

200 GERTRUDE STREET

5 - 26 OCTOBER 1991

the intertidal zone

SUE PEDLEY

the intertidal zone

comprises various processes of building which are all possible on the beach, working small. The ovoids are made of plaster and sand, cast over sand 'ribs'; the fleur-de-lis are made from plaster pourings over clay and sand reliefs; the jetties come from plaster moulds. The shapes are both organic and calcified. They are leavings, remains ... subtle imprints.

... circular pores,
perforations,
lattice-work,
meshes,
networks,
empty husks ...

To the Celts, petrified sea urchins were symbols of the world, like the egg. In ancient magic rites, masks were used to depict spirits and to personify the powers of people and animals. Vanitas paintings, with their hollow-eyed skulls, were laments about the transience of all things.

On a recent bus journey from Canberra to Sydney I sat next to, and so had to contend with, a 'hyperactive' nine-year-old girl. With her pen torch we created fantastic monster hand shadows on the bright blue plastic seat in front of us. Then we shone the torch up our noses and inside our mouths and closed fists, and, each time, I became enraptured by the translucent depth and mystery, warmth and blood in that particular red glow.

Within the gallery, walls were removed, false walls were installed, windows were uncovered, removed, and replaced.

Hidden Work. Hidden labour.

Home building. Space building.

A domestic space and domestic-scaled work.

A childlike process and a child's viewpoint.

Our skin altered from being a contained (if fragile) shield against the world, into a porous translucent sheath stretched over coursing blood and tendons and bones and transmitting back and forth from outside to inside and back again.

A small child squatted in front of one of Sue Pedley's porous redly-glowing coral masks and peered within, drawn, like me, to look in, to probe the light source. I remembered taking three children down to Catherine Hill bay on a wild blustery day. The rock shelves and cliffs were dark-grey pock-marked conglomerates - pasted and matted together sediments and debris - water and wind-worn into innumerable caves, grottoes, overhangs and pools. In age-old tradition we squatted round rock pool after rock pool, peering into their depths, beyond the surface water, exploring crevices and Lilliputian gorges for the alien life forms that thrive there. Luscious succulent flowers, mounds of jelly which twitch out into waving pink trees. Amorphous brightly coloured slugs. Textures: of spines, and soft wet masses, sharp crustaceans, calcified skeletal remains, tough sculptured external shells covering and secreted by the fleshy bodies within.

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t h e i n t e r t i d a l z o n e

(from front page)

"See what a lovely shell,
Small and pure as a pearl,
Lying close to my foot,
Frail, but a work divine,
Made so fairly well,
With delicate spire and whorl,
How exquisitely minute
A miracle of design."
– Tennyson

Cushions and mantles and tendrils. Unnatural colours – almost phosphorescent, in poor aesthetic taste. Primary colours in their elemental state, saturated and glowing. Sheltering and massed in all their grotesqueness and sublime beauty within microcosmic worlds within worlds. Filtering, breathing, feeding, undulating, secreting, in constant motion.

"On one occasion we took a dead Cydippe, and placing it on a piece of glass, exposed it to the sun. As the moisture evaporated, the different parts appeared as if confusedly painted on the glass, and when it was become perfectly dry, a touch removed the only vestiges of what had been so lately a graceful and animated being."
– Robert Patterson *Introduction to Zoology for the Schools*

My mother had a Kauri gum figurine of a Maori woman from New Zealand. In a household of solid and highly decorated ornaments this figurine fasci-

nated me. Over the years the Maori woman settled inexorably to the bottom; ever so slowly flowing downwards towards the earth's mass, losing its articulation and shape and becoming softer and weightier all the time. Live things slide and tremble and develop cracks and sag. Light and heat affect them, and can perforate them and emanate from them.

"... the organic forces separate the atoms of carbonate of lime one by one from the foaming breakers, and unite them into a symmetrical structure; myriads of architects are at work day and night, month after month, and we see their soft and gelatinous bodies, through the agency of the vital laws, conquering the great mechanical power of the waves of an ocean which neither the art of man nor the inanimate works of Nature could successfully resist." – Charles Darwin on coral islets

... bubbles,
crystals,
cells,
honeycombs,
sponges,
corals...

So many separate modules, but wired and spliced together and powered from a central source.

Making connections through making work.

TESS HORWITZ September 1991

SUE PEDLEY

Born Launceston, Tasmania 1954

STUDIES

- 1984 Bachelor of Fine Art, Tasmanian School of Art
- 1987 Guest student, Städel Schule, Frankfurt, Germany
- 1989 Post Graduate Diploma, Sydney College of the Arts

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1987 Galerie Wasch Salon, Frankfurt, Germany
- Städel Schule, Frankfurt
- 1988 Cockatoo Gallery, Launceston
- 1991 *the intertidal zone*, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1985 Chameleon Inc., Hobart
- 1986 Eberbach Kloster, Rheingau, Germany
- 1989 Performance Space, Sydney
- 1990 *Blue Edges*, Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney
- The Element Orange*, Performance Space, Sydney

Bondi Pavillion, Sydney

Combing, Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney

- 1991 *the intertidal zone*, Performance Space, Sydney
- the reef of the night sky*, in *Museum of Accidents* (collaboration with performance group 'Open City'), Performance Space, Sydney
- Bondi Pavillion, Sydney

AWARDS

- 1986 Australia Council Travel/Study Grant to France and Germany
- 1989 Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board Project Grant
- 1990 Australia Council Project Grant

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- 1990 Sydney Morning Herald (review) February
- Sydney Morning Herald (review) December

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