowledge and understanding of nature.

Robert Bridgewater's work *I'll be your sunshine (invisible) 2009* uses the traditional material of bronze within a totemic form that seems to present an abstracted representation of divine or spiritual light radiating from heaven, as featured in Baroque architecture and sculpture most notably in the work of Bernini. However, the black patina of the bronze has a mysterious, enigmatic aspect that seems almost like a chrysalis for an unknown species, and this locates the work firmly back in the earthly realm.

Anton McMurray's *Monument to the First International 2010* is carved from wood and its organic form and undulating surface celebrates the natural grain and texture of timber. The spiral finial on

top is a reference to the Russian Constructivist artist Vladimir Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International* 1919, which was a modernist industrial monument to the utopian ideals of the Bolshevik Revolution. McMurray's title *Monument to the First International*, deliberately positions the work to predate this moment in order to make a proclamation for an earlier utopian system and civilization built sympathetically and in harmony with nature.

A number of artists in the **McClelland Sculpture Survey 2010** have embraced the use of recycled materials as part of a statement about today's materialistic culture and have assembled mass-produced and obsolescent utensils and other disposable products. Louise Paramor utilises oversized brightly coloured, contemporary industrial plastic items such as vacuum-formed seats, plastic road barriers, bins, pipes and other common suburban utensils to explore the formalist principles of Modernism such as form, colour and spatiality - in works that comment incisively and humorously on both society and art history. In her assemblage *Top shelf* 2010 the oversized table acts as an altar upon which the saccharine paraphernalia of a modern, disposable age sit as objects that have been elevated for aesthetic contemplation.

The landscape setting of the **McClelland Sculpture Survey** provides artists with the opportunity to work to a grand scale, beyond the confines of the normal gallery environment. The monumental scale of Daniel Clemmets's *Development* 2010 which depicts a familiar object from carefree childhood - a toy tricycle - makes this innocent object somewhat intimidating. The tricycle has a quality of whimsy, but isolated in the bush, divorced from customary norms, its existence opens up speculation about its origins and the gargantuan absentee owner. While a plastic toy tricycle is ubiquitous in a children's playground, here its status and meaning is altered through its isolation and monumental scale. Unlike Paramor's use of 'off-the-shelf' objects which require little intervention, but the artist's brilliant assemblage, Clemmets has used recycled car parts which required significant blacksmithing. These elements - reinforced car bonnet panels - are selected to retain evidence of their original engineered form, colour and previous function, but are hammered and forged into a new identity. However, this new identity as a machine capable of movement, be it just a tricycle, is not totally unrelated to the original function.

Adjacent to Clemmets's toy tricycle work is Jason Waterhouse's *Glory days* 2010 which also takes form from discarded transport elements. At first glance it appears to be a standard Holden HQ Kingswood stationwagon, a product of the internationalised corporatised industrialised system, yet it is also an item for nostalgic veneration as an Australian icon. Waterhouse, with great skill and craftsmanship, has morphed the front left section upwards so it seems as if the tyre and mudguard have stepped up onto a plinth with pretensions to be a sculpture. This strange Surreal sight is undercut by the impeccable craftsmanship that flawlessly convinces the viewer that this inanimate object has become animated - as if a cartoon animation has descended upon the McClelland bush.

Matt Calvert's *Night imp* 2010, presents another example of the gargantuan scale. Here with empty eyes and outstretched arms is a large cookie cutter or model element used in toy puzzles to teach children to match various shapes to various slots. An *imp* in folklore is a fairy or demon who is frequently mischievous rather than harmful. This benign but slightly humorous role is echoed in Calvert's use of the simple outline of a cookie cutter profile to contain the toughened glass body of

his gargantuan imp. As with Daniel Clemmett's use of scale, Calvert also creates a sense of incongruity and puzzlement by making his objects monumental, thereby also adding an element of humour to engage the viewer.

One of the primary mechanisms of humour is a safe reversal of expectations. The title of *Alexander the Great* used by Dean Colls for his exceptionally large corten steel beetle, with its reference to the 4th century BC Macedonian general who created the largest empire in the ancient world, has a definite element of mirth. But humour can also be enlisted as a powerful tool for proffering the truth in a presentable and acceptable way. Here Dean Colls has reversed the hierarchy of the natural order of things; while *Alexander* is Dean Colls' avatar 'for the unseen world at our feet'; the beetle also has the potential power that comes with being overwhelmingly enormous. *Alexander's* scale would dwarf any natural history museum collection and the idea of collecting and classifying him as a trophy of the natural world is virtually unthinkable. Constructed in plate steel according to high-tech computer modelling, *Alexander the Great* 2010 totally dominates its natural setting, a reminder that human ambitions to conquer and lay waste the environment will have disastrous consequences.

Chaco Kato's delicate and ephemeral environmental works are her response to a world she sees as committed to over consumption and over production. In *A white nest:2010* she uses low tech materials such as white woollen yarn to construct a set of two site-specific installations. The huge complex webs of the white thread magically transform the sites, enlisting a new appreciation for the natural features of the landscape, as well as engendering speculation about the possible mysterious source of the web and its enigmatic presence. The patterns of the webs seem apparently random, but with closer inspection there emerges an adaptive order, responding and evolving to accommodate the random spread of trees and bushes – and embodying the beauty of 'insect architecture'. Of continuing importance is the ephemeral nature of her work, its materials and method of construction conveying the delicate ecological balances found in nature. Significantly, an essential aspect of her art practice is that there is no remanent spoilage of the site once her works have been dismantled.

If Chaco Kato's work inhabits the environment gently and embraces the interdependence of flora and fauna, then Joanne Mott embraces nature. *Australia re-generated* 2010 is her salute to our Australian identity. However, although the garden map looks correct and suitably nationalistic with the plants being recognisable and familiar, there is a vague sense of unease or incongruity until one realises that there is a mirror effect created by an east/west reversal of the map. This geographic flip of the east coast to the west is a comment on the botanical incongruity of transposing a European horticultural sensibility into an Antipodean context.

Horticultural maps with their imperialistic overlay were a common educational project in our immediate post-colonial past; Joanne Mott aims to question both the form and context of thinking behind these teaching aids by illustrating and enlisting history which has also enthusiastically recruited symbols of national identity for a wider political purpose.

Humour is the device that Geoffrey Ricardo uses in his work, such as *Emblemic 2010*, to play games with our sense of reality. Like the jester or the fool in a Shakespearean drama who can tell the truth with veracity and impunity, Ricardo uses a menagerie of actors, often in animal costumes, to play with and comment on the absurdities and vanities of life. The visual genesis of the characters which inhabit Ricardo's prints and prescribe the form of his sculptures comes from distant memories, childhood misunderstandings and simplifications, slowly recollected for their graphic sense of parody. These memories he inverts, reverses and stylises into dreamlike puns on reality where recognisable stereotypes and archetypal elements, such as the kangaroo from the Australian Coat of Arms, engage in grand comic melodramas. Additional comic elements in *Emblemic*, the gum-booted human legs striding forth below the obvious kangaroo costume and the miniaturised shopping trolley approximating the kangaroo's pouch- a symbol of suburban consumerism, adds to his social critique.

Subtle tokens of nationalism and identity can take many forms, but a commonality is their familiarity and ubiquity. In the Australian rural context the windmill and the corrugated iron grain silo are identifiable icons in a changing agricultural landscape. Robbie Rowlands takes the familiar utilitarian silo and radically re-invigorates it through a series of aggressive sequential cuts, which has the effect of transforming this structure into an animated victim whose twists and turns are recorded as with the contorted victims of Pompeii. The contemplation of Rowlands' *Fell for silo 2010* arching over in the landscape evokes compassion and nostalgia for a diminishing rural way of life under threat from climate change and transnational competition.

One of the great agricultural debates of the previous decade has been the ethicacy of genetic engineering. The elements in Adrian Mauriks' *Strange fruit 2010* purport to have an aberrant yet biological genus. Their primordial shapes, familiar yet unique within the taxonomy of contemporary species, echo the artist's creative process of luminal memories synthesised into archetypal forms which evoke fragments of emotions 'without prior conceptual commitment'. Although the title *Strange Fruits* refers to an anti-Racist song performed by Billie Holiday about a lynching, encapsulated by the line "Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees", the artwork is more a homily against unforeseen consequences of primeval acts. Adrian Mauriks thus explores the genesis of primordial totems which resonate with authenticity in a contemporary world.

In the 21st century mass communication brings world disasters to every living room with the evening news on television and more instantly via the internet. Understandably this century has been dubbed 'the age of anxiety'. Colin Suggett's art has a political edge which he conveys cloaked in humour. He utilises technical brilliance in fabrication to attract and astound viewers, and humour to engage them in speculation on current political events and issues. Perched menacingly atop a dysfunctional calibrated scale, purporting to be the *National Anxiety Index*, is an intimidating gryphon-like monster. In accordance with best mythology fiction, it embodies our sense of unease and apprehension about the future –yet it is ripping apart the now dysfunctional barometer, the symbol of our anxiety and its existence. As with all thrillers we do not know whether our nightmare is about to get worse, or if, in confronting our fear, we have nullified its potential for harm.

Within killing range to Colin Suggett's *National Anxiety Index 2010* is Caroline Rothwell's consort of three *Tygers I, II, III 2010*. Their innate menace has echoes of William Blake's celebrated poem, 'Tyger! Tyger! burning bright/In the forests of the night/What immortal hand or eye/Could frame thy fearful symmetry?' Rothwell is interested in the exotic. The jagged cast-form of the 'tygers' which retains both cloth textures and threaded seams is derived from Rothwell's earlier technique of using cloth moulds for low-temperature metal castings, a craft method which preserves the fluid character of the hand-sewn moulds and consistently compromises veracity to nature into abstracted hybrids. The Darwinian-like discovery of the unusual 'tygers' in their bush lair thus echoes the delight of sighting an isolated new species that is familiar, but distinctly different.

Mythology taps into a culturally shared universal subconsciousness and many artists in the **McClelland Sculpture Survey 2010** employ myths and legends to enhance the cultural resonance of their works. Like apparitions materialising from a half remembered dream, Jon Eiseman creates a world in which anonymous 'everymen' wander, in the best existential traditions of the *Theatre of the Absurd* as if waiting for 'Godot', for a purpose and enlightenment. Elevated on a massive classical plinth the bronze tableau of *Watching and waiting 2010* stands as a civic monument. Its solitary dwarfed everyman reaches out to touch a towering bird, not unlike the Iris-headed figure of Thoth, the Egyptian god of intelligence, for enlightenment. Although Surrealistic in feel Eiseman's work plays with traditional sculptural conventions through cultural paradigms of civic aspirations.

After a long career of avant-garde experimentation, followed by an allegiance to heavy metal sculpture, Clive Murray-White has returned to traditional sculptural materials and techniques - particularly carving in marble. Inherent in this creative focus is the quest for the Neo-Platonic ideal of an art that ascends issues of the moment for something that is eternal. Like great carvers in sculptural history, from Michelangelo to Henry Moore, Clive Murray-White seeks to reveal the figure locked in the stone. Important in this process is the evidence of the quest, with chisel marks and sections of the raw stone left visible, a visual Romantic aspiration underpinning the cultural significance of the work. The title *Sara Delaney - a head of her time 2010* refers to the sitter, but also declares a contemporary validity for the style and material of the sculpture.

Marble is also the preferred material for Jane Valentine and from it her inspiration flows. In a recent series of works, entitled *Return to Beauty*, there is a return to figuration from earlier abstracted geometric forms, which stemmed directly from her passion and commitment to marble: its colour, texture and its ability through the carving process to generate and dictate its form. For Valentine the white colour of marble evokes a sense of purity which influences her choice of forms. In the ovoid and egg shapes of earlier works which had echoes of Brancusi's reductive abstraction she sought to symbolically embody feminine aesthetic and archetypes. Valentine's use of the title in her current series *Return to Beauty* clearly declares her ambition to embrace, through figuration, subjective ideas of beauty along with flirtatious femininity, hence the choice of a fan as the object and subject in *Surrender 2010*. This work consists of three open fans in white marble, one intact and two disintegrating, a symbolic reminder that beauty is fragile and fleeting, with each individual marble blade precisely machined and perforated with delicate ornamental filigree.

The term 'beauty' is little used in art discourse today, a consequence perhaps of the difficulty of defining its criteria. However, the theme of beauty continues to interest artists and is evident in the **McClelland Sculpture Survey 2010** with the work *At the altar of Terpsichore* 2010 by William Eicholtz, which references the mythological *Three Graces* who were the goddesses of charm, beauty, and creativity. Given the historical view that the making of art was divine inspiration, William Eicholtz works in this spirit of exuberance with a particular eye on the Baroque, creating gay gods and nymphettes within the context of the Australian bush. Using traditional studio sculpting techniques, he emulates the feeling of the 17th century Baroque period with all its theatricality and transforms the site for his sculpture into an Arcadian glen.

Kate Rohde utilises an extensive range of craft and hardware materials, from garish artificially coloured fake fur to glutinous polyester resins, to create a wide range of fanciful zoological, botanical and geological specimens. In addition to re-imagining natural history she incorporates decorative elements typical of Baroque and Rococo patterning, which were based on flora and fauna motifs, to create excessive, exuberant and colourful works, which are abhorrent exemplars of 'humans seeking to have control over their environment'.

The form of Rohde's *Lucky cat* 2010 is based on the Japanese *Maneki Neko*, the beckoning cat, ubiquitously seen in shops and cafes, as a token of good fortune and good luck. When she was in Japan, Rohde became fascinated by the do-it-yourself charm bracelets popular as mobile phone decorations. The craft aspect of these threaded-beaded-charms, ranging from cartoon characters to cute animals, gives an expression of individuality in a highly conforming society.

A mantra of the 20th century coined by Marshall McLuhan - 'the medium is the message' - has come to epitomise the social changes brought about, for example, by the obsession with watching television regardless of the content viewed. Jud Wimhurst in *A moment of media-tation* 2010 has combined three televisions together, in a style reminiscent of the three-in-one home entertainment centre of the 1950s which combined in a hand-crafted cabinet, a radio, record player and television. This threesome of screens sited in the McClelland bush, through a trick of optics and mirrors, reflects on living in the age of technology together with a meditation on the environment. An additional feature making the familiar unfamiliar, is the oversized three pin electrical cable and plug leading from the unit, which is plugged directly into the ground, endowing the faux console with pseudo credibility.

Adjacent to Harry McClelland's original painting studio is the work of Briele Hansen, *Camera Obscura* 2010, which appears to be an old fashion camera, the type that uses a ground-glass picture plate to produce glass negatives. On inspection of the glass viewing plate in the camera, one initially believes the image on the screen is an accurate representation of the landscape directly in front of the lens. However, with further scrutiny and comparison of the landscape and the camera image, slight differences appear, until one realises that the image on the glass screen is almost imperceptibly changing, the result of a seasonal time-lapse loop projected onto the glass screen. Briele Hansen is interested in the slippage between image and the object - in this case the camera image and the landscape- using this slippage to intensify the perception of both.

An intriguingly unique aspect of sculpture is its requirement, if not necessity, to be viewed in the round, rewarding the viewer with multiple viewing points, and the discovery of new and additional information. As this protocol has an inherent temporal quality, an additional common inclusion in the sculpture genre is video and time-based art. Another subset is kinetic art, with masters like Alexander Calder with his mobiles, George Rickey with his wind-powered kinetics and Jean Tinguely with motor-driven constructions, all enriching the genre. Some of the most dramatic, with a sinister kinetic edge, are the works of Rebecca Horn which suddenly spring into life with a swift and spectacular action only to lie dormant for a period of unspecified interruptus. The fascination lies between the visible mechanism and the unexpected, almost unpredictable kinetic outcomes.

Laura Woodward's kinetic sculptures, not unlike Rebecca Horn's work, have an ambiguous relationship with technology, but with empathy and enthusiasm for industrial era machines. Her kinetic sculptures, produced under a group title *Machines of Joy*, have observable motors and mechanical mechanisms to generate their intriguing movements. In *Wring* 2010 the five cylindrical wire units, suspended from a field of pylons, twist and rotate on their axis and in doing so rise and fall in automated ballet. The movement, the concert, is triggered by unseen sensors activated by an approaching viewer. Although the purpose of the enigmatic twisting machines, ritualistically rising and falling to a self generated cacophony of mechanical sounds is allusive, there is a sense of familiarity with the mechanical laws and principles to which they conform. Woodward is interested in the psychological power of machines and technology to evoke feelings of human vulnerability, the counterpoint between observable man-made mechanical processes and invisible enigmatic technology.

James Kenyon is also interested in technological enigmas. He has invented a full on-going scenario of a parallel universe, in which a highly developed civilization has mysteriously vanished and only fragmentary evidence of its technology and culture remains, discovered in classified excavations in the hills of Adelaide. His work *Space junk from Adelaide* 2010 initially presents in a cruciform configuration, a pattern of unknown hieroglyphs, which with elegant science-fiction timing, slowly folds in on itself when approached. Equally fascinating as the enigmatic hieroglyphs, is the sophisticated and elaborate system of gears, cables and hydraulic levers that slowly transform the open cross into a compact cube, apparently in an effort to protect its meaning and significance from unwanted scrutiny. James Kenyon as a fictitious archaeologist, gives a humorous pseudo authority to his 'rare and beautiful' artefacts and in doing so questions the academy and the aesthetics of contemplation.

If Kenyon takes on the status of an artist/archaeologist whose *modus operandi* is the amassing of shards as physical evidence of great cultural achievements, other artists have turned to more intangible sources, those of literary myths and particularly Greek mythology, as a lucrative foundation for both content and comment.

The subtext to Matthew Harding's *Primordial* 2010 is the Greek myth of Nyx, the goddess of the night, who was conceived by the wind and who laid a silver egg in the primordial darkness from which Eros was hatched, who created time and set the world in motion. Thus the silver eggs are the symbol of the universe, its mirrored surface reflecting both the sky and earth.

In earlier work Matthew Harding used 'the laws and principles governing the shape and behaviours of the universe' as both a source from which to discover repeating forms and patterns, and as a guiding principle whose application produced well designed and aesthetically pleasing works. Linear patterns apparent in the engineering of his sculptures have an authority derived from the patterns of nature. In a sense his combination of science and art as his *method of operation*, blurs the boundaries between utilising good technologies and nurturing best practice approaches to the environment. The two monumental highly-polished stainless steel eggs in *Primordial* 2010 thus reflect nature rather than embody the grand designs of the universe.

Gregor Kregar also uses the reflective surfaces of *Reflective simulations* 2010 to enhance and through multiple fragmentations, to intensify and alter our perception of both the context and the work. *Reflective simulations* is indicative of one aspect of Kregar's multimedia practice, where he uses triangular crystalline mirrored structures within installations, which sometimes also incorporate video and coloured light projections. This serves to create ambiguous spatial relationships - a disco reality - which seriously questions our perception of 'reality'. In *Reflective simulations* the central void plays with real and reflected images. It echoes the famous French philosopher Jean Baudrillard's assertion in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1985) that 'our current society has replaced all reality and meaning with symbols and signs, and that human experience is a simulation of reality'. Kregar is fascinated by the fractal patterning of various crystalline structures which have their own apparent random patterns, but which still conform to the natural laws of physics.

Neil Taylor is also interested in the infinite but logical variations possible from repeating patterns which, through slight changes within standard repeated units, can evolve into unforeseen variations. In his sculptures he systematically orientates back to a grid as the base configuration to order and contain these variations. In *Afar beholden* 2010 the standardised pipe arc from which the work is constructed betrays an allegiance to old-fashioned blacksmith techniques of wrought iron, where each unit is twisted in a template to a standard curve through 90 degrees, so that within four couplings the basic unit can form an 's' or circular shape, or multiple variations in between. The underlying repeating geometry and the systematic sequences allude to patterns in nature and mathematics and give authority to his work. The artistry lies in the logical but apparent randomness of the association.

Michael Le Grand as a committed heavy metal sculptor exploits the potential of his material, using its malleability to astound and astonish our conventional industrial recall of steel's press-milled origins, as flat standardized sheets. Le Grand engineers into his work a sense of movement through sets, sequences and repeating rhythms of arcs, usually in ribbon form or twisted curved pipes, which move elegantly away from a central core or locus. Generally speaking these enlivening linear arc patterns have a logical rhythmic trait which is both sympathetic and enhancing to its originating core.

The use of impeccable high-gloss metallic auto paint increases the unity of the work while the intense colour gives sensuality to the surface. In *Yo-Yo* 2007 the intense blue seductively carries the eye along the concertinaed line of steel which abruptly terminates at an orb, which resembling the

spinning section of a child's toy, hence the title of the work. The buckled rod which inspired the work, is in one sense a *found object*, as it was a result of an industrial mishap at a Melbourne steel mill when a white hot extrusion from the rolling mill accidentally hit a lug on the conveyor and impacted on itself. The artist was attracted to its surface texture which was a consequence of its non-conventional cooling after having been discarded from the production line.

The use of the 'found object' or *objet trouvé* has an important lineage in the history of sculpture, beginning with Marcel Duchamp who early in the 20th century, selected mass produced industrial objects and nominated them as artworks. In the 1950s Robert Rauschenberg developed the usage of 'found objects' further with his concept of the 'combine' using multiple found objects which maintained evidence of their former identity, merged into one discrete work. In the contemporary era the practice of installation work has seen these techniques expand to occupy larger spaces and environments both within and external to the gallery.

Alexander Knox creates elaborate installations with objects which appear to have a loaded history, their own mythology and picturesque evidence of destruction and devastation, as demonstrated by his earlier award winning Helen Lempriere Prize work *Death of a white good* 2006, which consisted of fragments of an aeroplane crash, scattered around a partially disintegrated cockpit. *The mill* 2010 presents as an ambiguously hybrid construction, that is both an oversized and strange children's play frame with a set of impossible challenges and levels of advancement, and a macabre torture chamber. It emanates from Knox's observation of the surreal urban design of playgrounds which are often remote from children as the end-users and conform more to adults' concepts of what is appropriate.

Mathieu Gallois uses art as part of a sustained campaign of political activism ranging from critiques on the built environment to policies on refugee detention. For example, one of his earlier works *Caravan* 2001, was constructed entirely out of clear Perspex to capture a 'mirage-like appearance', as a statement on the transitory and marginal existence of its potential owners. For Gallois it was a 'monument to the "invisible constituents"', the fringe-dwellers of mainstream society'. A more recent project *Reincarnated McMansion* 2009, posited the auditing, dismantling, and rebuilding of an existing display home in order to create two new houses, applying 'best practice' environmentally sustainable design principles, as a catalyst for a greener and more innovative approach to suburban development.

In *1 house = 1000 homes* 2010 Gallois, working with Caz Comino and Vesna Trobec, has created a humble house out of Real Estate agents' 'For Sale' signs. Whilst there is documentation about third world housing within the house to highlight this issue, adjacent to the work, and in surrounding Melbourne suburbs, Gallois has also placed pseudo For Sale signs which promote the need to be aware of the predicament of inadequate and substandard housing, as part of endemic poverty in the third world.

Greg Johns sees his steel sculptures as emanating from and about the Australian landscape. The rusted steel is both a product and the colour of the earth, and the monumentality and scale of the shapes and forms that he employs also play homage to the natural environment. Within his oeuvre

two subsets exist: the vertical totemic symbol, which is often humanoid in character presenting a strong vertical silhouette against the sky; and fractal patterning, often using the circular geometry of a mandala, to represent the recurring patterns of nature. The repeating sections in Johns's early mandalas were derived from his observation of meandering river patterns where an arc has been created by the dynamic forces of erosion and silt deposition. In more recent mandalas such as *To the centre II* 2007, the fractal, as a repeating unit, has variations in sequencing and size that are related to the dynamics of river junctions and branching.

Artists have long been fascinated with the laws of physics and how they appear to function in Nature, particularly when the patterns and forms are evident and have evolved in complex self-governing structures. The geometric patterns in Geoffrey Bartlett's *Nautilus (with three legs)* 2010 originates from his fascination with the structure of the nautilus shell. The elegant external form of the shell with its Fibonacci-like arch and its complimentary camouflage patterning, together with its internal structure, represents one of the finest examples of a logarithmic spiral in nature. Bartlett's early sculptures however, focused more on mechanical principles with his machine-like structures incorporating industrial components such as springs, pulleys, cabling and counterweights, to echo an industrial ethos. In more recent works these forged raw steel components have been replaced by immaculately fabricated stainless steel elements which give a high-tech ambience to his sculptures; however the guiding principle remains his interest in visual weight and balance. Since having adopted the use of a computer aided design system (CAD), the particular focus for Bartlett has shifted to the intersection points of various elements to maximize the sense of visual tension and entropy.

The geometry of Jonathan Leahey's early works came from Euclidian geometry applied to folded paper and rudimentary aerodynamics. He folded rusted steel sheets into giant paper planes that had apparently been thrown from a great height so that they were either crumpled, or as in *Bulls eye* 2009, had their nose embedded in the ground. Leahey's sculpture *DNA II* 2010 marks a new departure. If the earlier plane sculptures were about flight and rough landings, the DNA works are about slow evolution. The sequence of cubes alludes to a double helix configuration of DNA molecules and the long-term storage of genetic information. Any variation in a unit in the chain of information is a mutation, which has the potential to create evolutionary change. In *DNA II* (the second in the series) the highly polished stainless steel cube in the sequence of rusted steel is a portent of change. Its mirrored surfaces, which reflect the viewer, are an acknowledgement that with genetic engineering we are within achieving god-like power.

The circle is the symbol of perfection, unity and infinity. In the grand design of medieval cosmology the universe was depicted in the form of a perfect circle, equidistance from all sections of earth as no one section could be privileged above another. Although we now live in a more sophisticated and technologically advanced world many artists still strive to create universals, often referencing past cultures and concepts for inspiration and guidance. Euclidian geometry remains the central element of experimentation for the sculptor James Parrett, with the dissection and reconfiguration of the circle as the basic geometrical unit of all his sculptures. Using low-tech materials, cardboard and glue, he experiments through multiple maquettes, with a 'process of gradual never-ending

change'. When a new and interesting aesthetic potential is achieved in a particular configuration it is fabricated up into a full scale stainless steel work, with *M-fifteen* 2010 being the most recent in this series.

Within the **McClelland Sculpture Survey 2010** there are 34 works which contain their own unique set of histories and meanings. Each work deserves individual contemplation, and to be enjoyed as a serendipitous discovery of the beauty of art and nature together. This we have provided through the development of a sculpture trail which winds through a variety of bush and park settings, each of which aims to compliment the ambitions of the individual works and installations.

Each work in the Survey is a triumphant declaration of the vitality and diversity of contemporary sculpture in Australia, and the commonality shared by their creators is an ambition for excellence. If there is a central zeitgeist, it is the awareness that we live in a world that is evolving at a greater pace than ever before. Themes of change, both climatic and cultural, are thus central to many artists' concerns and addressed with insightful contemplation and reflection, and often with humour. The federation of their combined acumen I hope you will all enjoy, and that you will be excited and inspired by the power and the insightfulness of Australia's contemporary artists.

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October 2010