

HIDDEN in Rookwood – a review by Courtney Burke

HIDDEN Rookwood Sculptures 2022 is an outdoor sculpture exhibition, showing the work of over fifty talented artists. Curated by Kath Fries, who also hosts tours, this exhibition has a lot to experience and to learn from. There are many types of sculpture included, made from a large variety of materials, including clay from Rookwood cemetery itself.



Throughout the exhibition I attended a Sound Bath in which artist Joanne Makas created sweet music from large coloured singing bowls and burnt incense to create a calming and surreal atmosphere. The artist drifts around through large pieces of tissue paper which have been hung in the Grave Diggers Hut, draping down to resemble conical trees. Appropriate, as it responds to current environmental issues. Her installation, *The Forest That Sighs*, is deeply spiritual, making this an emotional experience for both the artist and viewer. Joanne says that “if we slow down and listen, we may hear the stories of the earth”, which I feel is a nice sentiment to have.

Philippa Hagon’s *The Residence- Act 3-Full House* encourages the viewer to walk around, investigating stacks and totemic structures of found objects. These include suitcases, newspapers, milk crates and yes, wigs are included too. You notice something different each time you look at it. The piece encourages the view to consider over-consumption and the amount of things we discard. Whilst there is an important message in the piece,



Philippa achieves this in a fun and comical way. She wants the viewer to feel as though they are walking around in an expanded painting.



For something that is literally hidden, enjoy *Mother Scar Tree*, by Maddison Gibbs. If you can find it, that is! This installation acknowledges the Dharug people and their ongoing spiritual presence. It considers the impact we are having on our ecosystems. Made from mirrored acrylic, the embodied female spirits are hung

from trees and easily blend into their surroundings. If you do see them, count them and grow in your awareness that, if you stop for a moment and look, you may see and learn some poignant things.

In conjunction with HIDDEN Rookwood Sculptures, is the Satellite exhibition at Australian Catholic University, Strathfield campus. The McGlade Gallery hosts a selection of artworks which provide further insight into the main display. It shows drawings and experiments that a viewer would not otherwise see. Video installations can be viewed here, too. Namely, Danica Knezivic's *The Longest Time Since I Have Seen You* and *Spires* by Jacqui Malins.



At Rookwood, the audio tour that goes alongside each work provides further insight too. This is accessed via a QR code and means a viewer can hear the artist explain their concepts, whilst looking at the work.

As you experience the works at Rookwood, you see how distinctly different each is in their form and use of materials. Yet, there is a common thread. They each play into the cycles of life and death and many of them commemorate the loss of loved ones. They demonstrate humour, strength and vulnerability. They talk to us about shared life experiences and I'm sure that every viewer can find a piece that resonates with them.

All of the artworks installed at Rookwood draw the viewer into deep contemplation, using spirituality, symbolism and, in some cases, humour. As an art student, completing my internship at Hidden in Rookwood, I have grown in my knowledge of artistic practice as well as my insight into humanity and the natural world. I have grown my appreciation of artistic practice and the arts community. I hope that every other viewer of this exhibition feels much the same way and are equally as touched as I am.

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List of images

Image 1: Joanne Makas performing her ritualistic piece (C. Burke, 2022)

Image 2: *The Residence- Act 3- Full House* (C. Burke, 2022)

Image 3: One of the spirits in *Mother Scar Tree* (C. Burke, 2022)

Image 4: the exhibition at ACU Strathfield gallery (C. Burke, 2022)