

Practitioner's Statement

Great Barrier Reef

Melissa Shinn

I have held a love and admiration of the Great Barrier Reef for many years. The recent news about the bleaching of the reef horrified me and I wanted to express my concerns on human beings causing the damage to the pristine reef. David Attenborough's documentaries have always influenced and informed my beliefs on nature. I loved the reef's ability to be self-supporting for so many centuries but am disappointed that human beings are able to destroy it in mere decades through their selfishness.

I wanted to communicate the need we have to look after our planet. We are starting to lose one of our natural wonders of the world and we need to be proactive in saving our reef. I wanted to show how wonderful the Great Barrier Reef is and for all of us to see the wonder of Mother Nature. The vessels that make up my sculpture show the gradual effects of the bleaching on the reef by the changes in colour and the choices of materials and techniques.

I found that I had to push my boundaries in skill and learning to make the work successful. Sculpting the wet silk paper was critical in making the vessels show the waves on the top part of the bowls and the bottom half show the reef underwater. I was happy with this but the silk paper needed to be a little stiffer to help keep their shape. The small vessels which look like sea pods were a challenge as they needed to look like part of the art work. It was important to place the pods and the beads so that they would give the appearance of the coral underwater. I was happy with my choice of colours and use of organic shaped beads. I was successful in keeping the look simple while achieving the effect I wanted.

Meredith Woolnough is an Australian textile artist who creates 3 Dimensional free motion embroidery based on her love of the sea world. Her work is innovative and shows the beauty of nature, and the world under water. She influenced me to try to keep the work delicate and light. Dale Chihuly is a respected international glass artist who has created 3 Dimensional vessels based on sea shapes. His use of colour and shape greatly influenced my sculptural shapes.

My dyslexia makes it difficult for me to communicate my beliefs, ideas and thoughts in writing and I find it much easier to communicate visually. I am then empowered to communicate my ideas in ways that people are able to see and hopefully understand. I believe therefore that art provides a way for everyone to creatively express their thoughts and ideas and not to be handicapped and restricted. Today the range of materials and techniques is so wide that it opens a world of what can be used and how to use them. I believe art should be in depth and rigorous when expressing yourself. Escaping from the real world through art can take you to your own personal world.