

Hendrik & Kerry Forster

A Shared Perspective







A SHARED PERSPECTIVE unites new and recent works by husband and wife artists, HENDRIK and KERRY FORSTER. There is much that distinguishes the practices of the two, while at the same time there is much that they share. Both artists have a background in metalwork, and both have produced art that is decorative. However, it is the interest in transforming organic base materials into elegant freestanding sculptures that provides the most pronounced connection between their respective practices.

Hendrik and Kerry Forster live in the hills north of Bairnsdale in East Gippsland. Their home, which includes purpose-built studios, presents commanding views of the surrounding

district. It is here, where the natural world seems to align into some preordained cosmic order, where the foundations of the Forsters' shared perspective may be found. A powerful spiritual dimension inhabits the work of both artists, which has less to do with organised religion than a profound insight into the workings of the universe. Hendrik and Kerry each compose artistic reveries on the structures and spaces that surround us, without replicating any of these forms. Instead, each works within a self-defined visual realm, in which the material world is recast anew. The purity and simplicity inherent within their combined works speaks of primeval forces, which in each case veils a calculated and highly original thought process.



1



2

Hendrik Forster's sculptures convey a palpable presence through their dense materiality, while at once suggesting a sense of weightlessness. With towering archways framing the background into thin, vertical slivers, they recall the majestic heights of Gothic architecture, where heaven and earth were connected by the radiant conduit of church. Unlike the Gothic's unbridled exuberance, Hendrik employs geometry and pure mathematics to formulate an elemental sculptural code. There are no loose lines or wayward angles here; everything is composed, balanced, and harmonised, expressing a perfect visual order.

The present day sculptures of Hendrik Forster betray the artist's Germanic origins. Trained at the Munich

Academy of Fine Arts, Hendrik absorbed the lessons of the Bauhaus school, in which architecture, fine art and design would merge to form a 'total' work of art. The legacy of this training has been far-reaching for Hendrik; for the last thirty years he has engaged in the production of three-dimensional objects in metal, for both functional and decorative purposes, which adhere to strict formal principles. By basing much of his design upon the basic building blocks of humankind (sphere, cube and pyramid) he taps into a primal energy that underlies the archetypes of civilisation. With little or no reference to the particular or the temporal, his work activates the eternity of time itself, forming an elegiac enquiry into the foundations of man.



Hendrik offsets the geometric precision of his forms by encasing them within rustic, weather beaten shells. The teeth marks of time are emblazoned upon his works – metal becomes porous and rusticated, to reveal the inherent vulnerability of material. In this way each sculpture becomes the silent witness to the struggle between an orderly Modernism and the inevitability of decay.

While Hendrik tussles between reduction and substance, and geometry and symbology, Kerryn embraces the quirks and the strange foibles of our human condition. A close pairing of their respective works highlights these contrasts; Kerryn's sculptures exult in narrative, history and difference, whereas Hendrik's works do everything

to repeal the same. The note of ritualism in Kerryn's assembled sculptures is overtly humanistic and animalistic, and speaks of compulsion and obsession.

Kerryn Forster's practice exerts a transformative power over recycled and found objects. Her compositions of various materials – tree limbs, glass and metals – give life to the hidden energies resident within inert objects. The traces of her gold and silversmithing training are potent, leading everything she undertakes to be characterised by skilled craftsmanship and attention to detail. The result is sculptures that appear not so much assembled of different components, but a timely bonding of elements that were always kinfolk. They become tableaux of our



tribal impulses, symbolic of a language that has become lost.

Kerryn amplifies the history inherent within each working material, but the fractures and scars of separation are miraculously healed by their conjoinment with other materials. Her tree limbs become smooth and succulent, enhancing the brittleness of her crumbling metals and distressed timbers. We lack the words to translate the narrative of each sculpture, but we intuitively understand their stories as part of our cultural unconsciousness.

The cumulative effect of surveying Hendrik and Kerryn Forster's joint labours is a renewed appreciation of the co-dependence between the material and the immaterial. The work of both

artists is shaped by forces beyond our perception, whether it be a search for universal archetypes or the unseen energies that bind disparate forms. And while both artists are attentive to surface and structure, each achieves a transcendence of material substance. They are as much about nature as they are of nature; spawned by the energies that created the universe, the works of Hendrik and Kerryn Forster serve equally to reflect on and observe those energies.

SIMON GREGG
CURATOR



Images

COVER (LEFT)

Hendrik Forster, *H-House*, 2010

Corten steel

90 x 52 x 30cm

COVER (RIGHT)

Kerryn Forster, *Rising Water*, 2010-12

Poplar, driftwood, paint, steel, brass

76 x 21 x 10cm

LARGE INSIDE (LEFT)

Hendrik Forster, *Gate House*, 2010

Corten and mild steel patinated

60 x 35 x 10.5cm

LARGE INSIDE (RIGHT)

Kerryn Forster, *Dreams Past*, 2009

Steel, timber, paint, found object

39 x 21 x 21cm

1

Hendrik Forster, *Steps II*, 2009

Corten steel

58 x 31 x 13.5cm

2

Kerryn Forster, *Spotted Bird*, 2007

Poplar, driftwood, brass, steel, tin

98 x 35 x 26cm

Collection Artbank

3

Hendrik Forster, *Broad Church*, 2009

Corten steel

65 x 55 x 10.5

4

Kerryn Forster, *Dockside*, 2007

Driftwood, found objects

60 x 51 x 14.5cm

5

Hendrik Forster, *Himmel Street Houses*

2010

Corten steel, 22.5 x 95 x 18cm

6

Hendrik Forster, *Low Church*, 2010

Corten steel

48 x 52 x 14cm

7

Kerryn Forster, *Water Dreaming*, 2007

Poplar, driftwood, glass, stainless steel

60 x 77 x 15.5cm

Private Collection

8

Kerryn Forster, *Study of a Species*, 2000-12

Detail: Petri Dish 1. Glass, paper

found objects, 3 x 16 x 16cm

9

Hendrik Forster, *Pilgrim's Window II*, 2012

Corten steel

60 x 40 x 26.5cm

10

Kerryn Forster, *Pair II*, 2012

Steel

185 x 96 x 45cm

Hendrik & Kerryn Forster appear courtesy
of Anita Traverso Gallery, Melbourne

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