

Landfall, a sighting from a ship

Barnaby Smith, Scarlett Award 2018 winner

Landfall is a sighting of land from a ship, the eruption of land from the sea is often at first glance an unidentifiable object, a protrusion. Using a telescope, the captain tries to interpret what lies ahead; destructive rocks or a flat stretch of sandy beach. He must navigate strange waters and guide his vessel to shore deciphering the rocks from the shadows, often in the dead of night. Sometimes there is a lighthouse to guide him but if he misses Split Point lighthouse, Merinda Kelly's lit boxes act as a colourful substitute. The years Lorne Sculpture Biennale works hug the coastline like beacons for the ships, the shapes invite curiosity, they offer a new landfall.

The coastline around Lorne is varied and at times treacherous as it meanders around the land and forests, with rocky outcrops. When Captain Louttit he was forced to take shelter in this harbour in 1841 to escape a storm, he reported back about this tranquil, safe bay. For David Long, his drystone work, echoes the idea of the safe harbour, he uses the local stones to form a shelter, a home. His stonewall is reminiscent of those seen in abundance in Scotland, reconnecting the link between Lorne and the Scottish Nobleman John Campbell the Marquis of Lorne, after whom the place is named. This work cleverly echoes the colonial past of the area, using an indigenous material.

This year's Sculpture Biennale at Lorne, responds well to the title of Landfall as if one were to approach from the water, the curious outcrops positioned around the shoreline blend with the terrain and create scapes, moody shapes that assimilate with the landscape. I think of Max Dupain's work of *Sunbaker*. The bronzed body became a landscape, body contours replicated hills and mounds, there was a sense of outcrop too. As the sun sets the sculptures blend and add contours, shadows and begin to belong. As with Sonia Paye's, work *Littoral Echo II*, there are notes of the Dupain's work as the partially submerged shapes become embedded and reform, under the ebb and flow of the tide.

A Sculpture or public artwork, is made by the artist with an idea, a vision of what it will look like on site, but once it is married and secured to the land, the art responds and takes a second breath. The artist is gone, and the sun rises over the work to give an inanimate object new unpredictable life. Geoffrey Ricardo's work *the articulations* scatters sun fringed shadows, almost like foliage and this displays a vulnerability, that mirrors an eroding coastline.

Australian history is for many about arrival, about landfall, whether by sea or air there have been a continuous stream of arriving pioneers, the strangeness of this parched land with its spindly eucalyptus trees and harsh climate is resonated in this exhibition. What began as a story of colonialism and arrival is today about migration and taking refuge. The first thing each new arrival will do is to look out at the first sight of land, to survey their new home. For visitors to the Lorne exhibition there is a similar experience of arrival, the well visited and familiar beach has a new terrain which needs to be remapped by this local explorer.

Ironically the deposits of work for the Biennale, make us think about strange objects left on the land, discarded things which make landfall. Along with this the ever-growing pollution of plastics and discarded items, it develops this theme of what lands on the shore. There is an environmental need to consider what is cast onto the beach or left under the gumtrees. The works prick our conscience to protect our coastline for the future.

The other sense when I look at these sculptures is the beauty of them, they are crafted lovingly by artists and sympathetically placed on the land. They rarely disturb just settling in and adding a new vista. Matthew Harding's work, adds to the new view from the Ocean Road, it inverts the bridge and now balances it looking over the ocean crossing, now too wide to traverse. It is redundant as a bridge but has a new life as a visual perch which creates a different view. The straight horizon becomes corrupted by the upturned piece, he deliberately wants us to ponder disharmony as sea levels rise and the world warms up.

The Lorne Sculpture Biennale takes large foreboding objects, that seem to have been cast onto the land almost like shipwrecks but have brought with them a poetry, of arrival, first glance and landfall.