

Slag Studies

Jamie North

5 April - 18 May 2019



Jamie North, *Slag Study #2*, 2019, blast furnace slag, galvanised steel, Australian nativeplant (*Dischidia ovata*), 40.5 x 51 cm.

Working with arcane methods of mineral and resource extraction, Jamie North has gained critical attention for his ruinous appearing sculptures made from hand-produced concrete. Treating a traditionally mass-produced process with artisanal care, North creates formal structures that appear to have been weathered and deteriorated by the elements, while fostering and supporting emerging plant-life. *Slag Studies* begins to unpack the modes of production for which the artist is renowned. In a suite of photographic works, North depicts the industrial process of extracting iron, rendered moodily dark and foreboding, with machinery moving to tip molten slag into a churned landscape. In each, the slag pot appears as a fierce and luminous embodiment of energy, not dissimilar to the sun. This circular motif echoes throughout the sculptural works through the coring of slag rocks resulting in cylindrical tunnels. Some of these are filled with water, while in others lithophytes nestle in the cavities, bringing the carboniferous process full cycle. Each sculpture alludes to the various studio processes the artist employs in the making of his sculptural work, with the slag that has been used primarily as a material component in previous works essentialised and taking centre stage.

Jamie North lives and works in Sydney. Selected recent solo exhibitions include *Worlds*, Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney (2019); *Swamp Anatomy*, Neon Parc, Melbourne (2018); *Slidings*, The Lock-Up, Newcastle (2017); *Remainder*, Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney (2016); *Rock Melt*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2015); *Terraforms*, Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney (2014); and *innoerouter*, Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney (2013). Selected recent group exhibitions include *20th Biennale of Sydney* (2016); *Fleurieu Art Prize*, Samstag Museum, University of South Australia, Adelaide (2016); *Concrete*, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne (2014) and Tophane-i Amire Culture and Arts Center, Istanbul (2015); *Nature/Revelation*, Ian Potter Museum, University of Melbourne; and the *NSW Visual Arts Fellowship for Emerging Artists*, Artspace, Sydney (2013).

Jamie North is represented by Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney.



Jamie North, *Slag Studies*, installation view at Gertrude Contemporary.

VISUAL ARTS 7 - 10

Explore and Express

Levels 7 - 8 (VCAVAE034)

Explore how artists use materials, techniques, technologies and processes to realise their intentions in art works

Levels 9 - 10 (VCAVAE041)

Explore how artists manipulate materials, techniques, technologies and processes to develop and express their intentions in art works

Respond and Interpret

Levels 7 - 8 (VCAVAR038)

Analyse how ideas and viewpoints are expressed in art works and how they are viewed by audiences.

Levels 9-10 (VCAVAR045)

Analyse and interpret artworks to explore the different forms of expression, intentions and viewpoints of artists and how they are viewed by audiences

Visual Arts Practices

Levels 7 - 8

Experiment with materials, techniques, technologies and processes in a range of art forms to express ideas, concepts and themes in artworks

Levels 9-10

Select and manipulate materials, techniques, and technologies and processes in a range of art forms to express ideas, concepts and themes

VISUAL ARTS 7 - 10

Questions

Describe what you see, thinking about how the artist has changed, and adapted the materials in the exhibition.

What role does plant life play?

What role does concrete play?

What juxtapositions can you see?

Suggestion

As you wander around the exhibition describe the materials you see.

Why has the North chosen to use these materials?

Do you think they play an important role in his work?

What is the relationship between the artist's' photographs and sculptures?

What ideas do you think he is trying to communicate with you his audience?

Activity

Create your own habitable concrete sculpture

Use your visit to Jamie North's, *Slag Studies* at Gertrude Contemporary as inspiration for your own small scale concrete sculptures. Explore your school, home and immediate environment for interesting natural or discarded materials that could be used to create moulds, and surface textures for your sculpture i.e. leaves, plastic bags, plastic bottles, cups, balloons etc.

Once you have chosen your mould, follow the instructions on an artist/craft concrete variety and pour your liquid concrete into your mould. You may want to add additional materials to your mould to create differing textures. Remember to create wholes, openings or small cavities in your sculpture, where you can grow your own lithophytes.



Jamie North, *Slag Studies*, installation view at Gertrude Contemporary.

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VCE STUDIO ARTS + ARTS

VCE Studio Art

Unit 3.3 Artists and Studio Practices:

In this area of study students focus on professional studio practices in relation to particular art forms. Students investigate the ways in which artists have interpreted subject matter, influences, historical and cultural contexts, and communicated ideas and meaning in their artworks.

Unit 4.3:

You will visit a variety of art exhibitions and examine the different methods and roles undertaken in the preparation and presentation of art to the public.

VCE Art

Unit 2.2:

In this area of study students explore areas of personal interest related to culture and contemporary practices. They use the art process and experiment with visual language to develop, present and document their ideas.

VCE STUDIO ARTS + ARTS

Question

Before reading the exhibition statement describe what you see. What visual elements (line, shape, pattern, texture, form etc) make up both the individual art works and the exhibition as a whole? What is the significance of the primary materials (concrete, lithophytes, water)? What do you think the artist is communicating through his choice of materials?

Suggestion

One way of approaching North's *Slag Studies* is by viewing the exhibition as an extended study of the artist's studio processes. As you wander around the gallery what visual evidence can you find to support or dispute this statement? What connections can you see between North's sculptures and the resource extraction industry? Consider also what role the photographs play in relation to the sculptures.

Activity

During your visit to Gertrude Contemporary speak to a staff member about how they develop their exhibitions i.e. curatorial themes, exhibition design, promotion and how they maintain and care for their artworks during the exhibition cycle.

In the Harding + North exhibitions also consider the connections between the two exhibitions. What can you see that links the shows together? Why would the curator choose to show these artists at the same time?

Consider visual connections, subject matter, materials etc. and also what separates the two shows.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Aesthetics: The branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of beauty and taste.

Deteriorated: To have become worse, to be in decline

Arcane: Mysterious and obscure, known by few

Lithophytes: Plants that grow on rocks or stone

Cavities: Hollowed out spaces within solid objects

Carboniferous: Producing or containing carbon or coal

Resource Etraction: Withdrawing materials from the natural environment

Ruinous: Decaying / disintegrating

Artisinal: Made in a traditional way, usually by hand, by skilled craftsperson

Churned: Broken up, agitated, moved with force

RESOURCES

Gertrude Contemporary: <http://www.gertrude.org.au/exhibitions/>

Sarah Cottie Gallery: https://www.sarahcottiergallery.com/artist/34/Jamie_North.htm#a34

National Gallery Victoria: <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/jamie-north/>

eyeline: <https://www.eyelinepublishing.com/eyeline-86/review/jamie-north-remainder>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdrPgNyp68>