



**SIX
degrees
of
separation** An exhibition by Lyndal Hargrave

Redland Art Gallery, Cleveland, Gallery 1
Sunday 25 May – Sunday 6 July 2008



SIX Degrees of separation

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'It is difficult to get the news from poems' wrote poet William Carlos Williams in 1962¹, and a similar observation could have been made of art at that time: as Modernism became increasingly more self-reflexive, it also turned its back on the world. Since the middle of the last century however, ideas about art and its role in the world have dramatically changed. Artists of the 21st century now mostly resist having their work sequestered by Modernism's 'Art for Art's sake' philosophy. They prefer to grapple with the complexities of the real world. Inherent in that process has been a breaking down and limited, artistic practice.

¹ From *Asphodel, That Greeny Flower*.

Artists are now compelled more by issues than problems of form: their choice of media is based on its suitability in a specific situation. It reflects their determination to blur the divide that once separated art from the world. In seeking to relocate their work in this way, they offer their work as part of a discourse that is directly relevant to the human sphere. Via our encounter with Lyndal Hargrave's work, we too can become involved in that dialogue.

Six Degrees of Separation brings together a selection of works which map Hargrave's exploration of ideas about environment. Through her choice of materials and manipulation of form, this artist invites the viewers of her work to join in a consideration of the way in which we connect to each other, and the world, through our surroundings. Sharing our space and in some instances, physically responding to our presence, the artworks in this exhibition serve as a reminder that our universe is a common milieu which we share. Ultimately, our existence depends on a vast web of synchronicity, where everything is interlocked and interdependent; all is related and inseparable.

According to the concept of 'six degrees of separation', each of us is linked to everyone else on earth via a mere six steps of shared acquaintance. Hargrave uses this idea as a starting point for a much wider exploration of the notion of interconnectedness. In this exhibition we are able to witness how she has employed a wide range of media to extrapolate upon the idea of social interconnection usually associated with this theory, to highlight some of the much more fundamental truths that connect us. Once awakened to it, the experience of this expanded state of reality has represented something of a revelation for Hargrave. Happenings, apparently random and disconnected, now increasingly appear to form patterns of meaning for her, and materials, ideas, and people seem to reflect a common purpose. For the artist, this realization presented not only an infinite potential for creative application, but a new way of understanding and experiencing the world.

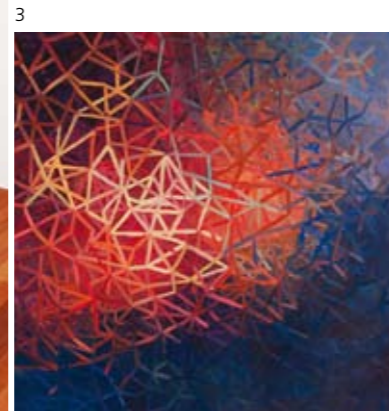
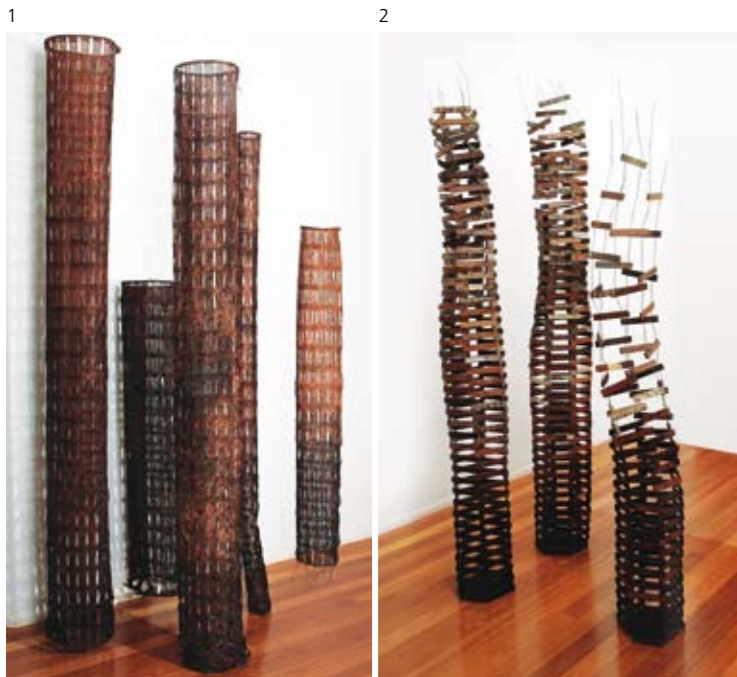
Hargrave has always been interested in structure. However, once piqued, her cognizance of a universal structure, and the marvellous and energetic juxtaposition of elements it affords, has become a central theme in her work. Working across painting, sculpture and installation, Hargrave gives us an insight into the process of discovery which has informed her art-making. Her two dimensional work demonstrates a painstaking exploration of the construction of both architectonic and musical forms: from the stacked and propped components of *Rhythm Metropolis*; to the thickly tessellated surface of *Cubic Legato* as it oscillates between the illusion of distance and proximity; to the pop and fizz of *Vibrato*. If her, mostly oil paintings can be seen to allude to the varieties of geometry which underlie all structures from the molecule to the metropolis to the musical score, Hargrave's mixed media drawings plunge us into the less certain world of gesture and improvisation. Exploratory works like *Descending Eco* and *Libero*, and the rhythmic exuberance of *Counter Melodies* seem to stretch our sense of what might be. However, in the more strident *Capricciose*, where the urge to break out seems to be amplified by the inclusion of collaged elements, the work signals its desire to embrace a third dimension.

Hargrave's transition to sculpture from painting was directed by her materials. Initially following an impulse to recycle paintings into forms that reflected her developing and evolving sense of the possibilities of art's engagement with the world, the process started with the weaving of strips of paintings and other recycled materials into new forms to produce assemblages like *Transition II*. Recycled materials carry with them the history of their usage, offering the opportunity for a fresh interaction and collaboration with the past. In the give and take of the materials and the processes of assemblage, of breaking down and building up systems, and starting from solidarity and taking off, this artist has found her interest and receptivity to coincidence and synchronicity constantly reinforced.

Whether the result of serendipity or synchronicity, Hargrave has embraced the opportunities afforded by being in the right time and the right place. Evident in *Ascending Scales I, II, III*, is the way in which uniform units of recycled wood have lent themselves, through arrangement and rearrangement, to a new paradigm of existence where the materiality of the work and the immateriality of light and shadow can coalesce. That compositional arrangement is echoed in *Quintet*, a floating ensemble of renovated materials that responds to the movement of air about it, and engages in a constant dialogue with its surrounds. Likewise, Hargrave's installation of spherical variations, amongst them *Agitato* and *Enfatico*, jostle together like giant molecules in a space which promises that a rapprochement of the realms art and science, and everything else is still possible. These sculptural works share a sense of permeability: they incorporate the vagaries of chance and they permit patterns to emerge, repeat and reverberate. Their openness is their most striking and central characteristic, and a reflection of the nature of this artist's open-ended intervention.

Embedded in the complex interrelation of components in the wall piece that gives this exhibition its name is a formula for the future. Although calculated using the logic of scrapped parquet tiles and discarded Cuisenaire rods, *Six Degrees of Separation* exemplifies the way in which art shows us the way forward. Across the space between micro and macroscopic, across real and imagined dimensions, the visibility or invisibility of our interconnections is rendered as an effect of either our proximity or perspective. In this exhibition Hargrave shows us how demands and expectations can be reoriented. She shows us, too, how we can look about closely for messages of hope, and remember our interconnectedness.

Text by Susan Rothnie, May 2008





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Redland Art Gallery, Cleveland

Cnr Middle and Bloomfield Streets,
Cleveland Q 4163

Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm
Sunday 9am – 2pm

Admission free

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Redland Art Gallery is an initiative of Redland City Council,
dedicated to the late Eddie Santagiuliana

Images

- 1 Quintet 2008, copper, paint, bitumen, poly mesh and wire
 - 2 Ascending Scales I, II, III 2007, recycled timber and wire
 - 3 Structural Overtone 2007, oil on canvas
 - 4 Vibrato (vibrating) 2007, oil and oil sticks on canvas
 - 5 Descending Eco (echo) 2008, charcoal on paper
 - 6 Libero (freely) 2007, mixed media on paper
 - 7 Counter Melodies (overlaid melodies) (detail) 2006, watercolour on paper
 - 8 Agitato (agitated) 2007, driftwood, screws and glue
 - 9 Rhythm Metropol (detail) 2007, oil on canvas
 - 10 Cubic Legato (connected smoothly) 2007, oil on canvas
 - 11 Capriccioso (unpredictable, volatile) (detail) 2007, mixed media on paper
 - 12 Transition II 2008, recycled timber, leather, copper, enamel paint, bitumen and synthetic mesh
- Cover Images: Six Degrees of Separation 2008, recycled parquetry and Cuisenaire rods on masonite
Enfatico 2008, Cuisenaire rods and brass
- All images courtesy of the artist. Photography by Carl Warner.