

Configurations – Clara Hali

I have developed my sculptures towards an enhanced expression of the human condition through metaphors of landforms.

The Blue Mountains have strongly influenced my work over the last 10 years. I am intrigued by the precarious nature of the Blue Mountains landforms and how they can reflect our inner landscape.

Rock walls can have huge crevasses and cracks, boulders can be stacked precariously on top of each other and somehow nature holds it together. Great fissures can cut across large rock beds and yet nature continues to hold it together. The human experience is such that, at times, we can feel we are falling apart and yet have a great capacity to function and seemingly 'hold' it all together. Sometimes it does not hold and landscape is transformed. I am concerned with capturing the vulnerable aspect of the human condition.

My sculptures are mostly portrayals of women. They are not portraits or specific personalities but generalized, universal images of women. I am working with figure from a personal perspective. The female form is something I know and feel. I have a female body, a female mind and female emotions. This is what informs me. It seems natural to assume that my experience will probably be similar to other people's experience.

Hatha yoga is about body consciousness through a series of exercises. It also aims at creating harmony between physical, mental, emotional and spiritual states. By practicing yoga one becomes intensively aware of the internal sensations of the body. (see *Blackheath Woman*)

Hatha yoga is essentially about body awareness. Meditation for me is about consciousness. Meditation has given me the means to observe my own and other people's behaviour. I am intrigued by human behaviour. What fascinates me is that we are all programmed a certain way whether we like it or not. The program is so deeply embedded within us that even with conscious intellectual intervention we still keep playing out the program. We keep making the same mistakes. It takes a lot of conscious effort to try and change the program. I suppose it is what makes us human.

The *Hip* sculptures

The *Walking Hips* are solidly wedged together, locked in place within the implied movement. Everything seems to be in balance. There are moments in life that seem to be like this. However, my experience is that it usually does not last long and starts to slip away turning into *Sliding Hips*.

Angkor Torso

The temples of Angkor really impressed me with the unbelievable precariousness of the ruins. In places the trees had totally taken over the buildings, pulling them apart with their strength and at the same time wrapping their roots all around them and supporting them.

The temples of Angkor, similar to the landforms of the Blue Mountains, fascinate me with their contrasts. The huge blocks of stone, the solidity and denseness of the material, and, the delicate way they balance on top of each other, and the transformations continually taking place. It is such a fragile equilibrium between supported structure and total collapse.

Humans are complex beings. We are made up of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Sometimes they are united and sometimes they are fractured. I am interested in how these things manifest.

For most people life is a balancing act. We try to find the equilibrium between work and play, sickness and health, supporting the family and finding time to spend with them, separation and union, frustration and well-being, and indeed with life and death. These are the things that make us who we are.

A few years ago I had brain surgery. At that time I felt I was really standing on the edge. I am one of the lucky ones. Most people have extraordinary events in their lives when you scratch beneath the surface. *Angkor Torso* tries to bring together some of these aspects that are reflected in the precarious nature of the current state of many of the temples of Angkor and the state of many of our lives.



Ruins at Angkor Wat



Angkor Torso 2004 bronze 210 x 70 x 70 cm

The figure offers a wonderful means to explore sculptural concerns. It has within its make up all the essential elements of sculpture, such as mass, shape, structure, direction, axes, planes, lines, contours, proportion, gravity, balance, geometry and space. It can be a magnificent means to give insight to who we are as humans and address issues of identity. Because we identify so easily with images of ourselves it is a wonderful subject to express aspects of consciousness. I am interested in expressing aspects of humanity that go beyond the physical. I want to explore the inner reality of humans. My interest lies with what makes us human and how that can be expressed through sculpture. Sculpture, in my opinion, is the synthesis of subject and form in an aesthetic experience. I am interested in some creative transformation of materials and ideas that can offer us insight.

Blackheath woman



Blackheath Woman 2002 view a wood



68 x 37 x 31 cm view b

Blackheath Woman attempts to capture the sensation of the body from within. I have always felt that the physical centre of my body is the belly which, after all, is the location of the origin of life in humans. With *Blackheath Woman* I have tried to capture the sensation of the body from the inside. It is not about describing the body parts literally but creating the sensation of how they feel, and butt up against each other.

Artist statement – Clara Hali 2013