



Symbiosis, C3
Polymer clay and paint
28 x 36 cm

Robyn Gordon is a Sydney based, multi-disciplinary artist who works with a wide variety of materials and techniques. Through body adornment in particular, Robyn has established a meaningful dialogue between maker, wearer and observer, creating jewellery/wearable art with elements of fantasy and the unexpected, using the body as a gallery.

Gordon interprets & depicts relationships in the environment, highlighting the beauty, delicacy and extreme vulnerability of ecological systems. Forms may be realistic, emblematic or almost abstract.

Since 1980, her work has been regularly exhibited throughout Australia, as well as in Great Britain, France, Spain, Germany, USA, New Zealand, Japan, Korea and China. Her work is represented in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, as well as state, territory and regional galleries and many corporate and private collections. She has received several awards for her work and undertaken numerous commissions including design for contemporary dance.



JANET
CLAYTON
GALLERY

location

2 Danks Street
Waterloo NSW 2017

gallery hours

Tuesday to Saturday 11am - 5pm
Sunday by appointment

enquiries

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Front Cover:

Sensuous Unpredictability
Polymer clay, metal and paint on canvas
30.5 x 30.5 cm

Robyn Gordon

Growing up I played a game with my grandmother. Housed in a cylinder was a brace of fine coloured sticks that one would hold tight fist then release. The ensuing woven mass complied to some natural code of gravity, chance, or physics, drawing you into its spatial play. As we took turns to remove the sticks our deeply considered reductions only set the mass adrift - a continuum of natural arrangements like a jostling flotilla on the dining table. And a new *dynamic balance* was found.

Robyn Gordon's assembled reliefs offer that same sense of chance and wonder. In a defining new step she has cast her signature polymer clay forms against a solid field of colour. But she pushes it further. Like our game of sticks constantly arriving at new compositions, Gordon's objects find their own placement, often flirtatious as they hover and engage the edges of the canvas, and finally break free as wall based installations.

Working with polymer clay for more than thirty years, Gordon's expression seems effortless and incredibly cohesive across this dynamic collection of forms. What one doesn't immediately register is that these are surprisingly physical works to make, a somewhat brutish act of rolling, scoring, scaring and impregnating the surface with information, which is built up over multiple firings like traditional ceramics or pottery. Made either side of breaking her wrist, Gordon's compulsion was perhaps even more driven for this exhibition, finding new strengths in the work's reductive clarity. She pushes beyond the physical space of the object to a psychological or emotional space, brought out superbly by these quieter grounds.

You can almost witness the execution of a mark: determined, complete, confident, evocative, and at times nostalgic. There is no apology for their decoration. It is indeed their textures that keep them connected to an organic form, and yet as drawn elements constantly shifting weight, direction and tone they usher an abstraction that sits beyond a logical course. It is a most articulate command of the material's range, compositionally engaged on both a micro and macro level.

Take the piece *Nature's Mystical Patterns*, for example, a catalogue of surfaces from spidery thin wire, mesh gauze, lace and ribbon drawn into a poised column-like meter against a dense black background. It's read on two levels. Our eye languishes in the detail but pushed back the

grouping evokes a collection of shields, grove of saplings, or perhaps the museological arrangement of specimens. We bring our own associations. The same compositional consideration is applied to *Silence of Space* and *Order in Chaos* where the elements are more formally 'lined up' flirting between chaos and order. In *Silence of Space* the individual units are orderly stacked building to a crescendo of scale, its slightly oriental feel constructing a vertical landscape narrative. In contrast *Interacting Endlessly* teeters at the brink of anarchy, the momentary freeze of its elements not unlike those randomly dropped sticks. Its languid tension captivates us.

The forms have become increasingly weightless and playful against the solid hues. Simple colour acts as a stage upon which to reveal the unknown and to wonder in nature. Talking with Gordon she explained her 'intoxication with nature's beauty and absolute fascination in the connectedness of forms' as central to her inspiration. I am reminded of the words of Richard Feynman in *The Character of Physical Law*, 'Nature uses only the longest threads to weave her patterns, so that each small piece of her fabric reveals the organisation of the entire tapestry.' Gordon is not trying to replicate nature. Rather her quasi-organic forms reach beyond the natural world, oscillating between familiarity and abstraction. It is a bigger picture.

On every level her ambiguous reliefs unsettle our formulaic viewing practices, unwilling to be categorised. She has always used her materials organically, happy to co-join precious metals with plastics, polymer and paint, choosing to construct her collages and wearables for their aesthetic bounce and unorthodox conversation. They are made to be enjoyed visually.

Time in many ways is a metaphor embedded in these works; we just have to read their titles to understand their alchemy. But time is also testament to Gordon's resilience to experiment and to find new directions. It is not surprising that she takes bold and elegant leaps with this exhibition. It is a world where old and new converge and we are magnetically drawn into the fray of its *dynamic balance*.

Gina Fairley

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JANET
CLAYTON
GALLERY

ROBYN GORDON

DYNAMIC BALANCE
15 AUGUST – 8 SEPTEMBER 2012

OPENING SATURDAY 18 AUGUST
3PM TO 5PM

TO BE OPENED BY
ANNE FLANAGAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, AGNSW



Left:
When the Sea Sighs
 Polymer clay and paint on canvas
 30.5 x 30.5 cm



Right:
The Sublime of Infinity
 Polymer clay and paint on canvas
 80 x 50 cm
 Photo: Jenni Carter



Left:
Symbiosis, A1
 Polymer clay and paint
 group of 7 forms, virtual area 140 x 80 cm, variable
 Photo: Felicity Jenkins