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LANDSCAPES

the spaces between houses, buildings, suburbs and cities

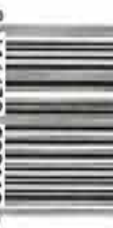
august to october 2006

urban innovation

Swiss cityscape brings the indoors out

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Wine tasting in a desert oasis
Village life in the heart of Sydney*

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island life



Currently, the Connells Bay Sculpture Park on Waiheke Island is under wraps – but come summer, it will blossom with a multitude of unique, astonishing and downright bizarre sculptures for visitors to marvel at. Maria Bevan got a sneak look at what's in store for the October opening. Photographs by Gil Hanly.

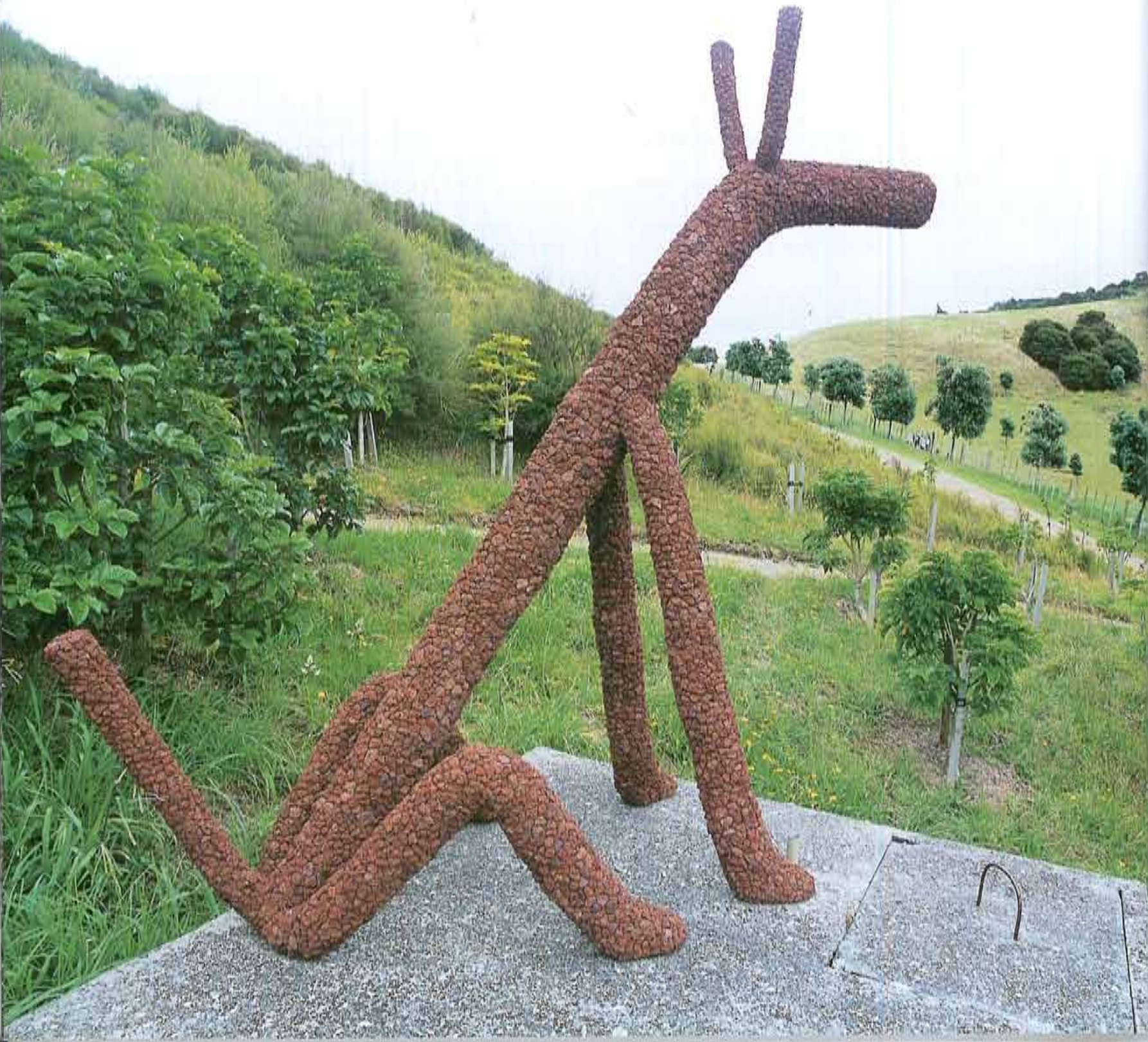
John and Jo Gow's Connells Bay Sculpture Park is an awe-inspiring and thought-provoking collaboration of artist and environment. Located in the beautiful natural surroundings of Connells Bay on Waiheke Island, the park opened in 2004 as a living gallery, characterised by outdoor "rooms" that exhibit large-scale, mostly contemporary sculptures created using diverse media.

Designed by the Gows to house the works of influential New Zealand sculptors, the park allows the sculptures to turn highly exposed areas into intimate spaces. The park

incorporates 15 commissioned works and 10 works purchased from New Zealand galleries.

While driving towards the entrance, the visitor is greeted with tantalising peeks of the sculptures, which are dotted along the two-and-a-half hour walk through the park with its stunning views of the Hauraki Gulf. Careful positioning means no one work overrides or detracts from another. While the huge macrocarpa bulk of *Fatu Feu'u's Ngati Feu'u* guards the park's entrance, and is a presence wherever you are within this landscape, its strong gaze does not overshadow Virginia King's *Oi Oi Bridge*, gleaming nearby in





The process of designing and creating these works can take up to two years

Top: Koru by Darryl Frost (left), Tamo by Peter Nicholls (right). Below: Kamo by Barry Lett (left), Tenantennae by Phil Dadson (right)

the mid-morning sun and offering a pleasant treat to the ears as the coins that hang beneath the bridge move in the breeze.

The Connells Bay Sculpture Trust is a Registered Charitable Trust that supports artists and assists in their long-term development. The artists in turn appreciate the valuable opportunity provided by staying in one of the cottages on the Gow estate. Sculptors select their space in the park themselves and use the resources and library of the Gowshed gallery – the name recalling the structure's life in days past as a cowshed – to inspire them, ultimately creating pieces that will sit comfortably in their surroundings while conveying their individual visions. The Gows give the artists complete freedom on site.

The process of designing and creating these works can take up to two years, many requiring collaboration with engineers to ensure that the strains of the environment are endured by the designs. Artists may return two or three times before installation

of their sculptures is complete. As John suggests, the "environment dictates the engineering of the structures".

The public is able to view the sculptures for seven months of each year. The 2006 season beginning in October will bring to the Gowshed gallery 10 new works, each never before exhibited. As the park absorbs new sculptures, it lives and changes like the interior of a gallery, to a large extent proffering the art outwards, towards the landscape and the sea.

Sculptures will be displayed in and around the Gowshed gallery alongside the park's permanent works. John suggests that the resurgence of sculpture as an artform over the last five years has meant a lift in the standard required of submissions. Indeed, submissions for the park's temporary installation sculpture have been whittled down to four from 30 strong proposals, and from these only one will be selected. This is an opportunity for an artist to submit an idea for a piece that will remain in the park for a six-month period.





Opposite page: Three Cows Looking Out to Sea by Jeff Thomson (top), Oi Oi Bridge by Virginia King (below). This page (left to right): Angel by Phil Price, Between Two Islands by Paul Dibble, Other People's Houses by Neil Dawson



Visitors will have the opportunity to revel in the works of established and internationally recognised artists including Phil Price, Virginia King, Konstantin Dimopoulos, Phil Dadson, Neil Dawson, Chris Booth, Graham Bennett, Peter Nichols and Paul Dibble.

Price's kinetic sculptures leave a lasting impression on the landscape. *Angel* and *The Dancer* are carbon-fibre sculptures that require only slight air movements to change the counterbalance of the parts. *The Dancer* features bright yellow disks on a sweeping fibreglass pole, combining the sinuous curves of the female figure with geometric forms. The subject's movements soar gracefully as her weight spins from one embryonic limb to another.

Konstantin Dimopoulos' *Kate* is made of polyurethane resin rods, using colour combinations and line to express beauty through pattern. His new work for viewing in October will use a three-dimensional rod surface. "Its subtle form and the translucency of the polyurethane rods will establish a layered depth that enriches the vertical form," says Dimopoulos. His aim is not to convey particular content, but to strip everything back to simple line and colour, which in combination with movement and sound will create "that magic something that comes from the work itself".

King's works celebrating life in the South Pacific were revealed recently at London's Chelsea Flower Show. Part of an award-winning submission to the event,

her Flower Show catalogue describes her sculptures as drawing attention to "their fragility and vulnerability [by] magnifying and abstracting the natural scale of life forms". Visitors to the Sculpture Park this summer will have the pleasure of viewing these three pieces, the Gows recently purchasing *Fern*, *Leaf* and *Lampet*, all created from marine-grade stainless steel, laser-cut and hand-finished. Editions of these works are also being offered for sale.

All of the artists have considerable vision, drive and creativity, and the Gows' desire to demonstrate this further has led them to plan exhibitions of the works of individual artists for 2007.

The Connells Bay Sculpture Park truly does justice to the beautiful sculptural works it encompasses. While many are complex in their construction and installation, their final launch onto the landscape has become one of elegant simplicity.

Drawing on a vast array of symbols and forms, history and engineering craftsmanship, and made for the setting, the park's sculptures have become part of this stunning environment. Roll on the October re-opening of this unique contribution to the New Zealand art landscape.

• *Guided walks of the Sculpture Park are by appointment only. For further information, phone John and Jo Gow on (09) 372 8957, email them at info@connellsbay.co.nz or visit their website at www.connellsbay.co.nz.*

