

ART MONTHLY

AUSTRALASIA



AN EYE FOR SUMMER

9th Asia Pacific Triennial in focus

Ernabella Arts at 70; 'Oceania' at the Royal Academy

AU\$14.95
NZ\$16.00
SG\$16.00

Surfacing

The art of Louise Olsen and Stephen Ormandy

Michael Fitzgerald

The oozing amoebic forms, fashioned from resin, that have become signature pieces from Sydney's Dinosaur Designs since the mid-1980s, always seemed to signal a desire to transform into something else. As have their City Art Institute-trained creators, Louise Olsen and Stephen Ormandy, who established the iconic brand with Liane Rossler in 1985. Now the pair's lesser-known artistic oeuvre, drawn from a shared 30-year studio practice and on display at the Newcastle Art Gallery until 17 February 2019, reveals a modernist aesthetic as seemingly simple and slippery as those early resin forms, moving from intimate and ethereal studies in watercolour and oil (Olsen) to tumescent totemic sculpture and three-dimensional collage (Ormandy). Critic Andrew Frost observes an undeniable logic at play: 'a deliberate engagement with beauty in surface, form and colour.'¹ Here the pair reveal more of their artistic impulses.

Michael Fitzgerald (MF) Looking back at your three-decade archive for this exhibition, to what extent is it a shared vision, and where do you see the nuances of difference?

Louise Olsen (LO) Over 30 years we have built a shared visual language in our work at Dinosaur Designs that centres on organic natural forms. We love the juxtaposition of the modernity of the material and the traditional sculptural techniques that we use. Within this we also have our individual identities which we explore in our own art practices. Steve works with more linear-based forms and the play between positive and negative spaces. My work is inspired by nature, the mythology of the Australian landscape and the interplay of spatial tensions.

MF Do you agree with Andrew Frost's observa-

tion that you share a deliberate engagement with beauty in surface, form and colour? And where do you think this impulse comes from?

Stephen Ormandy (SO) This comes from our love of the history of art and the natural world. We are drawn by beauty and want to lift and heighten people's experience of the world around them. We hope our exhibition is a refuge of positivity in the same spirit as Matisse, Miró and Calder.

MF How do you see your practices as moving between two- and three-dimensional forms, and also between the hierarchies of 'design' and 'art'?

LO We don't see the difference. We are artists and approach every piece we do in the same way – whether that is a bowl or a work on canvas. Giacometti produced homewares with his brother Diego, Picasso created ceramics, and Calder made jewellery, and it goes back to many artists throughout history who have explored a variety of materials to create pieces to be used and appreciated in many different ways. Art can adorn the body and the home.

SO The divisions between art and design are relatively modern and we don't really think about them too much. In a sense, we created the gift store first that allows the freedom to explore and create on a larger scale with painting and sculpture, which was always our intention.

1. Andrew Frost, 'The logic of beauty', in *OLSEN ORMANDY: a creative force*, exhibition catalogue, Newcastle Art Gallery, p. 9.

'OLSEN ORMANDY: a creative force' is on view at the Newcastle Art Gallery until 17 February 2019.

Louise Olsen, *Hidden Lake*, 2018, oil on linen, 198 x 153cm; image courtesy the artist and Olsen Gallery



Stephen Ormandy, *Low Profile*, 2018, oil on linen,
153 x 122cm; image courtesy the artist and Olsen Gallery



Stephen Ormandy, *The Factory*, 2018, resin,
102 x 35 x 22cm; image courtesy the artist and Olsen Gallery



Stephen Ormandy, *Low Profile*, 2018, oil on linen,
153 x 122cm; image courtesy the artist and Olsen Gallery



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