

Sea, sun, sand and sculpture

Sculpture by the Sea: Eighth annual exhibition

Cottesloe, Perth. Closes March 19, open around the clock

Reviewer: **Sasha Grishin**

Sculpture by the Sea (SxS as it is known in the trade) operates more like a franchise with separate exhibitions at Bondi (Sydney), Cottesloe (Perth) and Aarhus (Denmark), rather than as a touring exhibition to three venues. Less than 20 per cent of what was shown at Bondi last year has made it to Cottesloe this year.

Sculpture, through its bulky physical nature, is difficult and expensive to transport, so the Bondi show had a predominance of work from New South Wales and this show has a strong contingent of work from West Australian sculptors. Cottesloe has, in fact, become the premier venue for contemporary West Australian sculpture.

In view of this, it is even more surprising that it is a Canberra sculptor, Michael Le Grand, who has been awarded one of the three major prizes announced in Perth: the Sculpture Inside Curator's Prize 2012. The bright red non-figurative steel sculpture *Salut* was selected from a field of more than 100 indoor sculptures.

Among the indoor works there is another Canberra artist's sculpture, a small bronze by Ayaka Saito.

Le Grand is also included among

the 73 major outside commissions. His *Taiko*, 2010, is a large and confronting, yet at the same time lyrical and contemplative, sculpture.

While best read as a monumental totem-like form, the shapes relate to the Japanese drum, the "wa-daiko" now shown strangely suspended in a framework resembling a Japanese temple gate made from bent bamboo rods. The high-gloss dark red finish gives it a striking appearance against the panoramic Cottesloe background. Le Grand is one artist who finds SxS a critical venue for the display of his art and has been involved in exhibitions in Bondi, Cottesloe and Aarhus.

Bruce Radke is another Canberra sculptor (now resident in Braidwood) who is included in both the indoor and outdoor exhibitions at Cottesloe and is also a veteran of many SxS exhibitions. He uses welded steel as a preferred medium and his piece *Overture* is also painted red and is of monumental proportions.

Some of the other highlights at this exhibition are provided by the West Australian artists. The outstanding piece is Tony Jones' *Lighthouse*, a 8.5-metre steel construction which sits out on the edge of the pier and combines a whimsical wit with a strong sense of design and presence. Thomas de Munk-Kerkmeier, in his *It's a bird!!* employs wood with steel elements to successfully create a funky mobile-like construction

which owes a debt to both Miro and Alexander Calder. He also has very effective small-scale constructions indoors.

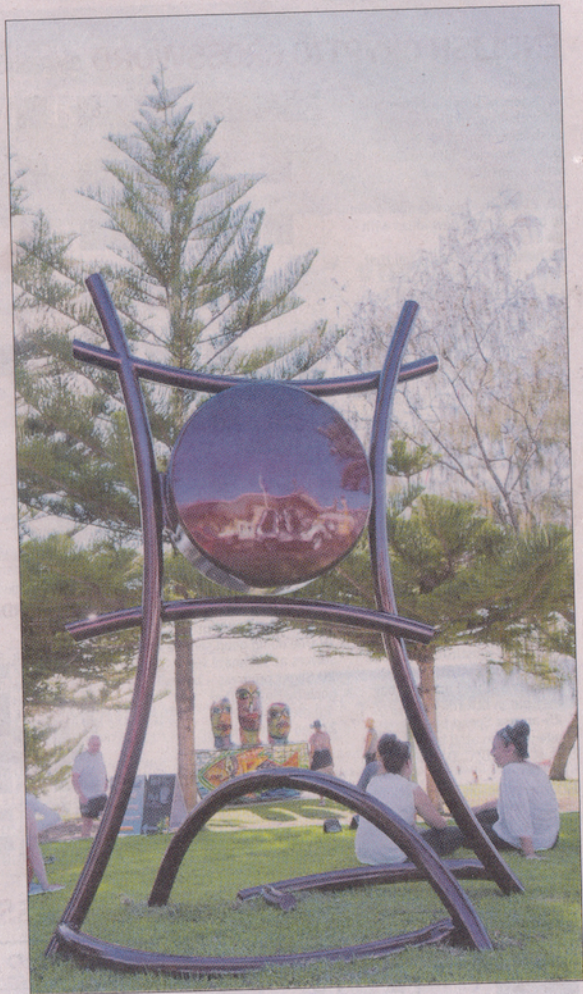
Lou Lambert's *Red Herring* is a wonderful classic example of disparate materials brought together to create a new reality.

Ron Gomboc is another veteran WA artist who continues with his signature pieces – the strong metal totemic poles.

Paul Caporn, who was awarded the NAB Western Australian Sculptor Scholarship, has made a funky sand dump truck in a nice canary yellow. Certainly eye-catching and a crowd pleaser, but somewhat trite. The Dad and Dave father and son team, David and Aidan Carstairs, made a very honest and simple steel structure on the theme of "stairway to heaven", which has a convincing presence. Although not coming out of an art school background, they operate on a hit and miss basis and this piece is certainly a hit.

What the exhibition reveals is that there is a vibrant sculpture scene in WA which is largely unknown on the east coast.

Emerging local sculptors, including Tania Spencer, Kathy Allam, Holly Pepper and Peter Zappa, are serious artists who should be given more national exposure, something which Cottesloe is, to some extent, achieving.



The striking *Taiko*, by Canberra's Michael Le Grand.