

Sandra HILL (b. 1951)

Western Australia

Mentor to Donna Fortescue



“Discovering how closely aligned Donna and I are in terms of artistic vision and practice has been great, I’ve really enjoyed seeing that we are on such similar wavelengths. Unknowingly we’re both working or have worked with flags. Justice means a lot to her, as it does to me and we are both very strongly tuned into the environment. When I chose Donna I didn’t know these things about her so its become more like a collaboration in a way. When she’s hit a roadblock I have been able to help her out with it – using my knowledge base to guide her a bit. She’s a white woman and I’m an Aboriginal. That’s the gem in the crown: two different artists working together so beautifully. It has made me want to do more with her in the future – even have a show together.

With this work are a few themes dealing with layers of society and layers of democracy. The external skin: because Aboriginal people come in all different colours – and it’s not just about Aboriginal people anymore. This is the thing that has shifted with

me – the reality that this country is so racist. Its not about Aboriginal people - its about anybody of colour. Other people coming here as refugees (being dispersed by war or other reasons) and they come and are spurned by the Australian people because they don’t reflect the white Australian image. With this artwork the skin that I am stitching together – the long strips of resin died rice paper – represents the skin of all the people. The whole concept of this work is that no matter what colour we are – we are all in this together. We are all joined by blood and humanity. By our humanness.

To me living at this moment in Australia, this is not a democracy. There is no democracy because people are not free in this country. We have closed our borders – what kind of democracy is it for a government to do that without asking and notifying the people? What kind of democracy denies Aboriginal communities their lifeline in their Country? What kind of democracy is it if we don’t have a say in it? I have

been completely immersed in making political work for years – it heals me to get the angst out through my art. When I make work that hurts me emotionally and cognitively, living in Balingup is a beautiful place to heal from it. It’s a refuge. In places like Sydney there is no escape, its traumatizing with the consumerism and visual pollution.”

Sandra Hill was born in Perth, she is a Yorga (woman) of the Noongar Aboriginal people of the South-West of Western Australia. Her traditional clans are Ballardong and Wilmen on her mother’s side and Wardandi and Minang on her fathers. She has participated in national exhibitions and prizes including the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards and the Bankwest Art Prize. Her work is held numerous collections including the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Aboriginal Art Collection, Edith Cowan University Collection, WA, the National Gallery of Victoria and National Gallery of Australia.

Sandra HILL

Double Standard, 2015 (detail), plywood, MDF, ink, rice paper shellac, and Marri and Balga resins, 102 × 150 × 10 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Mossenson Gallery, Perth



Donna FORTESCUE (b. 1964)

Western Australia

Mentored by Sandra Hill



“I was honored to be selected by Sandra for this project, I’ve always admired her as an artist and her strength to tell her family’s personal stories through her artwork. Visiting her lovely warm home and studio was exciting, her wealth of knowledge of working with resins from the local forest was one of the highlights; I learnt a great deal about Indigenous culture especially the language and the connection to Country. Sandra was extremely positive about my ideas and we felt a connected spirit existed between our art practices.

The battle of the Eureka Stockade in 1854 was at a time in Australian history that saw a young country attempt to assert its independence under colonial rule. It is seen as a key event in the development of Australian democracy

and identity; it has come to represent a symbolic stand against injustice and oppression. Regional miners in the goldfields of Victoria came together to forge a sense of the Australian ideal of ‘mateship’ as they fought under the flag of the “Southern Cross”.

The Southern Cross flag is used as a symbol of protest by organizations and individuals at both ends of the political spectrum, its time now for the environment itself to protest. The use of materials that I find just outside my door has heavily influenced this work. By using the natural environment to represent the symbolic flag, I hope to make modern day Australians more aware of the need to stand up for the environment that is the very essence of what defines our country and its people. The regional areas that are

being mined, drilled and cleared to create mineral and agricultural wealth and exports, need to be protected and the natural environment needs to stand against destruction, just as the miners did many years ago.

I have spent most of my life in regional Western Australia. My childhood was spent in the wheat and sheep farming area south east of Perth. The wide-open countryside on the family farm has had a great impact on my sense of space and the materials that I feel comfortable using within my artwork.”

Donna Fortescue has a Bachelor of Visual Arts and has participated in group exhibitions in Bunbury and Perth. She also works as a Gallery Officer at the Bunbury Regional Art Galleries.



Donna FORTESCUE
Beneath the Southern Cross we stand, 2015, Eucalyptus marginata (Jarrah), Corymbia calophylla (Red Gum) gum nuts and sticks, Xanthorrhoea (Balga) resin and fronds, Banksia leaves, hessian, braid, charcoal, rabbit skin glue, aluminum and cotton thread, 130 x 202 x 10 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

