



Barbara Heath - her opening speech (text) for “The Tasmanian Landscape” Handmark Gallery, delivered 6:00pm Friday 15/3/2013.

Our Tasmanian home is in the Midlands - it's a landscape of sparse trees - you can see the form of the land - the horizon of low rounded hills - and sky, lots of sky. It's all about space - distant views and light. The structure of the land is animated by the shifting play of light from this huge sky. We live a kilometer from the Salt Pan Plains - a landscape made famous by the Tasmanian artist: Bea Maddock - her powerful work **Tromemanner - forgive us our trespass I-IV* describes the physicality and history of this area. Interestingly - the painting is owned by the Queensland Art Gallery so we were already familiar with her record of this important aboriginal place. We keep a postcard of this painting in our house in Tunbridge, it feels like a touchstone to us - an object that helps us connect to the spirit of this place.

Jewellery is also a touchstone - a physical thing - worn so close to the body. These precious little objects can be so important to us in a wordless way, carry private meanings.

This year is my 40th anniversary of being a jeweller - I've been reflecting (as you do) - in the beginning it was all about reinventing the wheel - creating a vocabulary of shapes and forms - sculpture on the body. It was all about new ideas, over time - it has become the consolidation of those ideas - about refinement and deepening into the real nature of jewellery - how it functions and feels as much as how innovative it might be. Intrinsic beauty and generosity of materials - the heft and solidity of a handmade object - the evidence of the workmanship. Now I can trace the lineage of each shape and detail in this work - how one form or solution begat another - how historical research has introduced complexity and texture - how one colour combination excited the next.

In between working on the house or seeing a bit more of the island - each visit Malcolm and I further our tinsmith research - this time it was the West Coast + tin mining, Zeehan and Waratah . . . my mother came from Devonport, her mother from Waratah - from Cornish tin miners. I have a deep genetic connection to this place - I suppose I'm here mining that? I'm interested in the transference of skills over time - transposing genes to memes . . .

But it is also important to recognise the role the gallery plays in this - the relationship of artist to gallery - it's almost an old fashioned idea - and one that we might be in danger of leaving behind. The gallery is this conduit that enables - a culture-making vehicle. And that's worth celebrating. So cheers - and enjoy the work!

Barbara Heath - Jeweller to the Lost 15/3/2013

<http://www.handmarkgallery.com/exhibitions-Hobart/Hobart.php>

<http://www.daa.org.au/bio/bea-maddock/biography/>

<http://collection.qagoma.qld.gov.au/qag/imu.php?request=display&port=45000&id=477d&flag=ecatalogue&offset=0&count=default&view=details>