

Signs Taken for Wonders

Gray Street Workshop celebrates 20years
Julie Blyfield, Sue Lorraine, Leslie Matthews, Catherine Truman

These four 'girls', which celebrated recently twenty years existence of their 'Gray Street Workshop' in Adelaide, South Australia, became in the meantime 'ladies'. All those years, other jewellery-makers too, could work in this workshop and develop their skills and professionalism, guided by this team.

In addition to acting as mentors, Julie, Sue, Leslie and Catherine have become role-models. Each of them has developed a strong identity and visual language, and with that, an international profile. A common fascination for them is natural history, biology and specimen collections.

Julie Blyfield based her collection of brooches and necklaces, which have their premiere in Ra now, on the indigenous plant specimens gathered from a one hundred year-old album found in the South Australian Archives. By raising and chasing thin silver sheet, Julie created three-dimensional shapes with characteristic structures. The addition of colour makes reference to the original 'pressed desert plants' complete.

Sue Lorraine uses mild steel for her objects and jewellery. By sandblasting and quenching in oil after heating, these pieces colour to a matt deep black. For this exhibition Sue made a collection of moths, not as a realistic replication, but as an abstract form, always changing in movement.
Who has the courage to pin a moth-brooch on a woollen jumper?

Leslie Matthews took the fragile beauty of little bones as the starting point for her jewellery and objects. She pierced abstracted bone-shapes out of silver-sheet, and combined them in layers for brooches and necklaces. Leslie also cast bones in silver and composed the parts into organic objects. The contrasting surfaces being bright white or deep black were achieved by heat pickling in acid or blackening through patination.

Catherine Truman researched historical human anatomic models from the 18th century, and her '1:5 Models without portrait' are the poetic results. Bodies in scale one to five, without head and hands, but loaded with gesture and expression. Carved from English Lime wood, coloured with shu-niku ink or burnt black. Some with surrealistic additions in paraffin wax.

Paul Derrez