

LONE GOAT GALLERY

JEREMY HAWKES

CARAPACE

15 JUNE - 11 JULY 2018

Lone Goat Gallery - 28 Lawson St, Byron Bay NSW 2481

BIO

Born in Papua New Guinea when it was still a colony, I have lived, studied and worked in the NT, Queensland, NSW, Victoria and Tasmania and have traveled extensively throughout Australia and Asia – with plans for further adventures when able.

I've always been an artist and it is my first point of identity after reluctantly admitting to being human, white and a cis male. As a child I would draw and paint endless pictures of balloons, birds, fish...anything that defied gravity. I'm still waiting to grow up and achieve adult-hood, or for the baby sitter to resign and to finally know I can go home.

Immaturity not only keeps you young, it's a great excuse to continue to do what I want without deliberately, or hopefully inadvertently, causing harm to others... I'm not sure if I am an artist. I know that I love to make things, arrange things, have a fascination with objects, how things look, appear and disappear. I've always thought (and often been told) that I'm better with words, but the act of writing is the act of de-scribing and I fear vanishing into a realm that I love to visit...but have no wish to populate.

I began as a compulsive doodler; bored in school after the age of 12, I spent most of my time in a land of curlicues, organic geometry, morphing and melting identities, caught up in a world of biro's and ruled lines. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that I could pursue this form of escapism at a tertiary level, and in fact, excel.

I trained as a sculptor and spent nearly 20 years engaged in the tactile, the interplay between surface and form. Not particularly conceptually driven, nor with much ambition to achieve any status as a contemporary artist in a formal sense, I nevertheless had many exhibitions and sold a lot of work.

I traveled to India twice and studied traditional stone and wood carving in Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu. I spent a year in New Zealand where I found a very responsive audience – wood carving, owing to a strong and vibrant cultural history, is seen as sculpture there, and not 'merely' a craft. My works got larger and more complex and I went back to study post-grad – something of a let-down, though one of the most productive times in my life.

I became engaged in the body, how my own physicality informed the shapes I made, a mode of synthesis between process and object. The last series of work I completed, the 'Ossuaries' were about residue, deformity as evolutionary necessity, contingency as the prime organiser in all things organic...

A few years later I suffered a terrible injury to my spine and have been unable to continue this art practice since. The irony! A number of treatments and operations later, and I have a partially paralyzed right arm (Murphy's law dictates that I am of course right handed) and constant pain. A further diagnosis a few years later was neurological in nature – some form of movement disorder which is described as 'Parkinsonian' if not confirmed as Parkinson's disease.

Art ceased for a few years, or became at best therapy and at worst, ugly catharsis.

We all have a lot of bad art to do, get through, purge from ourselves, indulge in... I wallowed in it. I met some incredible artists with disability who turned this grief and self-loathing, this anger, into an identity and I began at the beginning. I began to draw. And paint, and eventually to photograph and acquire, finally, some interest in the digital realm.

Another first was I began to engage not just my senses, but my brain in my art practice – to ideate, to conceive of and engage with a wider cultural conversation. Could it be that I am not just a maker, a fixer, an arranger of stuff, but actually an artist? Time will tell.

After 20 plus years living in cities, I've returned to the country-side, to rurality. I currently live and work in northern NSW, the rainbow region. I travel regularly to cities though to keep an eye on what's going on with the in-crowd, what cultures are emerging, what ideas are artists engaging with, how the political landscape lies.

I miss having ready and easy access to cultural events and institutions, but do not miss the mess, the difficulty of forging an existence in the metropolis where space is ever more expensive and time is not my greatest resource, but something of an enemy to be vanquished on a daily basis. Life in lotus land is lonelier but happier, busier but more productive.

My practice has grown considerably and I now tackle a number of projects concurrently, I engage with my studio everyday – something of a revolution in time management in the face of disability. I'm engaged with so many ideas: identity vs pathology, the human body in/as architecture, mortality and hubris, intersections of self, sexuality, mark-making and technology... 'The Ghost in the Machine' performance piece, is in essence a performance of disability. If all the world is a stage and we perform our constructed gender identities on a daily basis, then what can be more pertinent than to perform dis-ability in light of the social model and its implications?

I'm an amateur student of neurology, neurobiology and more recently of evolutionary theory – in particular the startling ideas of 'neural Darwinism' put forth by Crick and Edelman in the 80's and 90's. Basically, they propose that the seat of consciousness is biological and can be traced as an evolutionary feature that recognises contingency as the primary genesis for what we call 'mind.'

To quote the late, great Oliver Sacks, "Experience and experiment are crucially important here – neural Darwinism is essentially experiential selection." What then of neural-difference and a condition like Parkinson's, Parkinsonism's, epilepsy, any form of what is termed a 'movement disorder' etc.?

Am I haunted, the 'ghost in the machine' being an inaccessible part of my brain / consciousness trying to communicate? I medicate it into silence and subservience for many reasons – pain being not the least of them. But, to let it reign free?

As an artist, someone concerned with the appearance of the world and how this can be transcribed via the architecture of my body, how can I not let this ghost out upon occasion? It is after all, a far more liberated and gestural mark-maker than I allow myself to be.

This part of my brain, my mind is quite a different artist than I am and I enjoy its deftness of movement, it's purity. I also dance with much greater freedom and without the usual self-consciousness when free from L-Dopa. Dance like no-one is watching? How about dancing when not even the self is aware...

Jeremy Hawkes
Northern Rivers NSW
2018