

Victoria Royds -Bodies that Matter: exploring the fragmentation of the female body and women's identity.

Metro Arts - Brisbane 28.10.05

Although trained in 75-76 VR has been an artist for over 30 years . . . a precocious child? . . .She began exhibiting at 13/14 yr old . . . her mother owned the Mill Gallery at Braidwood. As she told me herself she didn't build cubby houses she built stables.

I've known her since the late eighties I think we probably met at the 1988 Jewellers and Metalsmiths Conference although with Victoria it seems as if you have always known her . . . there is an ease with which she relates to you. Anyway 20 years ago she had already developed a substantial and powerful body of work as a jeweller. You can see in her earliest pieces the thinking . . . the inquiry that would sustain her. In those works tiny bodies of silver clambered up the neck to reach ears . . . other bodies linked arm in arm to drape across the shoulders. But V couldn't be constrained by these miniatures her work demanded more.

More vigor . More scale.

Her works became even more powerful in their material quality, more insistent in their multiple variations

Powerful in the method of making. She created a series of armbands drop-forged from steel .Her workplace became more akin to the foundry.

Studying at University in Tasmania in the 80's she

recalls working in the jewellery department with her back to the sculpture department, thinking 'I should be in there'.

And she was right.

Because Victoria is a woman of energy she is a force. She is a woman who always appears comfortable in her own body but she is driven by a dynamic energy. That force is now matured and focused . . . so beware, just as the laser beam can cut through solid matter, so this light body now cuts through our own clichéd assumptions.

VR works physically and her way of knowing is body centred. A Jeweller is well primed to do this body work . . . we wrap, circle and pierce the flesh, to fix memory and materialise wordless emotions. And in doing we get to know the body and it's meanings . . . within the trance of concentration, of repetitive manual labour we hear the messages the body emits.

VR was ultimately limited by the scale of jewellery but informed by it's canvas, the body . . . her sculpture takes this intimate knowing out to the larger domain dimensionally - intentionally.

To the body and it's contours.
It's readings and it's mis-readings . . .
and further . . . to bodies and their relationships.

In her artists statement she quotes; ** Skin opens our bodies to other bodies: through touch, the separation of self and other is undermined in the very intimacy or proximity of the encounter.*

Here are casts from every female in her family .
. . how beautiful these arms that hold, that work,
that lift up, that restrain, hold back.
Lips concealed, breasts revealed. Do these
boundaries fixed, now soften?

An artist works and reworks, digs, traces, layers
and returns to her task . . . feeling and looking,
all repetition and tracking over time . . . and going
back again like a tongue over a raw tooth or the
closed flickering eye in it's dream state.
Obsessive. A kind of thinking that reveals it's thread
only over time.
This is a way of knowing.
(Art is a way of knowing).

So we are here tonight and encircled by one
woman's way of knowing . . . mid career . . . mid
vocation . . .mid life.

Just as there are multiple ways of knowing so there
are multiple ways of seeing.

Tonight I would urge you to SEE this beautiful
work with your hands. Let yourself sink into these
living imprints and allow all THIS to emit it's
secret knowing .
We are fortunate to be here in the midst of these
loved traces . . . absorb them in.

One life. One knowledge speaks here.

Barbara Heath

* Ahmed & Stacey 2001, p.6