

at the South Australian CAE School of Design, and was soon exhibiting widely and winning the respect of her peers for her individual work, as well as for the collaborations undertaken through Gray Street. Since 1985 she has participated in 12 solo exhibitions in Australia and in over 70 group shows in Australia and overseas, including New York, Munich, Hokkaido, Chicago and London.

By the mid 1990s, Truman's practice had shifted from jewellery to focus predominantly on public art and architectural commissions, including some sculptural work I fell in love with in a courtyard at the Art Gallery of SA. She has achieved prominence as an artist whose work has concentrated on wood carving – mostly in English lime, coloured with paint or ink – using skills honed during a liberating three-month residency in 1990 working with “netsuke” carvers in Japan. By 1997 Truman's work had developed notably and was acknowledged in Sue Rowley's accolade: ‘Her work is so compellingly physically in its intense concentration on scale, detail and material that it is impossible to dissociate the emotional and spiritual yearnings they evoke from their physicality as objects.’² Truman states, ‘The objects I carve present scenarios based on the interrelationships between memory and our sensual and physical realities. The act of making provides me with a space to breathe ... like seeking constant clarification in a conversation.’³

As a contemporary jeweller and sculptor, Truman always viewed the body as a vehicle for exploration of the personal and the political, made more potent when, in the mid 1990s, she was afflicted with repetitive strain injury. As a result she embraced alternative methods of healing, in particular, the Feldenkrais Method of body movement. ‘I make works about my experience of the body. There is no attempt at anatomical instruction ... They are rather a sensorial record of physical experience ... in a sense, I've had to come to terms with my three-dimensionality in order to remain involved in the ongoing relationship between me and the objects I produce.’

In mid-1987 I moved to Sydney and Adelaide's dusty ochre landscapes dissolved into the harbour-city's more humid and dreamy hues. By now *Craft Arts* had published its 10th issue.

I don't clearly remember the first time I saw Margaret West's remarkable work, but I certainly admired it in the 1989 “International Craft Triennial” at the Art Gallery of Western Australia. Later, in 1993, I saw “Interstices: Works by Margaret West from 1981–92” at Artspace in Sydney, as well as two stunning solo exhibitions at Mori Gallery in 2001 and 2002.

In the early 1980s West was a full-time lecturer at Sydney College of the Arts in what was then called Jewellery and Silversmithing, a position she held from 1979 to 1999. At the time she was fully engaged with her art (drawing and object making, sometimes “jewellery”) and writing (“critical” essays and poetry). In fact, over the past 20 years, literature has been a major influence on her ideas. Having read widely since early childhood, she moved on to poetry, critical theory in literature, as well as visual arts, music, politics, science and philosophy.

‘I have always worked in a fairly hermetic manner, generally outside mainstream “trends”. While lecturing at Sydney College I felt obligated to focus my energies on the area in which I was teaching, namely jewellery’ (but in the broadest sense of that word).

West speaks of two particularly liberating career events: leaving the (‘somewhat claustrophobic yet supportive’) Melbourne environment when she moved to Sydney in

Margaret West, ‘Open Gesture with Yellow Fringe’, 2002, silver and paint, diam. 90 mm. Exhibited at Gallery Funaki in Melbourne and Mori Gallery in Sydney, 2002



Margaret West, ‘Still Life: natura mortua’ (detail), 2003, stone paint, graphite, wax, 150 x 145 x 5 mm. Exhibited in Clemenger Contemporary Art Award at the National Gallery of Victoria, 2003



Margaret West, ‘Blue Storm Red Storm’, balsa wood, gesso, paint, brass, 11 x 7 x 8 mm. Exhibited in “93 The Art of Jewellery”, Tokyo, Japan, 2003

