



Liquid Metal Studios: Meliesa Judge & Will Kuiper

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CALL TO MIND SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATORS in art history and some inspired combinations emerge: Rodin/Claudel, Kahlo/Rivera, Rauschenberg/Johns, to name a few. Two competent, contemporary artists in Adelaide, Meliesa Judge and Will Kuiper, continue this inspiration at their self-designed bronze art foundry, Liquid Metal Studios (LMS.) Creatively they work separately then combine forces to cast.

Judge works with universal forms of communication, exploring the philosophy of emotion through gestural movement. Kuiper's work questions the sublime, interpreting the greater forces of nature and the universe through form and memory. Their practice is the combination of science and art, the meld between logic and creativity.

Historically, figurative sculpture was the domain of men. Judge believes it is time for women to have their day expressing themselves through contemporary figurative sculpture. Bronze is an ancient, powerful, self-supporting medium, and Judge's designs combine both strength and vulnerability. 'Women have never been allowed to run foundries, let alone work on this scale, and there's so much we can say in our work that moves on past the male psyche of the erogenous and large.'

Judge started her sculpting career making clay figures. The strategic plan to move into bronze was a significant re-direction and a calculated move, ensuring a longevity to both artists' work and the ability to cast editions. Their combination of skills made it possible; her experience in

firing and the use of kilns together with his knowledge and experience in metal fabrication.

2001 saw LMS research art foundries in France through a Churchill Fellowship. This opportunity allowed them both to work on composition, explore the art history of Europe and work closely with master founders. They returned with increased technical abilities, new philosophies and a truckload of design moulds.

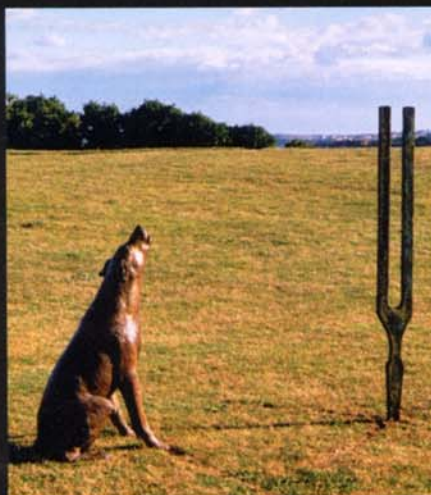
In 2002 Judge won a national tender for the Mary Ward Project for Loreto Colleges. The next five years immersed LMS in the construction and installation of eight life-size casts of Mary Ward, the founder of the Loreto Sisters order. Kuiper continued his work whilst helping in the technical aspects of the commission. His recent work incorporates vibrant, small, figurative sculptures, with dynamic steel line-work extending the frame. The small scale emerges to suggest much larger configurations and the intersection between the human form and environment.

Having documented every pour, Judge and Kuiper are now highly skilled technicians. With this knowledge comes the ability to experiment with the process itself, creating works that can only be done with self-casting techniques – complex, handmade one-off pieces and direct casts.

LMS is as much about process as product. The kiln is designed using NASA technology; it is 'clean and green', legal and eco-friendly yet the duo uses foundry techniques developed hundreds of years ago. Here is the bridge between culture and industry.

At times no doubt complicated, certainly intense but also enriching, the mutual respect and support between these two artists is obvious. The creative life that can so often be a solo endeavour is dispelled in this collaboration of concept, inspiration and technical eloquence.

Sonya Unwin is a practising visual artist and writer based in Adelaide.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Meliesa Judge, *Incandescent*, c. 2002, ceramic, 35cm (height); Meliesa and Will casting the last segments of the eighth Mary Ward bronze, November 2008, Photograph by Jackie Hamilton; Will Kuiper, *Sound Signals – sine waves*, 2003, Collection: Carrick Hill, South Australia. Photograph by Will Kuiper; Meliesa Judge, *Mary Ward*, 2008, (7/8), Marrayatville, South Australia, September 2008. Photograph by Meliesa Judge. All images courtesy the artists.