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# WORLD SCULPTURE NEWS

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## RONALD VENTURA

**Marea Gazzard** \* **McClelland**  
**Sculpture Survey And Award** \*  
**Yehudit Sasportas** \* **Hong Kong**  
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# Humanity And Nature

There are numerous sculpture awards around the world but one of the most exciting and innovative is the biennial McClelland Sculpture Survey and Award. The range of the works in the show and the astuteness of their intellectual statements are pleasures that reinforce our humanity.

By Sandy Caldwell

The McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery is set in superb grounds of elegantly manicured, European-style lawns. There is also a picturesque looped sculptural trail that meanders for a kilometer through natural bush and grassland. This was the setting for the 35 final works of the biennial McClelland Sculpture Survey and Award of 2012.

This award for sculpture comprises works by established, mid-career, and emerging artists who are addressing a wide range of subject and theme, from the changing ideas of beauty throughout history to environmental degradation to the art of recycling, from life's natural balances to philosophical musings on time and the elements to climate change and love, and so much more. This exhibition presents many works that examine notions of weight and weightlessness in a broad range of ways including form and/or content, socially, physically, politically, and ecologically. As the late sculptor and architect Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988) said: "It is weight that gives meaning to weightlessness."

Greg Johns was awarded the A\$100,000 major acquisitive McClelland Sculpture Award for his work *At the center (There is nothing)*. This corten-steel mandala sculpture reflects Eastern mysticism, fractal patterns found in nature, and a sense of place. The form contains references to the rivers and hills near the artist's home in South Australia. The work is a type of ideogram, like a language that is imbued with motion and appears weightless, defying its materiality. It includes patterns and rhythms and a dynamic sense of movement that seems to imbue the work with a living momentum.

Artist Terrance Plowright won the People's Choice Award with *Tubular Resonance* whose form is reminiscent of the famous steel sound sculpture entitled *Singing Ringing Tree* that overlooks Burnley, in Lancashire, England, designed by architects Mike Tonkin and Anna Liu of Tonkin Liu, in 2006. The sound recording for *Tubular Resonance*, however, is not wind generated but composed to evoke a meditative experience with nature, sculpture, and music. The form of the work responds to the nearby coast, as it is indicative of kelp, reeds, rushes, and/or of a waveform as it peaks. The work appears weightless as it flies off a small base as if being windswept towards the shore or upward to the heavens.

When nature is turned upside down, you get a Greek column—at least this is the impression given by Anton McMurray's *Seed*. This work is made from upturned *hinoki*, Japanese cypress trees, and in this state they resemble two Greek

columns. With the tree roots in the air the work expands up into the sky. We get to see what is below and above the ground. When you are in the Antipodes, you get the notion that everything is upside down and back to front. What is hidden is now revealed.

*Solar space resonance* by Augustine Dall'Ava shows that life remains a balancing act, in both micro- and macro-cosmic levels. Dall'Ava's work incorporates dynamic balance and includes meticulous forms that appear to defy gravity. The semi-abstract form of the work resonates through cool, mainly geometric, shapes and other structures made with an indus-

trial finish, implying through materiality an allegiance to the systems of mathematics and physics.

Daniel Clemmett's *Embracing the plateau*, made out of recycled car bonnet undercarriages, is a sardonic interpretation of the *Venus of Willendorf* (24,000–22,000 BCE). Here he is referring to the changing notions of beauty through history, and the varied issues we face in contemporary life. The work utilizes a recycled resource and provokes dialogue about the environmental impacts of cars and travel and the world's dwindling resources. Although huge in scale and voluptuous, this "Venus" appears balanced on a high point: like a



Above: Greg Johns, *At the center (There is nothing)*, 2012, corten steel, 350 x 350 x 170 cm. Previous page: Anton McMurray, *Seed*, 2012, hinoki (Japanese cypress), 450 x 600 x 300 cm. All images: Courtesy of the Artists and McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park.





Terrance Plowright, **Tubular resonance**, 2012, stainless steel, sound, 430 x 252 x 231 cm.



Karleena Mitchell, **Cacophony**, 2012, stainless steel, speakers, paint, sound, 19 elements: each 150 x 200 cm.



Lani Fender & Damien Elderfield, **Grassy mole**, 2012, stainless steel, synthetic turf, dimensions variable.



Augustine Dall'Ava, **Solar space resonance**, 2012, steel, aluminum, paint, 243 x 157 x 68 cm.

bush ballerina, she is a symbol of recycling as a new representation of fertility.

Antonia Goodfellow's earth-shaped form *CONSILIENCE – we all jump together* is covered with long strips of recycled bike tyres. The work is a metaphor for humanity's overpopulation and the need to address climate change, with sustainable travel being one way to start.

Isaac Greener's and Lucas Maddock's *Apostle number 2* recreates one of the famous *Twelve Apostles* in Victoria near the Great Ocean Road that collapsed into the sea in 2005. The work is a symbol of the changeability and impermanence of nature and the global environment in political, cultural, social, and economic factors. It also refers to changes in land use and urban expansion resulting in the loss of farmland and open space. Recreated as it is here, as a mock limestone cliff made from reinforced polyester resin, the artists have depicted nature using highly toxic materials, which is often considered a quandary in itself, particularly when artists are drawing attention to contemporary environmental concerns.

Chaco Kato uses string for the ephemeral work *Himo Theory* (2012), a large macramé type installation knotted onto the surrounding bush, creating a string room with external and internal spaces.

Vince Vozzo's *New man meets new woman* are rounded figures that are caught in an embrace about to kiss. The work references Rodin's *The Kiss* sculpture as well as being influenced by the stylized portrayal of the human figure often found in the works of Inuit artists from the Canadian Arctic and Alaska.

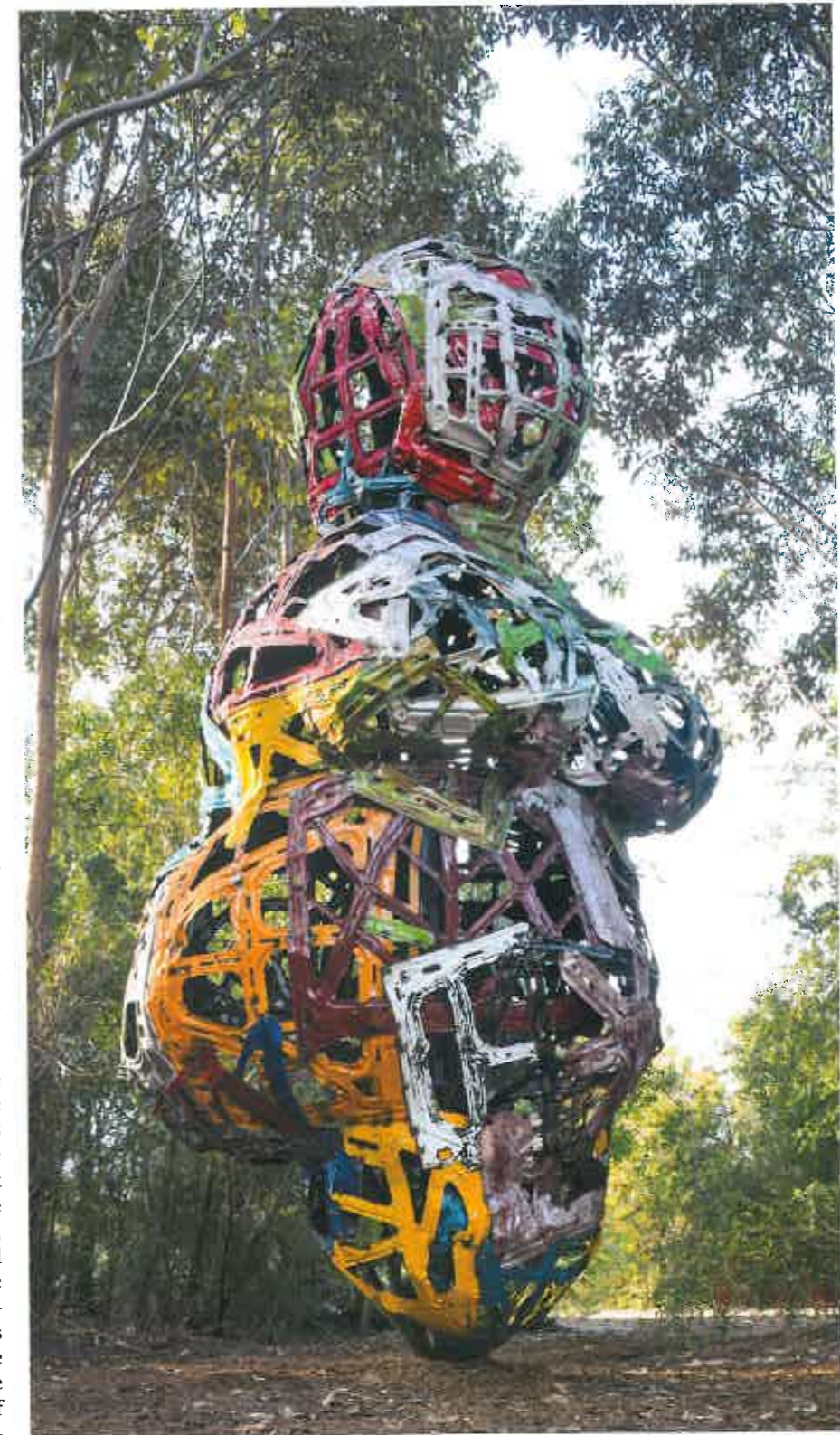
Gerard McCourt's *Broken stone* has an over life-size stone hammer resting on top of a pile of sandstone, referring to craft, tools, energy, and transformation of materials through labor. The work relates to the context of the site, being positioned in an area where coastal scrub has been pulled down to create space to show sculpture. It is as if the tool takes a rest in the midst of creation.

The issues associated with the continual growth of urban fringe areas and the impact this has on the natural environment are promoted in the dialogue that is *Cacophony* by Karleena Mitchell. Here a group of primary-colored bird boxes, or "suburb boxes," creates a tranquil scene in the bush surrounds. The peace is shattered suddenly when the threatening sounds of road traffic and sirens and car horns completely change the mood of the scene. Just as suddenly the traffic sounds cease, the equilibrium of the bush setting is restored. This "on-and-off" crescendo creates dualities and

tension that builds and are released. Bozo Ink's *Bunker-de-bunk* is architectural and like a barricade in a war zone. This built form is industrial and militaristic, with an open doorway that provides surveillance of nearby new suburbs.

Robbie Rowland's *Dead Reckoning* is a 50-foot salvaged boat that the artist says relates firstly to the Fukushima

tsunami and the power and force of nature. Rowland's mentions "strength in buoyancy" and his shipwreck represents humanity's and the earth's fragility. This work brings up the hot current issue where refugees trying to reach Australia board unsafe boats provided by people smugglers die at sea or are turned away when they arrive.



Daniel Clemmett, **Embracing the plateau**, 2010, recycled car undercarriages, 500 x 300 x 300 cm.



Lani Fender's and Damien Elderfield's *Grassy mole* is an environmental sculpture that alters the environment around it. The work generates reflections in the surrounding area, as opposed to just figuratively presenting itself to the viewer. The group of squared columns, with their angled tops, rises out of the earth and provides a copse of stainless steel and reflections through which to walk. The architectural forms are like stylized buildings with rooftop gardens of synthetic turf. The work responds directly to the site and the surroundings, merging with it through reflection, color, and topography, making an "otherness" in terms of "place" as you walk through.

**U**rban wildlife by Robert Delves presents the iconic Australian kangaroo, made from fragments of road signs, as a metaphor for how restricted animals are in terms of where they can safely travel and live. Covered with imprints of partial road signs comprising abstract regulations and directions, it is ironic as roads are where so many animals die.

Matthew Harding's *Antithesis* is an elegant topological work of stainless-steel architectural and mathematical forms. The work implies twisted mathematical forms, indicative of flight, while symbolizing all sorts of tensions inherent in the form and in life.

Renowned Australian sculptor Inge King has referred to measuring her work against the vast spaces found in Australia and of her aim to conquer the landscape with her work, not through scale but through the use of simple clear forms that express tension and strength. Marcus Tatton's *Corruptus Indigicus* expresses this same tension and strength. His monumentally scaled zero's and ones are made from corten steel, and are the continuation of a body of work undertaken over many years, to reflect the binary code that is the core of the language of coding and technology. Tatton makes a modern-day relic to evoke the changes that are so rapid in technology, that even binary code may soon be obsolete.

Another work that references technology via an interactive element is Emma Anna's *Tourist*. In this visual poem the word *Tourist* is missing the "i" becoming *Tour st*. The viewer as "tourist" is invited by the artist to get a photo taken of them standing where the missing "i" is and to then upload it onto Twitter, building upon the story of the work.

Christopher Langton's work *Away with the fairies* is a group of Japanese-inspired Avatars, or characters from *manga* cartoons, expressing ties to Disney and American cultural concerns. Langton won

the McClelland Achievement Prize for this work. He has worked with highly colored plastics and resins for almost two decades, often using larger-than-life subject matter from popular culture. Langton's animated, sexy Asian figures are an incongruous surprise when you come across them in the Australian bush. American artist Chuck Close said: "Sculpture occupies real space like we do ... you walk around it and relate to it almost as another person or another object."

With technology developing as dramatically as it is, the works in the exhibition are surprisingly low-tech. The

artists here have employed diverse sculptural practices to comment on the unease and the fragile relationship between humanity and nature, pointing to ecology as among the most pressing of societal issues. As Isamu Noguchi said, "The essence of sculpture is for me the perception of space, the continuum of our existence," and this exhibition reinforces those same concerns. Δ

Sandy Caldwell is an Australian contributing editor for *World Sculpture News* and *Asian Art News*. She is based in Melbourne.



Robert Delves, *Urban wildlife*, 2012, road signs, bitumen, steel, wood, dimensions variable.