

Clare Davies

a miraculous memory

30 January - 14 March 2010

How did you find yourself in Fremantle?

I left Melbourne in 2005 and spent several months in the Central Western Desert community of Willowra as an artist-in-residence. I then travelled on to Western Australia for my step-brother's wedding in early 2006 after which I hoped to find work up north in an Aboriginal arts centre. When that didn't pan out I stayed in Perth and have really focussed on my practice since then. I was lucky to receive a subsidised studio through Artsource at the Old Customs House in Fremantle.

How do you approach your work? Do you have a specific process?

I tend to work quickly and produce a lot of work in one go. Out of thirty drawings, one might be good. With sculpture I think I'm still finding my way with materials and construction, each one still feels like a bit of an experiment. The process is slower and feels more dangerous than painting/drawing, perhaps because they take up more space.

I like working with a variety of media. This has happened over the last five years, before that I made prints and paintings. I like the freedom of working with an open mind as far as materials or format go, the shift or change in media can be a relief from too much head stuff.

I've exhibited more in the last year or so too and that has impacted my approach as each show is beginning to flow on to the next exhibition or project.

How has the shift in scale affected your work?

The work is getting bigger, this is challenging and exciting. The intention with this show was to take a drawing from a group of quick sketches I'd produced on a Bundanon residency in 2009 and use it as a template to investigate scale and form. The important thing and difficult part about working with scale has been maintaining the sense of intimacy and containment within the drawings in the new work. I would hope to retain the sense that one has when a small painting or drawing envelops you, draws your mind in.

At times I've been trying to 'draw' with the sculptures and therefore the individual finish of each form has not been as important as their overall contribution to the whole. Hopefully there's an equality amongst the forms just as there might be on the drawn page.

You've called the work a miraculous memory. What does that mean?

I find it difficult coming up with titles – I was looking for something that would describe the moment when a deep memory is revealed, partially exposed and a bit furry. It may have diverged from its original form almost entirely having osmosed with a million and one other thoughts, dreams and memories but it still retains a hint of sensation and truth of the original memory. I don't believe in miracles but if the word were to describe something surely it would encompass everything in the world including us- there's something sad in that too.

What inspired your work for this show?

My inspiration for this show is a colliding of all the things I've been interested in lately. I live in White Gum Valley and find the vacant areas of land in the Knutsford precinct (a combination of vacant land and industrial warehouses) really beautiful, wild verges, piles of rubble, long sunburnt grasses and wild fennel, lupins, jonquils. Other points of interest ... I read Chloe Hooper's book, *The Tall Man*; an account of the death-in-custody of a Palm Island man, the heat and heating up of this country, tropical heat, and a subsequent sagging decay of buildings, people, spirit ... thinking about how the cosmos and the land and underwater all mirror each other, an island as metaphor, containment, the materials that I found along the way, decoration and the sacred in Asian and Pacific Island cultures ... gravity ... equality amongst objects, each with its own place and autonomy but integral to the whole like the weeds on the nature strip.

Where do you get your materials from?

Hard rubbish, skips, op shops, markets. I also dismantle previous sculptures and reuse the material. Aside from the corn puffs, almost all the materials are reused, reclaimed in some form or another. I'm not holding it up as an example of sustainability, that might be a trap but I've enjoyed being more resourceful and the accidents and surprises that have come out of that.

What artists are you interested in at the moment?

English painter, Paul Nash - there are two of his paintings in the Art Gallery of Western Australia Collection. Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, an Iranian artist whose work *Lightning for Neda* features in the current *Asia-Pacific Triennial* at the Queensland Art Gallery, Franz West and the late Thai artist Montien Boonma.

Clare Davies and Jasmin Stephens were in conversation Fremantle, January 2010

Fremantle-based Clare Davies has long been intoxicated by the possibilities of dreams. Born in 1976, she trained at Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, and maintains an animation strand to her practice.

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Australian Government



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