

## CONFLUENCE Pippin Drysdale | Warrick Palmateer

John Curtin Gallery, 28 Sept - 2 Dec 2018

### INTRODUCTION

*Confluence* brings together the ceramic artworks of Pippin Drysdale and Warrick Palmateer, exploring their unique collaboration, common strengths but also celebrating their differences. Both artists have created major new works especially for this exhibition, contrasting their own distinctive aesthetic language and passion for different aspects of Australia's natural environment. One profoundly important quality that both artists share and which radiates with hypnotic authority from their finished work, is their obsessive pursuit of excellence. Palmateer and Drysdale have each refined their skills relentlessly and their extraordinary capacity to collaborate in a seamless and respectful, almost symbiotic way, to produce Drysdale's work with such consistently inventive and striking forms over more than twenty five years, is almost miraculous. By bringing these two dedicated and exceptionally skilled artists together in *Confluence*, I wish to honour and explore the compelling collaborative processes through which together - and in Palmateer's own work, alone - these two artists continue to push themselves and each other, to conjure some of the most breathtaking ceramic forms ever made in Australia.

### THE ART OF PIPPIN DRYSDALE

In a chance encounter in the early 1990s, Pippin Drysdale was struck by the extraordinary throwing skills of a young potter by the name of Warrick Palmateer. Drysdale readily acknowledges how privileged she is that Palmateer has been so loyally committed to their collaborative enterprise over such a sustained period. The fact that Palmateer has thrown all of Drysdale's vessels over the last twenty six years, is testament to just how quickly their deep bond was forged, and how vitally the convergence of their energies seeking perfection continues to inspire them both and fuel their continuing collaboration. Another long-time collaborator is highly respected photographer Robert Frith, who has been documenting Drysdale's vessels for over twenty years. Through his careful orchestration of Drysdale's work into groups for her website and a network of international dealers, Frith in his own way, has contributed to her practice with an aesthetic impact on how Drysdale optimises the layout designs of her ceramic forms for exhibition displays. Robert Frith is also contributing to *Confluence* with images of the Devils Marbles captured during the documentation process. Their relationship also plays a part in the conversation about interconnected collaboration within the central of the three galleries that *Confluence* occupies in the John Curtin Gallery.

Drysdale's latest ceramic forms are created not so much as individual objects - as her mostly symmetrically formed vessels have been - but rather, as sculptural components to be gathered into agglomerated suites. These clustered forms, whose collective tensions and rhythms are finely poised to convey a sense of the seasonal subtleties of Australia's desert landscapes, fill the gallery with a range of breathtaking vistas. The new *Devils Marbles Series II* created for *Confluence*, are all inspired by the compelling rock formations in the Karlu Karlu / Devils Marbles Conservation Reserve - a significant Aboriginal sacred site in Australia's central Northern Territory. These asymmetrical faceted forms represent a new, more sculptural journey for Drysdale, with naturally forming clusters, evoking landscapes of form, colour and pattern that resonate with specific Australian seasonal desert flora and geography. All of these aspects informing her work are connected to the inspiring force of Drysdale's compelling experiences many decades ago within remote station country that continue to resonate in a deepening sense of respect for both the landscape's profound physical and spiritual beauty as well as the sacred connectedness that Australia's First Nations people have with Country.

### ARTIST STATEMENT

*The Devils Marbles site has been my influence with this new organic sculptural work developed over the past year for the John Curtin Gallery. It has been an exploration of abstract ideas of spatial relations, line, texture and colour. The natural process of weathering and erosion has shaped, scarred and coloured the rocks making them look like they are made of layers of skin, onion-like-or produced cracks so deep which have split them in half. The work references these different landforms across the desert valley, depicting the shadows and colours at different times of the day.*

*I have long understood that landscape is not just about physical form and in the past I have tried to depict the changing time of day in the choice of palette and patterning of my work. I wanted to tease this out and introduce the concept of seasons - an approach I was innately drawn to. The Warumungu, Kaytetye, Alyawarra and Warlpiri people are the traditional owners of the Devils Marbles (Karlu Karlu), and they view the landscape very differently to how I do as a non-Aboriginal person.*

*The stories of the traditional owners depict the Devils Marbles as the eggs of the Rainbow Serpent. Their world is one that sees itself through the seasons, interlinking all the environmental phenomena including wind, rainfall, temperature, plants and animals; the happenings on the earth and in the sky as one holistic and living entity, interpreted through mythology and socio-cultural traditions.*

*The local seasons are not the typical western four season cycle but are linked directly to the local conditions and the cultural necessities of finding food, medicine, shelter in that landscape. For example, in August-September a warm steady wind comes from the north and west signaling the time of seeding, when animals breed, reptiles come out of hibernation, the honey grevillea is in bloom and it is a good time for hunting kangaroo. I sincerely thank CSIRO for developing the Indigenous Australian Seasonal calendars that have been of such help to me in exploring the planning of my installations to reflect the seasonal approach and have named my installations accordingly.*

*I finish this exhibition with my installation Constellations - marking the importance of the sky in the understanding of seasons, and the glory of a sky undisturbed by urban influences. Lustrous and luminous, both informing of direction, of the weather and the seasons and, in turn, touched by the interface between the earth and the universe.*

Pippin Drysdale, Fremantle, 2018.

#### BIOGRAPHY

Pippin Drysdale is widely acclaimed as one of Australia's foremost ceramic artists whose profile sees her artwork regularly exhibited internationally. Her work is held in major museums, galleries and private collections across Australia and throughout the world. A Diploma in Advanced Ceramics, from the WA School of Art and Design, 1982, followed by a Bachelor of Art (Fine Art) at Curtin University of Technology in 1985, grounded Drysdale in her chosen career. Over forty years she has developed and refined her practise, drawing inspiration in recent decades from the ancient landscapes of Australia's interior desert country. In 2007 she was awarded a *Master of Craft*, from Craft Australia, New South Wales and in 2015 the Western Australian Government conferred on her the *Living Treasure Award*. In the pursuit of excellence in her craft, Drysdale has worked alongside many revered and outstanding artists as well as travelled and studied extensively throughout the world, including at: the renowned Anderson Ranch Art Centre in Colorado, USA; Deruta Grazia Maioliche Pottery in Perugia, Italy; the Artists' Union of Russia, Tomsk University, Siberia; the Banff Centre for the Arts, Calgary, Canada; as well as time travelling in Pakistan.