

Greer Honeywill
IN-Grained
works in wood
(exposed and disguised)
2003-2012

EXPLORING PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPACE

PETA HEFFERNAN, CURATOR

IN-Grained is the first solo exhibition in Tasmania of the acclaimed conceptual artist, Greer Honeywill. The exhibition brings together thought-provoking, sculptural works, predominantly made of wood that collectively have been developed over a period of nine years and represent a strong and enduring seam in her studio practice.

In 2011, as her exploration of the realm of art and architecture intensified, the artist invited me to join her as an active participant in the development of the exhibition. Her aim was to harness the gaze of the architect as both curator and designer of the exhibition space. The brief was for a space in which we could both be playful. The artist and the architect exploring shared ideas on private and public space, while providing a unique experiential journey for the audience.

Honeywill's work openly explores concepts of social patterning, the blemished surface of suburbia, time lost, the place of self, and memory. Overlaying these concerns the artist also explores grand architectonic narratives that allude to the power of architecture to affect the psyche.

From the floor plan for kitchenless Courtyard Houses designed in 1885 by Howland, Deery and Owen, to eliminate time lost to the mundane, to the poetic expression of architect Peter Zumthor; from the disruptive relationship of Le Corbusier to the house Eileen Grey designed and called E-1027, to the wilful expression of Rudolph Schindler, Honeywill has gathered narratives, just as she gathers familiar objects

infused with memories for inclusion in her work. *IN-Grained*, illuminates Honeywill's observations of the impact of architectural expression on social behaviour, and ultimately the human condition.

In the expression of these ideas, Honeywill elevates the value of craftsmanship through the materials and methods used in the development of the installations. Her collaboration with artisans keeps the idea of crafted authenticity alive and draws our attention to a society that is losing sight of the pleasure gained from experiencing the delight of well-crafted objects or spaces.

Honeywill's exposed, wooden works celebrate craftsmanship and the beauty of natural timber, while in the white or disguised works, Honeywill seals the surface of the wooden substrate using white paint or fabric, focusing the attention on the form rather than its composite parts.

The design for the exhibition space creates a journey of revelation for these works. '*Carpet*', experienced at the entry, suggests the spread of suburbia carpeting the landscape. In this context, '*Carpet*' defines our exterior lives – makes apparent our significant public disguise and the declaration and definition of our boundaries. This apparently innocent hall runner spreads infectiously and destructively across the landscape.

Beyond the thin veil we enter private space to explore interiority. In this series of intimate spaces, privacy and enclosure allow focus on smaller installations and beyond the intimate there is a gradual shift to public space and openness at the heart of the space.

The dynamic of the plan actively engages with Honeywill's works allowing the artist to re-imagine installations within their particular spaces.

The exposed timber works with their layered meanings and beautiful surfaces are reminiscent of the rich, wooden textures softening the modernist hand celebrated in Wright's prairie houses and Alto's Scandinavian sensibilities sculpted seamlessly into his human scale compositions.

Works such as *Carpet*, *Variations on Monotony*, *Anthology of Sadness* and *Mothership* draw out the expressive possibilities of the skeletal timber form with architectural and domestic references. Proceeding through the 'front door', observations of suburbia and the effects on the human condition come to the fore. But does the great Australian dream of a house on a quarter acre block satisfy the yearning? Too often the dream has taken precedence over sense at the cost of community and quality of life. How did we get to the stage as a society where soulless suburbs become acceptable just so we can 'own' our plot of land?

The early Modernist architects used white to highlight architectural relationships in the most pure way – the relationship of one plane to another; the relationship of linear elements to planar elements, the way space is modulated. They believed the openness and mass, transparency and opacity that exists in defining space was defined more clearly through the use of white.

Honeywill's white or disguised works typified by *On Show*, *Elysium* and *To look at the moon*, highlight architectural narratives and the modernist aesthetic. The variations of white and light highlight a simplicity allowing form and shadows to be accentuated. There is a sense of visual purity and simplicity and yet these works harbour complex ideas and explorations. Honeywill is encouraging us to see rather than just look.

We have come together, artist and architect, to make a work that continues to develop shared ideas explored through our different disciplines. *Groundcover*, is

an abstracted, white, gridded landscape, overlaid with architectural notations symbolising the home. Is the built fabric eroding the landscape or is the landscape beginning to erode the built fabric? The modular work continues the patterning and repetition seen in Honeywill's work, while a sense of ambiguity leaves open interpretation of the forms and their relationship with the eroded modernist house plans designed by prominent Tasmanian architect, Ray Heffernan, my father.

Groundcover is infused with questions that provide the springboard for our investigation. Is the cultural obsession with housing estates and therefore disconnectedness from the urban environment working against the achievement of considered, design outcomes? Does urban sprawl prevent the building of communities? Does lack of community impact on human interaction and social isolation?

The Finnish academic, Juhani Pallasmaa said, 'Architecture is a direct expression of existence, of human presence in the world.' In other words, the built environment reflects the values of the society that exists at that point in time. By observing the layers of time we can see how these values through the ages have shifted. Honeywill's work draws out some pertinent questions about the way we treat the environment and gives us reason to consider our priorities. If we pause to reflect on our contribution, will we be proud of the legacy we have created for future generations? As a society we have the talent and expertise to solve problems and make beautiful, stimulating environments for people. We just have to value them.

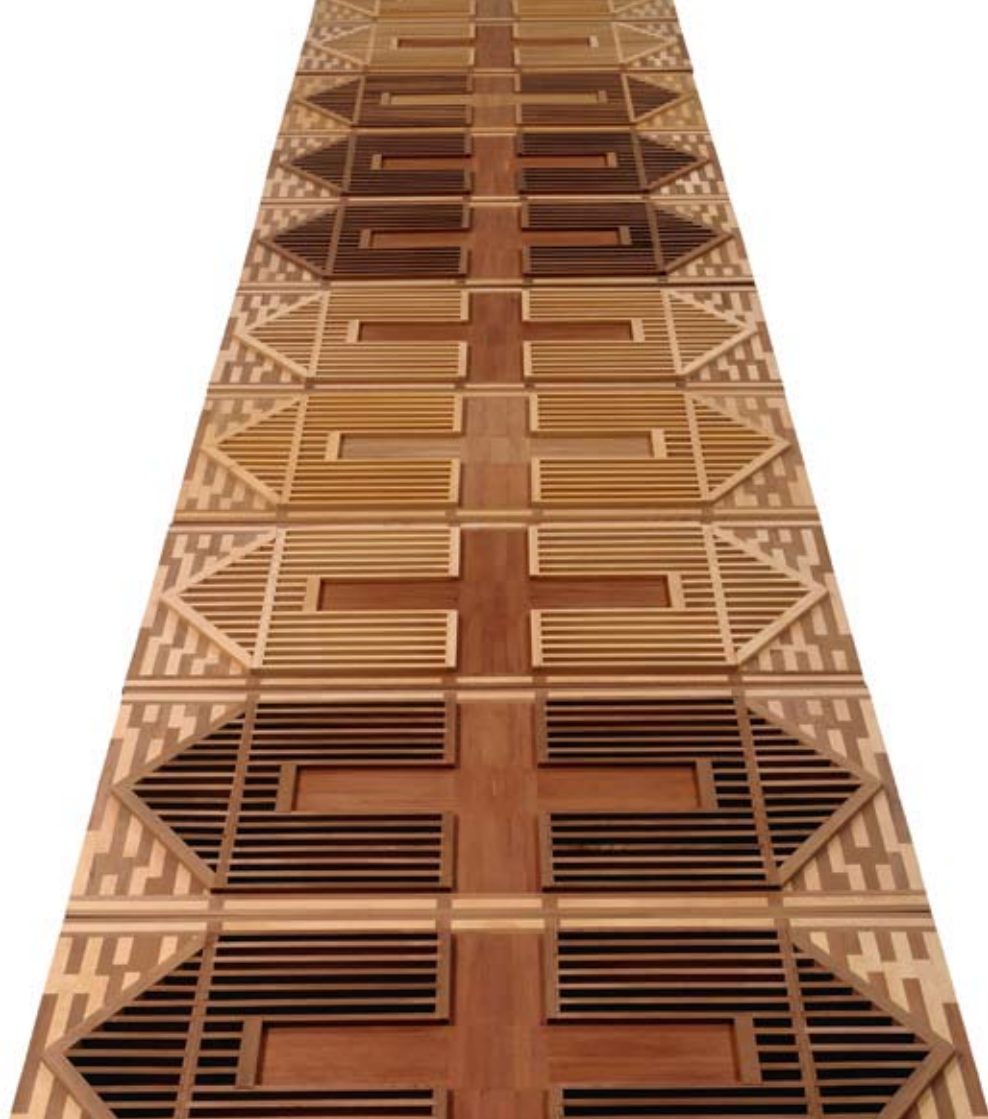
Peta Heffernan

architect

Liminal Spaces

www.liminalstudio.com.au

Carpet (detail)
2005-2012
wood (various timbers), craft wood, glue
6 x 150 x 1100 cm
Photograph John Best



HOME TO HOUSE TO PLACE

PETER POULET, NSW GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT
AND GENERAL MANAGER, ARTIST

Greer Honeywill is an architect's artist; not at home at home, but like an architect, wondering and wandering through time, space, memory and metaphor.

Childhood experience connects her to the home and memories of the domestic which in turn lead to contemplation of house, enclosure and then beyond, to the role of architecture and home in chasing dream, illusion and deceptions.

This particular body of work titled, *IN-Grained*, has been chosen by the curator Peta Heffernan. A Tasmanian architect with a pedigree, Heffernan has a nuanced understanding of Honeywill's work.

Heffernan's architectural practice and philosophy is centred on the making of unique space and the dialogue between object and the space it inhabits. This focus is ideally suited to Honeywill's explorations of domestic space, form and memory.

Heffernan's design for the exhibition space echoes the patterns of domestic architectural perambulation, a design that skilfully reinforces the conceptual framework of the artist's work. The gallery as house or the house as showpiece?

We move from the entry to internalised domestic ideas and beyond to broader concepts outside the home, culminating in a collaborative piece, *Groundcover* (2012), by artist and architect.

The works chosen by the architect/curator are predominantly made of wood, some concealed by white paint, some obscured or veiled, but all referring to the making of house. Often originating with the skeleton of the timber frame; the construction becomes mediator or divider, physically and metaphorically. Some things can now be obscured or hidden. What things happen behind the closed doors of the house you visit or the home you live in?

The vein of domesticity tapped in these works alludes to women's work and practiced skills and knowledge (overlooked and obscured for so long). We see craftsmanship in the making of these objects and the joy of making in wood, a practice now becoming rare.

However, Honeywill is no naïve interpreter of the homespun. Look carefully and the architectural modernists and reference to their 'heroic' machismo is integrated into many of these installations. The story of the suburbs is told and interrogated. The house dismembered, remembered, and re-represented.

Carpet (2005-2012), ushers us into the domestic realm and we become entranced by the craftsmanship, detail and patience of the piece. It is monumental yet requiring forensic viewing. Beyond the welcome a series of rooms illuminate the impacts of the suburban dream. The trickery of *Off the plan* purchases. What is it you're buying? And who's joking at whose expense? The subversion of planning has never been a joke and perpetuates suburban sprawl.

Then, the endless repetition captured by *Variation on Monotony* (2007), a townscape built on endless iterations and ultimately suburban despair. How can we find fulfilment and individuality when lost in the mundane and repetitive? The haunting sentinels of *Anthology of Sadness* (2003-2012) reveal the repetitive nature of household life and the addictive accumulation and growth of pattern

and craft and memories and stories, and lives and

Mothership (2006) with its 'army' of ready-mades seems orderly and controlled; suggesting balance and comfort; completeness and contentment. But does resentment swell? Does chaos beckon? Is the ideal of domestic life and suburban planning hiding despair or longing? Do memories fade sufficiently? Are we in step?

We are all on show, but *On Show* (2009-2012) also masks the mundane domestic. As in the Rudolph Schindler and Clyde Chase house of the early 20's where the planned union of two couples was thwarted by a house designed to unite.

Untitled (Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet) (2003-2012) returns us to the domestic kitchen, the repetitive, and the mundane; the scribbling of lists; the tedium of shopping. The work insinuates and loops itself into our subconscious. Shadows are of memory, the insistent whispering not to forget, is ever present. That 'silent' voice, that mantra made real, momentarily, by the sudden disgorgement of sound.

Elysium (2007-2012) suggests disorder within order. The archetypal house form diminished in scale and subjected to the reality of everyday life by repetitive piercings. The everyday impacts seem innocuous enough, like lace tracery injecting humanity into the idealised form; the veiling and screening of our internalised reality, our domesticity is comforting. Yet despite the play of light there is loneliness, alluding to despair as this object floats alone. No community and our daily lives contained, solitary and sometimes desperate.

The seven-level Milan family house by Paul Rudolph completed in 1962 stacks rectangle upon rectangle in a sculptural approach captivating and infuriating those living in the house. *To look at the moon* (2009) plays with this, quite literally.

There is playfulness and ambivalence here. The 'hero' architecture versus domestic reality. But also an iconic façade, exploring the play between the inside and exterior space, again exploring and mediating what is seen, hidden or on display.

Finally a collaborative piece, theatrical, playing made space, against the natural. Like a score of sorts, the work plays the rhythm and beat of our lives against a literal overlaying, a coverlet of ideas, by artist and curator.

With Heffernan's selection and interpretation of the work we are able to penetrate deeply into Honeywill's world.

This is a powerful exhibition, tracing the evolution of Honeywill's study of home to house to place. The work originating in intimate childhood memories and moving to explore the notion of home ownership, suburban development, architecture with a capital 'A' and the role of women as survivors and interpreters of this realm.

This is a fascinating and rich area of enquiry as we look to making our communities and homes more responsive to our humanity and needs. As environmental and social imperatives have demolished the heroic iconography of modernism, what is replacing it?

A pluralistic, inclusive society with a responsive and enabling built environment is sought.

As more and more women enter the architectural profession and make their mark on the buildings of the future I am heartened that we might get dwellings and cities that understand the land, humans, human interaction and are sustainable and nurturing.





previous
Variations on Monotony 2007
three timbers
126 x 150 x 56 cm

right
Off the plan 2009
wood, horsehair, found object
124 x 70 x 84 cm

far right
Laughter Forbidden (detail) 2009
found scooter and bread board,
adhesive vinyl, MDF, automotive paint
275 x 155 x 35 cm
Photographs John Best



Anthology of Sadness 2003-2012
Huon Pine, American Cherry Wood,
ceramic plates, cotton/polyester shirts,
metal, hooks, light
dimensions variable
Photograph (installation view 2003) James McArdle





Mothership (aberration) 2006
(detail opposite)
Huon pine, synthetic turf, readymades
104 x 120 x 357 cm
Photographs Michael Baker

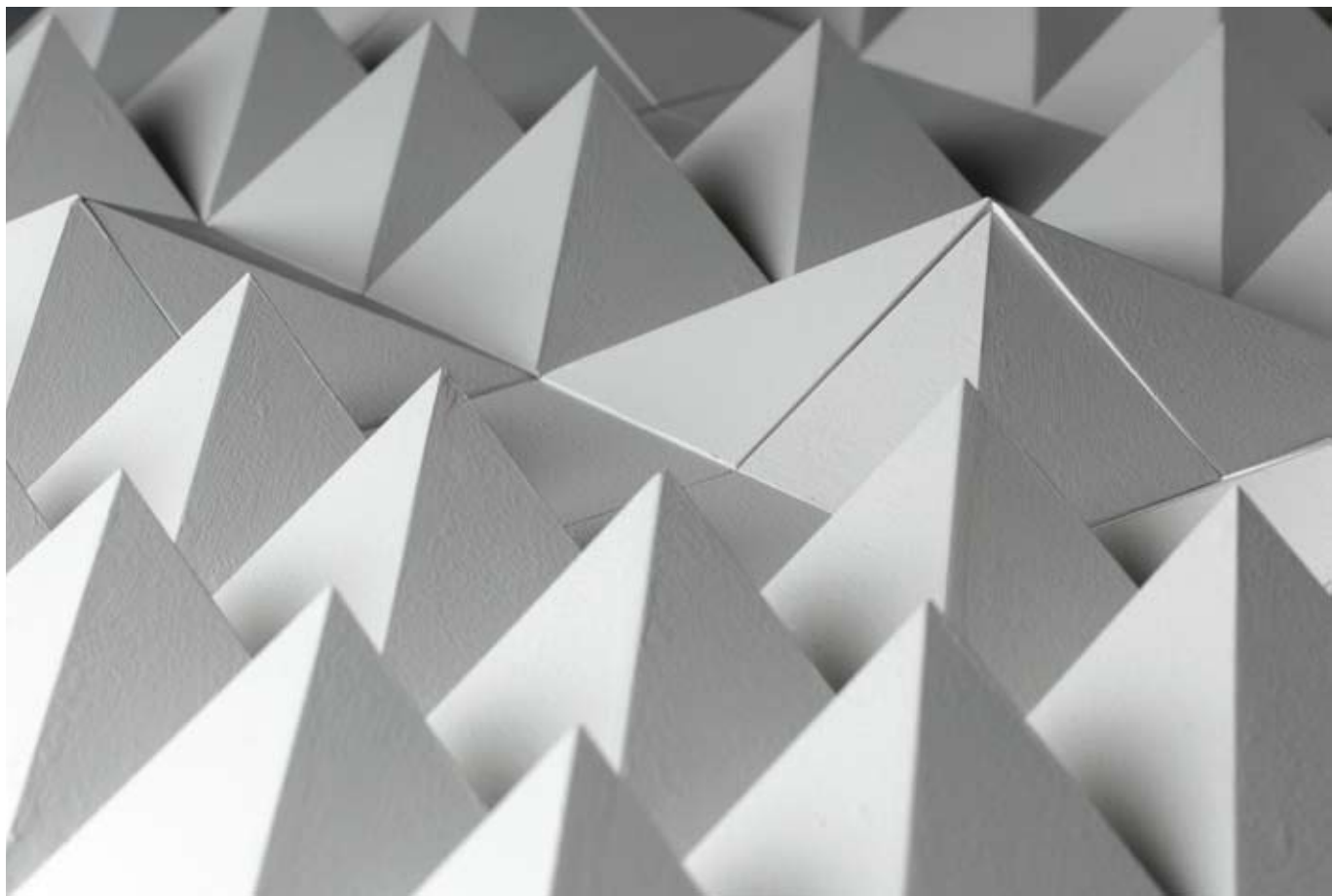




On Show 2009-2012
mixed media
dimensions variable
Photograph John Best

opposite
Groundcover 2012 (detail)
Peta Heffernan and Greer Honeywill
Scale model work in progress
Photograph Peter Whyte





Untitled (Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet) 2003-2012
(detail opposite)
transformed and dismembered wooden cabinet (circa 1940),
canvas, metal fittings, marine ply, foam padding, Perspex, vinyl type,
single channel sound work,
dimensions variable
Sound: Moira Smiley, April Guthrie and Abigail Nessen-Bengson
of *moira smiley & VOVO*, (USA)
Sound engineer: Mark Wheaton, Catasonic Studios, Los Angeles
Carl Higgs: Interactive design
Photographs John Best





To look at the moon 2009
wood, paint, found object,
metal fittings
106 x 31 x 220 cm
Photograph John Best





Greer Honeywill wishes to thank

My four studio assistants whose skills with wood made so much possible

Bill Miller (1917-2011) with whom I worked from 1999 to 2004

Trevor Hatcher 2004-2007

Erik North, LEV, (Melbourne) 2007-present

Matt Milanovic (Hobart) 2010-present

My collaborators in sound, Moira Smiley, April Guthrie and Abigail Nessen-Bengson of *moira smiley & VOOCO* (USA)

Photographers James McArdle, John Best, Michael Baker, Peter Whyte and Peter Robinson

Carl Higgs for his interactive sound design

Darren Sylvester for graphic design

Peter Watson, Casamondé

Jane Melross

and my extraordinary partner in crime, Peta Heffernan and the team at Liminal Studio

Peta Heffernan wishes to thank

The Liminal Studio team for their experimentation with land form narratives that inform the collaborative work, *Groundcover*

Ray Heffernan, my mentor, for the use of his residential floor plans representative of his skilled hand that has provided uplifting and inspired living environments

Greer Honeywill for her collaborative openness and the stimulating journey

Artist and Curator wish to thank

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Arts Tasmania staff

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cover: *Elysium* 2007-2012

marine ply, mild steel, paint, light

140 x 150 x 56 cm

Photograph Peter Robinson



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Curated by Peta Heffernan
13 July – 12 August 2012

Carnegie Gallery
16 Argyle Street, Hobart 7000
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hobartcity.com.au
Open daily 10am-5pm