

Inspiration behind “Cockatoo in Time” series

My current body of work was inspired by a trip to Cockatoo Island in Sydney. At first glance it was just another tired island used-up long ago in other times with an interesting history, fairly non-descript. On closer view I saw the difference, strange metallic guardians, and sentinels of long ago, some reaching up to the sky to perhaps ward off an attack, others buckled over in defeat, all inert and lifeless as if someone just pulled the plug and walked away.

I felt transported back in time, to a Jurassic age or perhaps something more sci-fi like an old battlefield from “War of the World’s”. An island with as many lives as a cat: a Penitentiary; an Industrial School for Girls; a World War II Naval Dry Dock and more recently a movie set to name only a few. The only survivors of those days are rusting cranes, cogs, decrepit working sheds and discarded machinery, some having lived through more than one island life, all having their own interesting stories to tell. I had to bring them back to life, reanimate them and allow them to tell their stories through my eyes and interpretation.

I chose encaustic and oil as my preferred mediums. Wax, like the machinery is inert until you decide to reactivate it, where once again it comes alive to do our bidding. Melted wax was poured onto plain canvas boards or on top of collages from photographs taken by me whilst on the island. Like the photographs under the wax, so too is the history buried on the island; an undercurrent of events now hushed by time. The photographs are like memories of the island just under the surface. Ground pigment mixed into the wax for colour, hue and tone; scribing and gouging giving structure, form and definition; dripped, melted and brushed hot wax adding additional texture and 3D effects. Each piece has oil paint worked into the wax and grooves to accentuate various cogs and pieces, items that perhaps need to be heard more than others.

I am hoping my paintings will come alive to my audience and tell their own story. I am excited that you may see more than just leftovers from another time.