

EVIDENCE OF SCALE III

Evidence of Scale, the exhibition, encourages the question, 'What is scale?'

It is helpful here to limit the inquiry only to art which, according to Google, translates, as; 'The size of one object in relation to another.' As a participant, I can only offer a purely subjective response based on the work I am contributing, which I hope communicates that whilst small in scale, its impact is not diminished.

The 2022 flood left me without a studio. For the past year, the facilities available for my work have been severely limited, accordingly I have been experiencing a forced hiatus. Arguably responding to that hiatus has encouraged me to make absorbing, highly considered carvings, at the scale of my hand. Perhaps a distraction from the recent trauma, but more an opportunity to investigate studies of Old Masters made during my travels. These works are shown in their original carved form beside their translation into bronze.

The first work based on museum studies is ***Two Peasants Dancing***, after a woodblock etching by Durer, which dates to 1514, and is held in the British Museum. The wood block itself is postcard size, which given the meticulous resolution of its imagery, is remarkably deceptive. It remains unclear whether the highly skilled and exacting engraving was carried out by Durer, or whether he has been aided by an equally accomplished technician. Either way, Durer's exacting presence has been held in perpetuity. Whilst seemingly unrelated, inspection of the engraving reminds me of viewing the complexity of the internal wiring of today's modern computers. It is these unique processes that enable our material world to exist, though few would be considering that connection, as they administer their daily life aided by their modern devices. Within the limited dimensions of the



original 2-dimensional wood block, is the information which inspired me to transform the image into a hand-sized carving in wood. This was an enthralling process, no doubt further stimulated and informed by the extraordinary resolution I have seen in Japanese Netsuke carvings.

For me carving retains the very magic, the essence, which I associate with the origins of sculpture. The reduction of matter through hand and eye, to the legibility of image. Whilst sculpture making has advanced beyond that elemental concept, those origins remain.

In a similar vein, ***A Rolling Stone Gathers No Moss***, a matchbox size wood etching, after William Blake (Circa 1821) from his illustrations of the Virgil's Pastorals, depicts a man hauling a heavy roller, which put me in mind of Sisyphus' ceaseless labour. Although the original illustration lacks Durer's acuity, it contained enough resonance to encourage a rapid reinvention in carved and constructed wood. The scale here, for expediency, enlarges Blake's original work.



The third of my hand-sized carvings translated in bronze, **Crouching Youth** was inspired by a casting which I discovered in the sculpture galleries of London's V & A Museum. Included amongst the many plaster life casts, is a seemingly innocuous, contained, yet compelling figure by Michelangelo. The original marble carving resides in The Hermitage, St Petersburg. If one takes the time to closely inspect this figure, it reveals a profound grasp of the human body. The hunched youth pulsates with life in every carefully considered contour. The work can be studied completely in the round, an opportunity which highly influenced the early modern master, Auguste Rodin. The crouching figure vibrates with the life force that has been masterfully communicated by Michelangelo's hand. It became for me, a dynamic impetus for drawing. My small, hand-sized, carving in wood reminds me to revise my appreciation of the timeless Renaissance Masters, whose achievement is often considered dated by later developments. I gained a new appreciation, both of Michelangelo, and the very modernity of the classical sculpture which had, in turn, inspired him.



A fourth, more contemporary piece, offers a vague nod to the popular culture which defines contemporary life. A photo of Elvis Presley and Ann Margaret dancing provocatively heralds an age of liberation that followed the cataclysms of World War 2. The challenge for me to translate, what is in essence pure energy, was as irresistible, as it was inspiring. Its first iteration was an even smaller carving in polychromed Beech. That image almost doubled in scale in a second version, which I carved from a single block of Tasmanian Blackbutt. The complexities of animating two figures, locked in the same material are immense, and I have resolved them to the best of my ability.



By contrast, **Continuum** at 2.4 metres, is a counterpoint to the previous small figures which I hope exemplifies that evidence of scale, and the detail which can be communicated, is not imperative to size.

Other works here include one of the 500 small, individually carved figures, created for the construction of a 2011 work **Spent Time**. This rumination preceded a body of work, of larger figures, exhibited at the Museum of Brisbane in 2013, entitled **Fellow Humans**, which we, of course, all are.

I am indebted to the highly skilled services of **Perides Fine Art Foundry**, who cast each of the bronzes. It is a Brisbane institution, for which this city might be justly proud.

