

## Exploring Private and Public Space Curator, Peta Heffernan of Liminal Spaces

*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 it's 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 infectious 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 work 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.

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