

# IT'S THE END OF 2013 AND I'M THINKING ABOUT GHOSTS

I WENT TO SEE THE EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE WORK THE GREEN ROOM, A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE MUCH IN DEMAND COMPOSER DYLAN SHERIDAN AND THE VERY COMPETENT PERFORMER JANE LONGHURST. IT WAS A VERY RICH WORK THAT TOOK PLACE IN ONE OF THE MANY SECRET SPACES OF HOBART. CITIES HAVE A GREAT MANY LOCKED DOORS AND FENCES, AND BEING ALLOWED TO VENTURE INTO THEM IS A GREAT PLEASURE; I THINK WE ALL LOVE A GOOD STICKY BEAK. THE GUNPOWDER MAGAZINE UP ON THE QUEEN'S DOMAIN IS A SILENT AND RICH SPACE, AND WAS A TREAT TO ENTER.

The Green Room was about a lot of things, but as with so much work that is live, there was a central question about the experience of time. The performance seemed to describe a sequence of moments that were frozen and repeating, as there was a problem to be solved that had no answer. It made me think of ghosts, and it was very easy to do in such a space. Time inscribed events into the walls and while we do not really have the capacity to see such things, we can imagine something and deal with the weight of history.

Hobart is filled with secret places where something happened. Tasmania is a place where something happened. Lot of somethings, actually. Tasmania is haunted.

I do not really believe in ghosts, but it seems the best way to describe with emotional clarity the sometimes-terrible things that happened here. I don't see or feel spirits or anything like that, but history is palpable. Time ravages and things decay, but something happened behind the rusty doors you are not allowed to go through.

Taking tours and making art works that explore and investigate these spaces is something that is just not done enough. The recent Open House Hobart event that took tours into private and inaccessible

spaces was a fantastic idea as well, there's a lot to see and it gives a new view of what's in Hobart.

There's much talk about making the city come alive and making things happen in Hobart in the creative and cultural spheres. Lots of people are trying lots of different things, and I can't wait to see what happens when the new Detached opens in the old Mercury building (what's going to become of that great old space, where Detached currently is I wonder?), but seeing The Green Room really made think that using Heritage buildings and council spaces for performance events is a no-brainer. There have been a few to date – I recall an excellent inhabitation of the battery under Princes Park in Battery Point by great local Hobart artists Matt Warren, that also spoke to the idea of resonant hauntings – but this is something that a dedicated program could be built around. Small, dedicated works that open spaces seems like a free kick. Anyone want to organise some more? I'd get along.

ANDREW HARPER

## HUBERT DUPRAT:

# TRICHOPTERA TRICKERY

MONA IS KNOWN FOR THE SPECTACULAR: POO MACHINES, TATTOOED PIGS, NUDITY, SEX, DEATH, PARTIES AND A LIGHT THAT COULD BE SEEN FROM SPACE. HUBERT DUPRAT'S WORK COULD BE SEEN AS THE ANTITHESIS OF THE SPECTACLE. HIS IS BEAUTIFUL, BUT IT'S BEAUTIFUL IN A QUIET, CRAFTY WAY, BEAUTIFUL IN ITS DELICACY AND INTRICACY. SUCH IS THE LURE OF HUBERT DUPRAT'S WORK.

Duprat's interest in the natural world has continued since his boy-hood, he would collect and observe aquatic creatures, the Caddisfly among them, in a tank. His interest in these creatures, a passion for geology and a chance meeting with some gold-panners on a river in south-western France lead him to his ongoing use of the Caddisfly's inherent behaviour.

MONA founder David Walsh says: *'Hubert Duprat co-opts nature in his art. He uses caddisflies to make his art. But they don't make his art, they make their art.'*

Since 1983, he has continued his work with caddisfly larvae – a freshwater aquatic insect known to anglers. Duprat intervenes with the natural process of the caddis, who, in nature, use silk thread, twigs and gravel to form their protective metamorphic sheaths. He replaces these common materials with grains of gold dust, pearls and precious stones including rubies and diamonds.

The aquatic larvae's gold-lined chrysalis becomes an elaborate and precious ornament, as Duprat subverts the work of nature by creating the conditions necessary to display its talents. By altering its common conditions, the caddis becomes a goldsmith, unwittingly spinning glorious and intricate works of art to encase its own body. Aesthetic, form and function become one.

*"Duprat considers his work a collaboration between himself and the caddis larvae; he is the architect of their environment, providing them with the gold and precious gems with which to build their protective cases. Hubert's practice often involves inviting skilled craftsmen with special expertise to work on the realisation of his sculptural creations. Materials not usually found in 'fine art' – ranging from modelling clay to crystals – are employed to create improbable forms. His great interest in natural phenomena and his vast knowledge are combined to create art that is truly unique."* says MONA Senior Curator Olivier Varenne

Duprat's caddisfly works are however just one part of his self-taught practice. Duprat also uses coral, magnetite, pyrite, magnets and bread to create organic networks that mimic and investigate the supernatural appeal of the natural world. It is the caddisfly that we keep returning to though, because it is such simple trickery, the artist is letting someone else, someone far better suited and more experienced at their craft than he, do his work.

Duprat's collaboration with arts and science is one that has spanned decades and this will be his first solo exhibition in Australia.

PIP STAFFORD

Museum of Old and New Art in Tasmania, from December 7, 2013 – April 21, 2014 will feature a selection of his works, utilising a variety of materials, natural and man-made, in symphony. The fully-illustrated catalogue, to be published early 2014, includes essays by David Walsh, British poet and novelist Adam Thorpe, Jane Clark and other international contributors.

