

The Art of Found Objects

Judith Brown

The focus in my artwork is to work with natural found objects. In 2010 I resigned from full time art teaching in order to concentrate on my own creative endeavours. In 2011 my journey of discovery began by experimentation using digital media, Photoshop, cutting, reflecting, recolouring, distorting and patterning imagery from natural forms into symmetrical and asymmetrical works.

The term 'found art' generally describes art created from undisguised, sometimes modified objects that are not normally considered art, and which already have a non-art function.

In my digital series of 'found art' works I explore simple organic objects present in my immediate environment, ranging from a cabbage leaf to a grape, a zucchini to a perfectly formed duck egg. I have manipulated the objects to create intricate and detailed compositions that intrigue and challenge the viewer to recognise the original form. There are recurring themes throughout the series that have been adjusted by means of colour, hue, shape and arrangement. The overriding objective is just that—to create numerous compositions by simply reusing these objects



Above: Digital creation. Below: Colour retention through freeze-drying



with careful reworking of art elements and principles.

We often miss and overlook the aesthetic beauty and artistic possibilities in the simplest things that surround us. It is the challenge of the artist to reinvent and create compositions that appeal to our sense of balance, movement, colour and composition. In the midst

of this process of observation and searching, I discovered the *Watsonia* bulb—a wonderfully intricate and delicate structure, so common to us all and often considered a weed. This was a pivotal time, as my interest had now turned to three-dimensional works using these casings as the 'fill' for so called fashion pieces. The web structure on first sighting fascinated and intrigued me with its intricate structure and resilient form.

The effect is lace-like. Each casing is different, characterised by a varying cell structure or strength. The melding of 'new' technology (computerised design), with traditional cutting and pasting skills is satisfying and allows me the freedom to explore intricate designs such as that found in *Flight of Fancy*, 2013. As quoted from R. Eskridge. 2010,



Small cape and neck adornment



Flight of Fancy front



Flight of Fancy back



Above: Nature's Lace close up

Below: Nature's Lace



in *'The Enduring Relationship of Science and Art'*, "Art and science naturally overlap. Both are a means of investigation and involve the systematic use of a technique or a skill, and the testing of ideas and theories. Both artists and scientists study materials, nature, and people to create something new.

History proves that the two disciplines cannot exist without each other, enduring in constantly changing and evolving relationships." As artists we need to be multi-functional. Perhaps it is my teaching background where I had to be familiar with a range of media and technologies in order to be the best resource for my students. I am constantly inspired by the possibilities and challenges that new knowledge offers.

The focus on the 'natural' soon expanded to include various other leaf forms and berries interwoven into the sculptural piece. I continue to be intrigued by the changing colours of the seasons and use drying methods to capture these hues, thereby introducing colour as an integral part of my work.

As quoted from J. Brown, 2013, in *Waterhouse Natural Science Art Prize: Flight of Fancy*, "Nature's recurring seasons of growth, perfection, decline and renaissance are a gift to us all. The constant exchange of form and style in nature's palette challenge the artist to create a canvas, rich with allusions and symbolism. Through the fragile complexities and nuances of delicate forms this piece is a celebration of her unadorned beauty." The process in preparing and manipulating these diverse but complimentary elements is challenging, but continues to

reinforce my respect for nature's forms and structures.

My introduction to the Waterhouse Prize was in 2012 as a finalist with a sculpture titled **Nature's Lace**, a neckpiece incorporating *Watsonia* bulbs and ash leaves, with the basic 'frame' taken from a scan of a single bulb. The effect was lace-like and highlighted the delicate structure and form of the object. In 2013 I created *Flight of Fancy* again using *Watsonia* bulbs and Ash leaves.

The Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize has been a wonderful experience and although I was initially overwhelmed at being the overall winner, I was nonetheless honoured to be part of such a prestigious and creatively valuable event. I think one of the highlights was also winning the Peoples Choice Award, because it was not only positive acknowledgement from the public who viewed my work, but very affirming that both judges and public agreed in their opinion of my work.

The most common question asked of me is 'how do I make these pieces?' The 'frame' of the artwork is drawn using Adobe Illustrator, sometimes from a scan of a single bulb casing or alternatively free drawn to create the effect I want. It is then laser cut in watercolour paper.

The frame acts rather like a stencil to which the casings are painstakingly pasted and then trimmed. In *Flight of Fancy* birds and the formation of feathers on their wings inspired me. Trying to create a sense of freedom and movement of a bird in flight was integral to the piece. The 'frame' was designed, drawn in Adobe Illustrator in five sections,



Top: Neck adornment close up
Below: Neck adornment



and linked together to make the final cape. In addition I sourced leaves from *The Tree of Heaven*, a very common tree that originates from China. Its leaves twist and twirl, and it is the tips of these that I have used in the medallions both front and back on the cape. In more recent works it is the integration of colour that has preoccupied my interest. The discovery of freeze-drying allows me the flexibility to store a colour no matter what the time of year. As a consequence I watch and observe the changing hues in my environment, always fascinated by the numerous colours that evolve.

More of Judith's work may be seen at www.judithbrown.com.au



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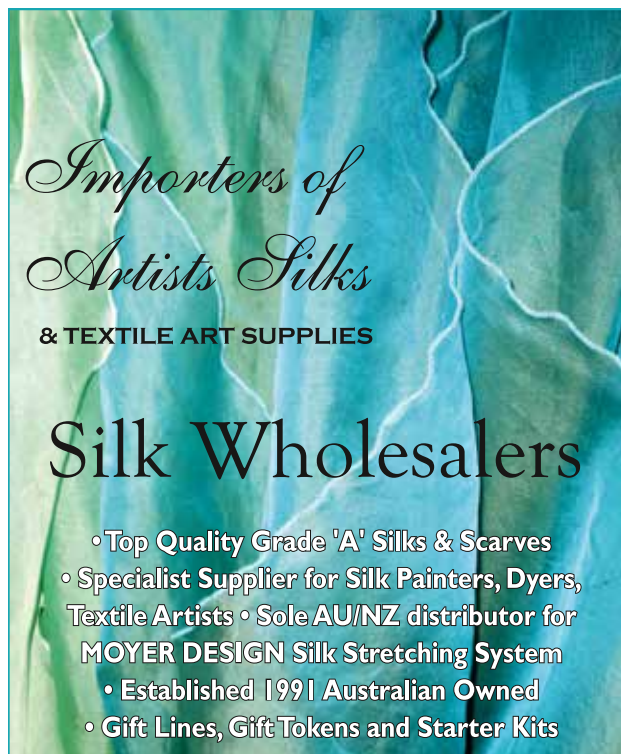
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