

Story Carole Shephard

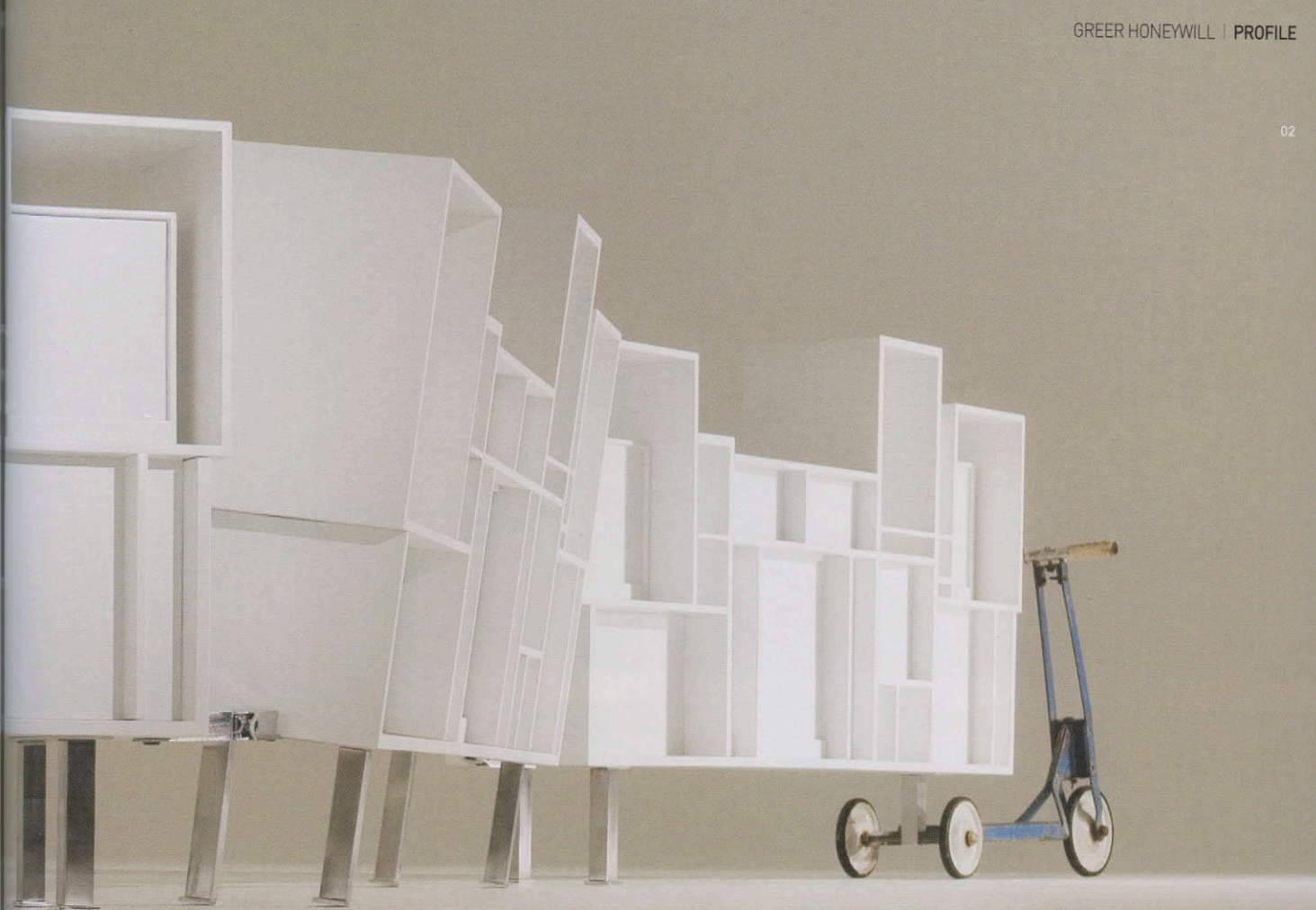
Greer Honeywill

MELBOURNE SCULPTOR Greer Honeywill is someone who works as both an object maker and an installation artist. By constantly challenging the narrow temporal boundaries that separate the past from the present and by bringing a clarity and authority to all she makes, Honeywill is an artist of growing significance. For some artists the creative process is evasive and wilful while for others, the process allows for possibilities such as quietness, contemplation and the psychic value of silence, often associated with memory and time. This is her realm.

Interestingly, it is her use of distillation, repetition, modularity and generative processes that provide understanding of how history, society and culture impact on the human condition. And it is in this context Honeywill has secured her place. She brings an exacting critical eye to all her art making, from large-scale outdoor installations to more formal plinth based sculptural objects and wall mounted text based works. She makes sculpture that 'uses' things past, at the same time as dismissing any notion of nostalgia in her mode of art making. Repetition, a strategy used by contemporary artists such as Mona Hatoum, Ann Hamilton and Mary Kelly provides a glimpse into understanding the complexity and control Honeywill requires of both her materials and her ideas. It is in her desire to offer more expansive readings of her sculpture that audiences will be richly rewarded and her determination to state and restate, through the use of modular forms is a way of determining meaning so there is no confusion over her intention, even when it evokes paradoxical associations.

"The only way to reach is by repetition, all the rocks make a mountain, all the sand and gravel a desert, repetition is unbounded, it has no time, no end"

Honeywill has been in the public eye since she exhibited, *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet* in 2003 where she laid the ground-work for what has become a substantial sculptural practice. Her interest in the tactile is shown in the materials she uses (old and new); the processes she employs (traditional and industrial); and the objects she employs (found and constructed). By travelling this road, Honeywill has begun a journey that fuses sculptural conventions, autobiography and critical thinking. The sculpture of Greer Honeywill rests not solely within the reactive realm of the domestic, or Australia in the 1950s, but in a contemporary context that recognises linked fields and integrated practices. There is eloquence (and elegance) in Honeywill's work that both mesmerises and captures the viewer, and understandably audiences find themselves drawn deeply into her work, either by desire or curiosity. It is too simplistic to focus solely on aesthetics, materiality, technique or concept in her art making as it is the successful marrying of all that has created a significant body of work in a relatively short period of time.



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“A slow and languid motion is more beautiful than a brisk one.”

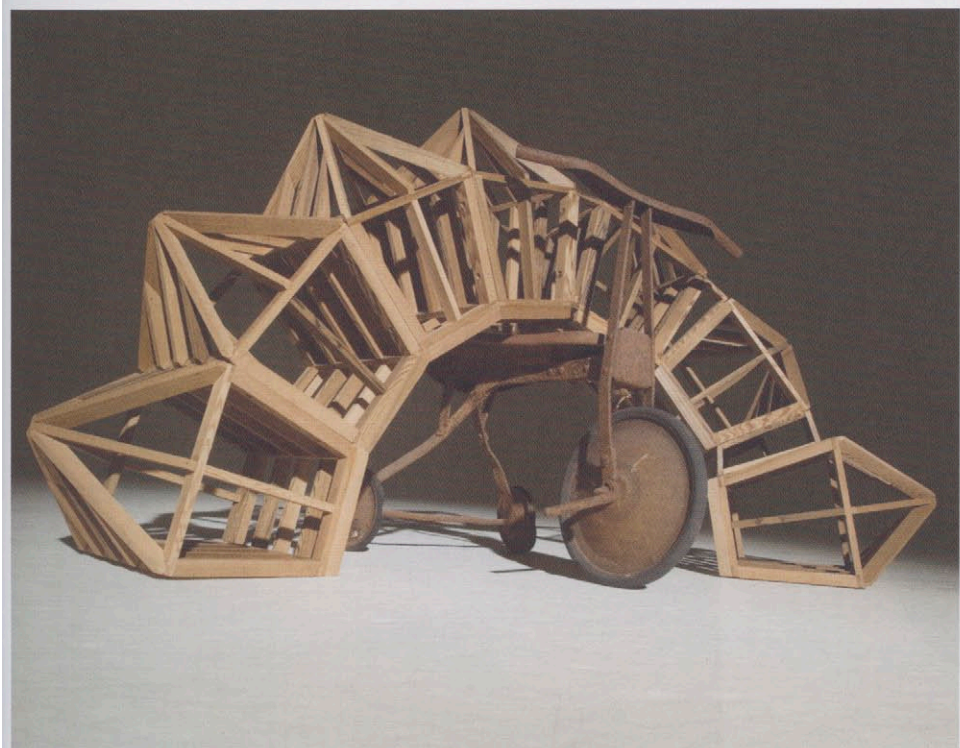
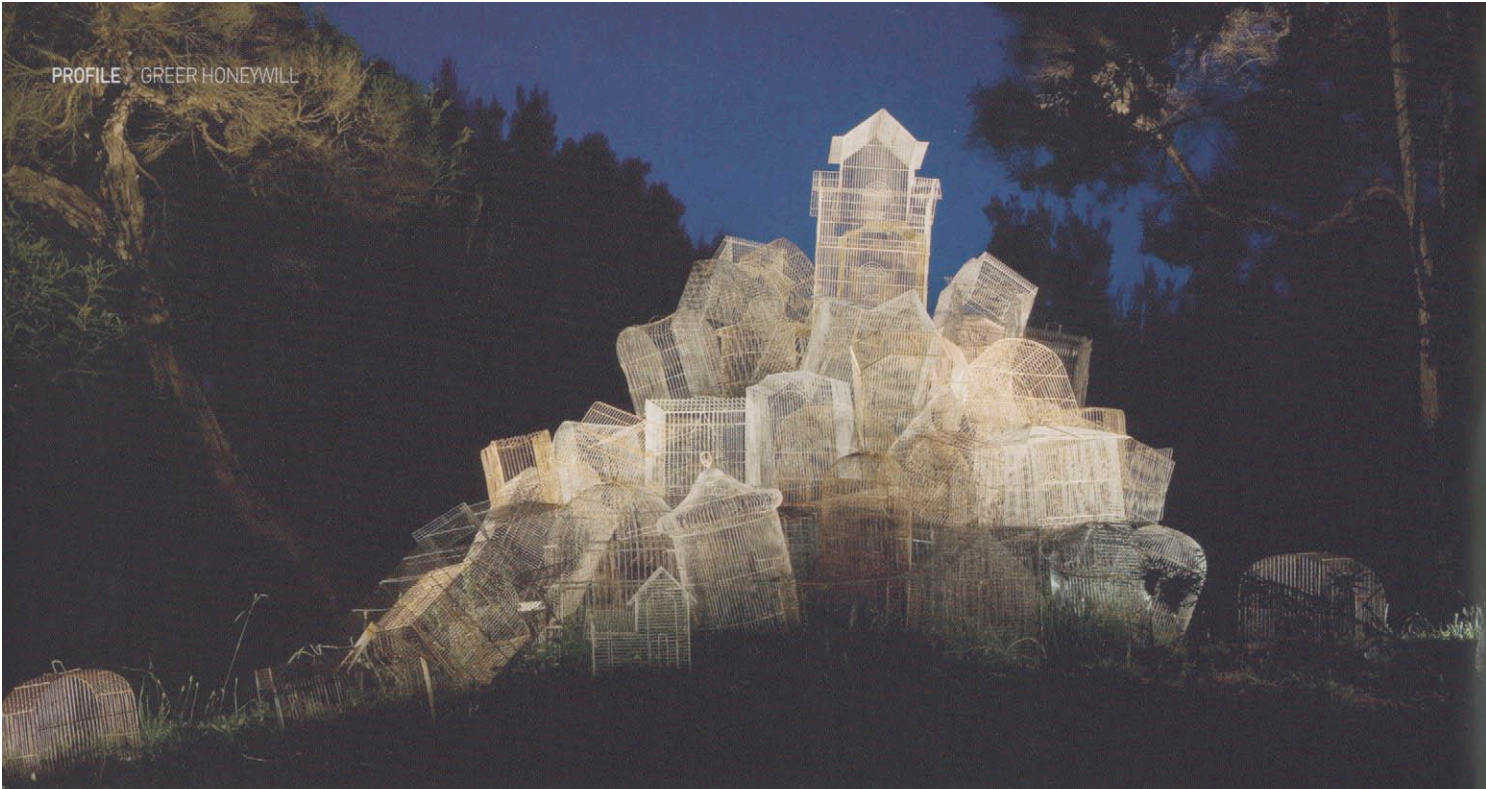
WAITING. TREMBLING, POISED.

In *Architecture of the Heart* (2008), 100 birdcages have been piled into a tall climbing form not unlike a spontaneous roadside monument made with everyday materials or an impulsive family ritual of some kind. The concept of temporality permeates this work and creates an eerie experience of fragility, instability and loss. This is especially so when viewed at night where the velvet of darkness meets the delicacy of Chinoiserie and the sculpture takes on an ethereal, elusive quality. During daylight hours the work appears more passive, more balanced and more self-assured — as if flying-in-wait for nightfall. In this work where impermanence and instability are inherent, 'lightness' (from Calvino's *Six Memos for the Next Millenium*) has much poetic resonance as Honeywill's installations become large scale events, haptic experiences, rich visual feasts. She shapes her ideas with intensity, culls images from her own archive and enthusiastically engages with contemporary discourse. She takes the viewer into an indeterminable space and puts perception into question through the use of scale, perspective and light.



03

- 01 Greer Honeywill, Photograph: Earl Carter
- 02 **Shadowboxing**, 2008, found object, wood, paint, metal fittings, 45 x 397 x 80cm, Photograph: John Best
- 03 **Embroidered House**, 2005-2007, marine ply, mild steel, varnish, light, sound 136 x 150 x 56cm, Soundscape: Frank Moylan, Photograph: John Best



'Each night he played Beethoven sonatas from an antique book on his mother's piano and I am made a child again whenever I hear sounds of those sonatas. In the midst of a busy day I crawl into my house of sound to feel the warmth, to catch the magical caress of the vibrating atmosphere, to dream, to muse.'

Embroidered House (2005) demands the same attention and exudes a similar dualism, however it is more reliant on controlling the space it inhabits. Although both works thwart narrow readings, this powerful work creates an emotionally charged physical environment. Neither a formal replica of an established house design, nor a 'useable' doll's house, this structure with patterns 'shot' into the plywood surfaces like random buckshot, creates a form of utmost simplicity, with rich associations to theatre and film making. *Embroidered House*, shows us emptiness and beauty, absence and presence, and does this in such a subtle way that even when intention is clear and well articulated, the work itself draws us back in time, into our own memories of things past, things lost.

04

Whether each work is determined by a single object that has significance to the artist — small, large, monumental — or is initiated by a fragment of an idea matters not. Recent object-based works such as *Wrap* and *Shadowboxing* (2008) have an acute visual clarity and while quite different pieces of work, step one is to seduce the viewer and step two is to drop them into a sea of uncertainty! *Shadowboxing*, is a work that references the 1950s architecture of Paul Rudolph, and is reminiscent of shadowboxes played with by many children at this time. Just as a magpie fills her nest with shiny collectables, these tiny spaces would be filled with small precious items. In Honeywill's hands these forms have become abandoned and empty, somewhat mournful in their alien environment. The clinical whiteness of the shelving system (devoid of dust, scratches or stains), the emptiness of the spaces within, and a linked form unable to be towed by the three-wheeled scooter, shows Honeywill at her most perceptive. She speaks of commodification, reductive architectural design, and what she poignantly refers to as the 'disappearance of poetry'. Because of the conceptual toughness of this piece, and her rapidly growing body of creative work, audiences will be able to recognise the significant social implications in her sculpture and embrace the value placed on work where meaning can be multiple, speculative, contradictory and endlessly debatable.

05

For more on Greer Honeywill:
www.flg.com.au

04 **Architecture of the Heart**, 2008, deconstructed birdcages, tie wire, 250 x 400 x 200cm, Photograph: Sonia Payes.

05 **Wrap**, 2008, found object, wood, 71 x 119 x 50cm, Photograph: John Best.