Breaking Ground

Garry Barker

A Yorkshire Sculptor’s Group exhibition installed within the grounds of the Patching Arts Centre, Nottingham.

My contribution to this exhibition focused on allegorical ideas constructed as a ceramic ‘memento mori’ installation made in relation to responses to stories told to the artist by recent migrants to Chapeltown in Leeds. The exhibition was an opportunity to open out a very different opportunity for public engagement with my practice and to provide a form of ‘closure’ to an ongoing series of interrelated narratives concerning responses to migrants.

A series of drawings were done of plant forms, looking at possible memorial or ‘Memento Mori’ possibilities for migrants losing their lives at sea as they crossed the Mediterranean. These drawings then became the starting point for the development of a series of ceramic ‘flowers’ designed to sit within a field of a typically English wild flowers.

Beginning with conversations had with recent Leeds migrants whilst drawing on the streets of Leeds, the initial response to these conversations included the making of images that included the tower block that the Leeds local authority were using to house recent migrants. Several exhibition opportunities have since been taken to exhibit different aspects of the allegorical narratives that emerged. One story told though ‘resonated’ with me and it was the story of a man in a small boat hallucinating a white rabbit as he fell into a reverie because of lack of water and food. This ‘white rabbit’ began to follow the boat and became a talisman of survival. From this story others began to open out. For example the animation that was selected for the Trinity Buoy Wharf drawing prize this year was one aspect of this story and this memorial piece was an attempt to put some sort of closure to the work that had emerged. Communion with a ceramic ‘ghost’ of this rabbit being just one form of parallel hallucinogenic activity that was used to encourage images to emerge from the subconscious during the realisation of this project. The rabbit was in this case ‘submerged’ back into the subconscious and the field of wild flowers became an ocean substitute.

The use of QR codes placed next to the work was an attempt to build in another type of audience engagement, the link made to people’s mobile phones allowing them to access myself speaking about the underlying narratives that shaped the work and to remind everyone of the loss of life that continues to occur.

Exhibition

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At the time of planting the pine (podocarp) in 1849, the kānuka (Nestegis) was a young plant. The kānuka was a common tree in the Taranaki region, and its presence is significant in the history of the area.

While the kānuka has flourished, it has been a challenge to keep the tree from being affected by pests and diseases. Today, efforts continue to protect the kānuka and ensure its survival.

Memento Mori

[Image of a kānuka tree]

'Breaking Ground' - Sculpture Walk

The sculpture walk features a variety of artworks created by local artists. Visitors can enjoy the natural beauty of the landscape while exploring the artistic creations.

Memento Mori

[Image of a kānuka tree]

Breaking Ground

The sculptures on display are inspired by the natural environment. Visitors can appreciate the art as well as learn about the local flora and fauna.

[Image of a kānuka tree]