

CERAMICS

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So stilly-greeny . . .

SCULPTURE IN CONTEXT 2005



Niamh Garvey's 'Cowboys and Indians'

There is something about the National Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin that seems to sooth me. I wonder is it the feeling of being sheltered in a cocoon of green while the city bustles all around? Or maybe it's the smell of the place or the colours, the textures, the attention to detail? Maybe Kavanagh said it best, "...so stilly-greeny in the heart of summer." As a participating artist in Sculpture in Context for the last few years, I have relished the excuse to spend time in the gardens. Thankfully this year my piece was located in the tropical setting of the Curvilinear Range, whereas last year I spent a great deal of time up to my elbows in pond water!

Sculpture in Context over its twenty one history has established itself as the largest outdoor sculpture exhibition in Ireland. It is an independent, artist led exhibition that offers many opportunities to sculptors in a variety of mediums and styles. Indeed, it provides a unique platform for artists and challenges them to respond creatively to a specific location.

Each year a different panel of selectors is invited to adjudicate this open submission exhibition. This year Colm Brennan, Cliodna Cussen and Henry Pim adjudicated. The Botanic Gardens offers a magnificent



Bettina Seitz

setting and has been host for the past four years. The works are displayed throughout the gardens forty eight acres and in the gallery above the visitors'

centre. The exhibition has previously been hosted by venues such as Fernhill Gardens, Kilmainham Gaol and Dublin Castle, has developed into a major event in the Irish arts calendar.

The eleven ceramicists who exhibited this year, once again held the flag high for clay, showing the diversity and beauty of the medium. There were one hundred and fourteen sculptures throughout the gardens from almost ninety artists and ceramics featured strongly amongst the awards scooping two of the six available. JULIET CADOGAN won a Sculpture in Context Award for a Work of Distinction and BRIGITTA SEITZ won the Cast Award for a Work of Merit.

Cadogan created a wonderfully clever outdoor installation entitled "Planting Song". The idea of "planting" seeds to make people and to see them pulling themselves up out of the ground was really something special. Indeed, the poignant faces of her growing figures looking up to the sun for nourishment was inspired and the award was very well deserved. Brigitta Seck's award winning piece "Resting place for a stone" was located in a delightfully peaceful meadow of oak trees far away from the more



Juliette Cadogan's 'Planting Song'

populated areas of the gardens. I had to really concentrate on my map to find it, but it really was worth it. Constructed in paper clay this slab built structure simply felt like it was part of the place, so perfect was its colour and texture. Peering into the gold clad resting place for her egg-shaped stone, I was struck by how shrewdly Seitz had interpreted the brief, indeed this piece like Cadogan's really was sculpture in context.

NIAMH GARVEY'S indoor piece "Cowboys and Indians" reminded me that ceramics can also be fun and indeed that perhaps at times we can take things a little too seriously. The pieces which sold very well were beautifully glazed. Jane Jermyn exhibited two pieces in paper clay and both blended beautifully into their environs. Her "3 Pod Forms" perched in the arid landscape of a greenhouse seemed like they had always been there. "Standing Form" on the other hand was located in the more lush surroundings of the Great Palm House and indeed standing tall and proud it enhanced the planting around it. Also located in the Palm House was CORMAC BOYDELL'S "Jungle Bird", however his piece was perched high up above the canopy of trees. If I'd had a ladder high enough I would have honestly struggled up just to touch his fantastic glazes, but even down below on the jungle floor the effect was still to be felt.

PADDY MOLONEY'S piece "The Ferryman" complete with special effects had an eerie ghostlike quality to it. Again, its location in the Curvilinear Range amongst the architecture of the plants, seemed to only further enhance



Brigitta Seck's 'Resting place for a stone'.

worked very well. These two remnants of a geological age long forgotten seemed to capture and indeed preserve a perhaps now extinct plant form. SANDRA MCCOWEN'S installation "Looking for Land" consisted of a series of different characters coming out of the ground, each with their own air of expectation! The piece were both playful and lively and once again was very well located in the context of the gardens.

HENRY PIM, who of course was an adjudicator, was an invited artist and his piece "Conglomerate" was exhibited in the indoor exhibition space. I always think there is a kind of mystery in his conglomerate pieces. If we peeled away each layer what would we find? For those of us who saw Henry demonstrate at Aberystwyth we know his Mum's old china might certainly feature! But perhaps what is more intriguing is what we cannot see, what is forever hidden beneath the layers he creates.

In terms of ceramics a final word on my own piece entitled "The Titan Arum: Behind every great man..." All phallic jokes aside, it is perhaps a mark of my own naivety that I did not see what was before my eyes!! They say that life imitates



Henry Pim

art or is it the other way around? They also say that behind every great man there has to be a great woman and of course the irony of the phalli I created is that they are in fact the female part of the Titan Arum, the largest flowering plant in the world!!

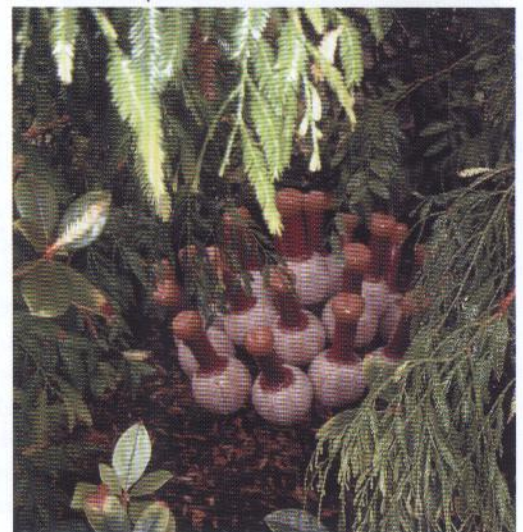
Other sculptures of note were GER CLANCY'S simply magnificent structure "Log Place". I was lucky enough to observe him in the gardens as he constructed the piece on location. He painstakingly clad in circles of natural wood an enormous steel sphere three and half meters in height. A doorway on one side allowed the visitors access inside the structure and to look up and see the light peaking in through the wood was amazing, not to mention

the piece. The same was true of ANNIKA BERGLUND'S "Shells" and indeed if some giant prehistoric mollusc crawled out from inside the smoke fired pieces it would have seemed perfectly natural!

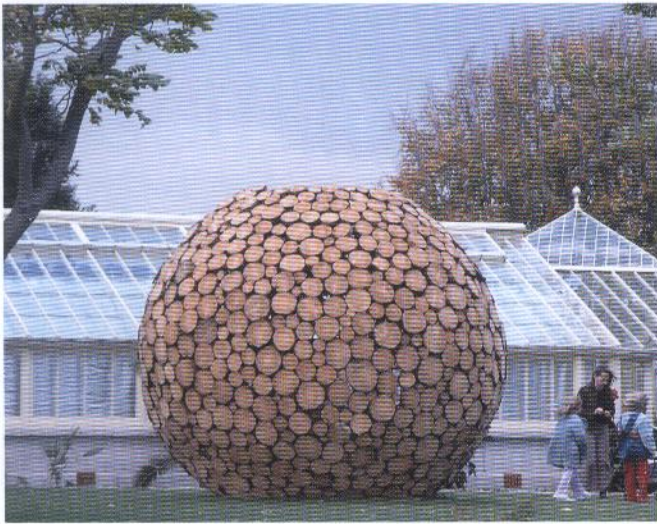
MOYA MULDOWNNEY opted this year for two indoor pieces entitled "Fossil". There was a lovely delicacy in the fine detail that she created and her subtle use of colour



Cormac Boydell



Michelle Maher



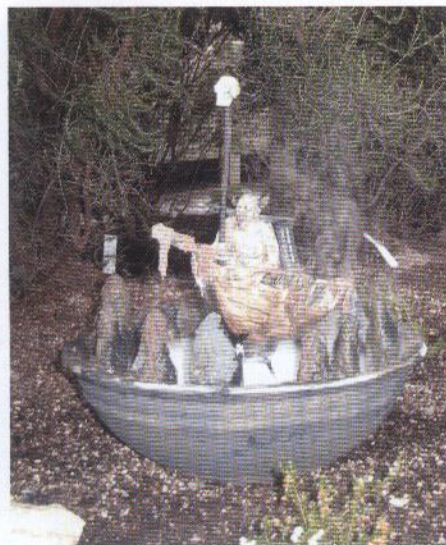
Ger Clancy

the wonderful sound quality in the space. Congratulations to Ger who won a Sculpture in Context award for the piece.



Billy McDonald's Tumble Weed'

BILLY McDONALD'S cleverly named piece "Tumble Weed" was entirely made from plastic bottles yet it had an elegance to it and for me the visual impact of the piece against the background of the pond was stunning.



Paddy Maloney

Of course, BETINNA SEITZ'S piece "Growth" constructed in concrete and steel was as beautiful and as inspiring as her work in past years at Sculpture in Context. KILLIAN SCHURMANN'S work in glass "Three Figures floating on a



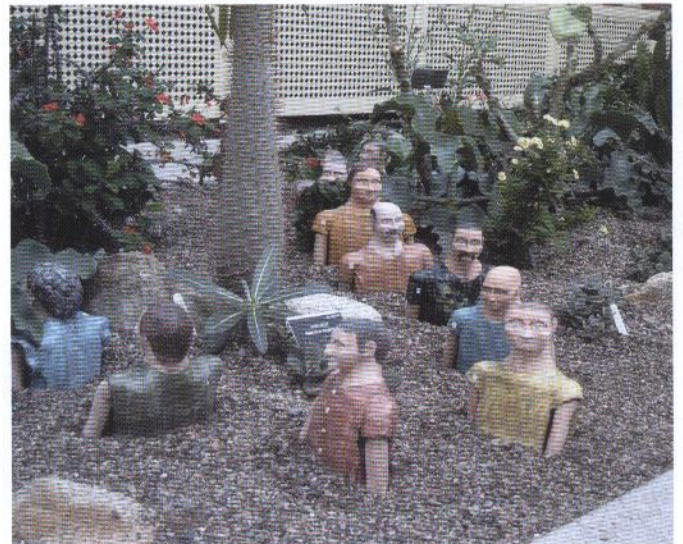
Jane Jermy

pond" also won an award and deservedly so, as it was an exquisitely well made piece. Yes the Botanic Gardens are ... "stilly-greeny" and enhanced all the more by Sculpture in Context, so let's hope they choose the gardens as the location again next year, maybe I'll end up back in the water where I belong!

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