

# WORLD SCULPTURE NEWS

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## Treasures Of Australian Indigenous Sculpture

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# EXHIBITION

## REVIEWS

### AUSTRALIA

#### Sydney

#### Jayne Dyer at King Street on William

**B**eijing, as a city in flux with a compelling art scene, has drawn many international artists into its hyped-web. Jayne Dyer's was made following her secondment to Beijing but, unlike so many, it sits outside the standard pillage. I suppose the title says it all, *White Work*. How far can you get from 'bubble-gum portraits'? These images rather prey on minimalism, geometry, architecture, and nature as their contemporary meter.

*White Work* combines sculpture with drawing. The resolve in moving across media is a seamless process for Dyer. There is no sense of disjunction as one moves through this exhibition. The sculptures can be read as drawn forms in space and the drawings as studies of line and emergent sculptures; the two spring from the same consciousness.

Commanding the gallery space are two large sculptures: *Arch* (2008), a sweeping tri-form constructed of marine ply but mimicking the clarity of fiberglass or metal, and three soaring tables that stand over two-meters tall and elegantly balance object from their lofty perspective. The two are disparate in terms of volume—one is grounded and weighty, the others are flighty and air-filled yet their exploration of material and spatial play brings this exhibition together.

*Arc* stands to eye-level with three S-shaped elements fanning slightly at one end playing off positive and void. The units are balanced on their edges in the genre of Richard Serra but, unlike Serra's work, their glossy white surface removes the density and impending tension between balance and collapse. The gloss doubly works to confuse our reading of their material, a slick-skin more akin to a cast form than wood. Their lines are organic echoing the curve of a woman's hip or air-



Jayne Dyer, *Prism*, 2008, balsawood, mapping pins, 46 x 60 x 3 cm. Image: Courtesy the Artist and King Street on William.

stream off a wing. *Arc* has the poetics of form and the clarity or simplicity of minimalism.

The three forms *Sphere*, *Pyramid 1*, and *Cube* (all 2008) don't seduce the viewer with the same fluidity as *Arc* but charm through their quirkiness. In them Dyer presents the hand-made as ready-mades atop table-like pedestals that seem to defy gravity and push the boundaries of

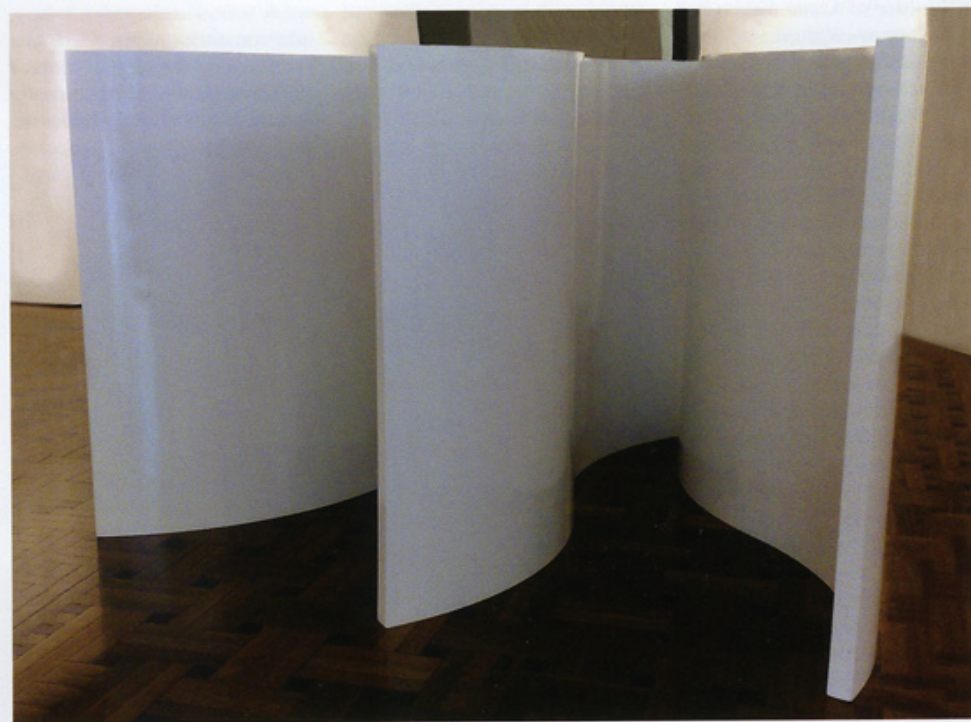
construction. Their legs are not quite square hinting at the skew of a trapezoid. From their elevated perches the objects teeter, best-illustrated in the sculpture *Cube*. What is delightful about these works is their anomalies, calling upon but recoiling from the perfection of minimalism. They have humanity.

*Sphere*, despite its title, is neither a sphere nor an ovoid

and has the organic asymmetry of being sculptured before cast in fiberglass. Like *Arc* it plays with our perceptions of weight, hovering at that point of balance where the form's gravity is countered by the soaring flight of its pedestal. These are extremely elegant and engaging works to move around.

A little gem bridging the larger sculptures is *Prism* (2008). It floats off a wall and is constructed from balsawood and mapping pins. Its thrown shadows act as a microcosm of the larger shadows cast by *Cube* and *Pyramid 1*, and are echoed across the show in a pair of drawings. The lightness in *Prism* moves beyond mere description of its medium to describe an air within this work, despite its directional lines that build the form. Like the trapezoid tables, the perfection of *Prism's* geometry is flawed, splintering, and collapsing the form towards its bottom right corner. It is a natural dynamic and, in that sense, is caught between the temporal and ephemeral through this frozen gesture.

While the sculptures were made in Beijing, the drawings were worked on either side of that journey, bridging the two places. They transmute that



Jayne Dyer, *Arc*, 2008, ply, pine, marine-coated, 3 panels each 150 x 223 x 5 cm. Image: Courtesy of the Artist and King Street on William.



peripatetic experience. The drawings possess a sensitive layering of washes and obsessive linear repetition. They also echo Russian Constructivism in the way they define space and their internal illumination continues to foil weight.

Dyer's Asian journeys have bought a perspective to her work that sits across ideas with dynamism and humanity. Her work has a maturity that is deeply overlooked in Australia and one that deserves to be noted.

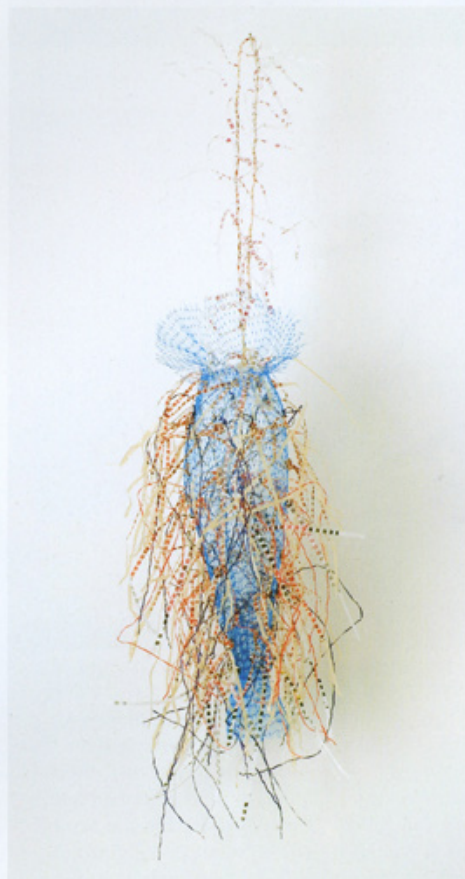
Gina Fairley

### Annie Aitken and Helle Jorgensen at Sullivan Strumpf

Many Australian sculptors are consumed by the delicacy of nature: the mysterious world of deep-sea creatures, the minutiae of insect life. In some cases this fascination manifests itself through colonial investigations of natural history or retrospective observations of abuse of the natural landscape. Sometimes this collective nostalgic mourning of lost environments can be forlorn, if not depressing. But in the case of Annie Aitken and Helle Jorgensen, there is a strong element of optimism and hopeful celebration in their artwork.

Both artists are included in the *Post Chrysalis* exhibition, curated by art advisor Natalia Bradshaw. Bradshaw has a reputation for 'discovering' exciting new artists. She supported Australian artists Jess McNeil, Lionel Bawden, Philip Wolfhagen, and Caroline Rothwell before they came to prominence. Her 'eye' leans towards the visually beautiful rather than the politically overt but the two are not mutually exclusive.

Helle Jorgensen's significant expertise is crochet. A nostalgic medium, crochet calls forth memories of 1970s fashion and home-making skills. Jorgensen produces a cornucopia of crocheted objects; living beings that glide like snails, wave-like seaweed or cascade like blossom in the wind. Her free-form crochet technique



Annie Aitken, *Untitled*, 2008, plastic mesh, polypropylene, and stainless steel wire, approx. 80 x 20 x 20 cm. Image: Courtesy of the Artist and Sullivan Strumpf Gallery, Sydney.

makes use of recycled plastic bags as yarn and focuses on the torrential diversity of the natural world. This fecund obsession began as a result of Jorgensen's biology studies and research. She later trained as a horticulturist and worked in garden design before studying drawing and printmaking.

Jorgensen's work is made feminine by the choice of her

historical method and she shares this element with fellow sculptor Annie Aitken, who weaves and sews bags and vessels from plastic fruit and vegetable bags. Her work is frail and tender, wispy, and romantic. Again there is a reference to the degradation of the environment and the desire to look to substantial, elemental, and useful activities (crochet, sewing, weaving) to make sense



Helle Jorgensen, *Plastic Sea Creatures Series*, 2008, discarded plastic bag yarn, approx. 10 x 15 x 15 cm. Image: Courtesy of the Artist and Sullivan Strumpf Gallery, Sydney.

of a biology in disorder, an environment under threat.

Aitken's works are more recognizable than Jorgensen's in that they are objects of ordinary every day life. Brightly colored fruit and vegetable bags are reconfigured, through the process of drawing and weaving, to create new objects out of old wares. But Aitken leaves portions of the bags or vessels unfinished or 'overflowing' with extra plastic. There are references, whether intended or not, to Aboriginal dilly bags. This aspect, too, takes her sculptures out of the suburban humdrum from whence they came.

If Jorgensen's and Aitken's sculptures represent the new world, the future order, then perhaps there is the time and the will to reverse ecological damage and celebrate harmony in life.

Prue Gibson

### CHINA

#### Beijing

### Lin Tianmiao at Long March Space

Having begun her career as a textile designer in New York, Lin Tianmiao returned to China in the mid-1990s where she has since become recognized as one of the country's most important female artists. In what is touted as the artist's most significant work to date, in *Mother's!!!*, Lin transformed Beijing's Long March Space into a world with a ghostly evocation to the scars of physical and psychological abuse.

Although somewhat passive, there is a certain level of audience participation, with visitors required to remove their footwear prior on entering the space, and traversing her ambitiously constructed landscape. Navigating the undulating slopes of the molded environment lined with a patchwork of silk was uncertain. The overall effect of the delicately crafted, softly lit space with its atmospheric shadowing across the surreal forms was dreamlike and initially calming, evoking