**2015 CSA SURVEY EXHIBITION**

**Yarra Sculpture Gallery**

**Friday: May 23**

**Opening Address:**

Thank you for inviting me to open the 2015 CSA Survey Exhibition. I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to a knowledgeable audience about a discipline that we are passionate about ‒ particularly now that I have left my teaching profession of 40 years within 3-D disciplines.

In the past few months ‒ we have been fortunate to have experienced two miles-stones in the history of Australian sculpture. Both ‒ like this current exhibition on display ‒ have their origins in a Survey: The first being the significant historical retrospect exhibition titled *Mildura Revisited* (sculpture exhibited 1961 – 1978) at the Mildura Arts Centre. Curated by Ken Scarlett, this major survey captured the spirit, the diversity, and the ambition of the Sculpture Triennials that cemented Mildura’s position in Australia’s contemporary art scene. The second milestone was the recent launching of Mark Holsworth’s book titled *Sculpture of Melbourne*. A much anticipated and generous publication exploring the rich diversity of public sculpture in a narrative style that engages both historically and personally ‒ as he covers a remarkable number of prominent and lesser- known works.

In addressing the idea of a Survey, we can enlist a number of terms that come to mind: an inspection, a study, a review, an assessment, an appraisal or – what I prefer to describe as a Consideration. Look at this, consider it, contemplate another reality; a 3-D reality. A Survey, in this context, also deals with the present – what is happening now ‒ not looking to the past ‒ rather ushering out a contemporary example of each sculptor’s practice alongside his/her colleagues. Embracing some of the objectives of *Melbourne Now* at the NGV during 2013-14 ‒ this Survey exhibition also celebrates what is unique in our membership. In this manner, we are invited to share the experience of the collective whilst acknowledging individual achievements, their insights and expressions across a range of media, skills and techniques.

Looking across the ‘expanded field’ in the gallery this evening (with a nod to Rosalind Krauss), we see the forces of 3-D creativity that traditionally underpin the discipline such as : modelling, casting, construction and carving alongside the digital and what has come to be termed as ‘spatial practice’ in the broadest sense. There are also some pointers of future inroads with technologies – perhaps some unheard of today ‒ that sculptors and artists alike will embrace as each generation explores the tools at their disposal. From what we see today, particularly coming out of industries using cutting-edge technologies, just image what curious and remarkable sculptural forms and platforms we will be experiencing 18 years from now.

For example and closer to our own domestic lives, every time I visit Bunnings ‒ the sophistication of power tools, devices, products and equipment for DYI projects on display – amazes me. Their use for sculpture activity and cultural production will be a constant source of inspiration ‒ in much the same way that metal, wood and plastic fabrication and synthetic materials became available ‒ in the previous century.

Just the other day at Office Works ‒ I saw a digital printer on sale for under 600 AUD. Granted, a crude machine layering up a plastic object very slowly ‒ it was both novel and mind-boggling. Not that 3-D printing technology and its incredible applications can ever be the sole determiner of rigour or quality in sculptural concepts or form ‒ rather, like computers ‒ it is another powerful tool that awaits our creativity and imagination; the sky is the limit.

The future of sculpture makes me recall Jack Burnham’s influential book: *Beyond Modern Sculpture* published in 1968 ‒ who pioneered discourse surrounding some of the sculpture’s hi-tech territory that continues to be researched today in some University Art Schools and Artist’s studios that include: electronics, robotics, cybernetics and sound. He predicted some of sculpture’s greatest potential would not only be held captive in the minds of future generation of artists ‒ but would also be propelled by the break-throughs in science and industry. The British Sculptor, Tony Cragg, states that we are only just beginning to harness the creative forces of these new technologies.

So, in recognition of this unique Survey of work (for our consideration) ‒ let us look optimistically to the future and the idea of Sculpture. In all of its democratic guises, trials, experiments, failures and successes ‒ that have occurred over previous generations ‒ sculpture will no doubt continue on its own trajectory of inquiry and critique ‒ the two hallmarks that have taken so far and fast in our lifetime.

Likewise, in the CSA ‒ its history and its important role in the development of Australian sculpture, its membership and those committee volunteers who have maintained the passion and goodwill for years on end ‒ we thank you.

I now declare the CSA Survey Exhibition of 2015 formally opened.

Dr Dan Wollmering

**2015 Contemporary Sculptors Association Survey Exhibition**

May 20 – June 7

**Closing Event: Sunday June 7 at 3pm**

Yarra Sculpture Gallery

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