

wyndham art gallery

WATFORD IN WERRIBEE

by Lyndal Jones



Study for 15 painters and prepared house – Lyndal Jones

31 August – 29 October 2017

WATFORD IN WERRIBEE an installation by Lyndal Jones

Lyndal Jones has an extensive exhibiting career. In 2001 she was Australia's representative at the Venice Biennale.

The Avoca Project – Art, Place, Climate Change is an international art project in regional Victoria centered around Watford House, a once derelict two story prefabricated house with an amazing history, sited on a flood plain in Avoca in central Victoria. For over ten years Lyndal has involved national and international artists and local residents in projects that involve land works, exhibitions, performances, concerts and symposia, always responding in some way to Watford House and new ecological possibilities.

The materials that became Watford house were shipped out from Germany in 1852. The house was imagined by the person who selected materials from a variety of potential house designs to construct a grand dwelling. The numbered panels chosen became a prefabricated house, one of many to be built across Australia until relatively recently in the pursuit of the 'Australian dream', home ownership. If you visit Watford House, known locally as 'the Swiss House' due to its beautiful two story presence on the banks of the Avoca river, you can see some of the numbers left revealed by Lyndal in a note to its history.

In 1890's the house was moved from the main street where it was originally built, lifted onto logs, and rolled down the hill to the river bank where it now stands.

In 2004 Lyndal saw the possibility of a radical new project, 'the house as a work of art', that could be used to explore creative ways to deal with the oncoming onslaught of climate change. While most of us put our heads in the sand to avoid confronting what might happen if the world's top scientists are proved to be right and our beautiful seaside retreats as well as many of the earth's big cities are submerged as a result of sea level rise, Lyndal took a major departure from her current ten year project and took on dealing with

this inevitability. How can art help us deal with the social upheaval and reconstruction of our ways of life that climate change will demand.

WATFORD IN WERRIBEE brings these questions to our doorstep in Wyndham, one of the major growth corridors in Victoria, where housing developments grow like mushrooms and MacMansion's bloom air-conditioners, reminiscent of fields of cauliflowers in the abundant market gardens of Werribee South.

Once again Watford House is on the move again with remnants of left over materials arriving in Watton St. Pieces that have been rejected or collected since its arrival in Avoca, are reconstructed or simply given a life of their own as art.





Wyndham Art Gallery is dominated by a large black construction. Its sharp edges conflict with the sense of temporary dwelling that brings to mind refugee camps or the disaster relief locations that we are currently seeing on our televisions as a result of the record breaking floods in Texas.

In an immaculate shaping, the outside has an exclusionary impression, as though it has turned its back on us, reminiscent of the global response to the rapidly growing refugee crisis around the world. However when exploring the front of the dwelling towards the back of the gallery we see inside to an unfinished clearly temporary home. Large plastic carry bags are often used by homeless people to store their meager possessions. Lyndal has lined the inside walls with these, creating the effect of a desperate attempt at interior decoration in difficult times.



The house deconstructed could be a metaphor for many things, the subprime mortgage crisis, the inability of young people to imagine being home owners or the small home movement but in the end it is a sculpture.

Lyndal Jones took the brave a controversial step of making an artwork out of a house. This turns the gallery into the environment in which it sits which is a rapidly drying landscape on a river bed, which threatens floods every year just as frightening although not as long lasting as Houston.

Twice Lyndal has had to move everything up to the second story as the flood waters rose to the front porch and once they came right in, leaving a house with muddy feet. Bringing objects from the house into the gallery space changes them. We are able to look at them differently and discard our entrenched notions of house. This allows us to see the house as Lyndal sees it, not merely as a dwelling, but as an artwork.



The Ionic columns are placed out of the context, one against the white wall of the gallery, making it a beautiful sculptural object, and the other in a funereal box, not buried but definitely dead.

What does this tell us about the future of such pleasurable but rare building commodities. Concrete slab houses that go up in weeks and the promise of 3D printed homes seem gross next to this finely crafted decoration.



The black fabric used to create the temporary shelter is from a previous work of Lyndal's at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. In fact everything in the installation aside from the timber frame is pre used and will be used again. This echoes Lyndal's original intention to explore how an artist might bring creative intelligence to contribute to the future as we all begin to deal with the inevitability of climate change.



The several objects sit on plastic crates that are from the underground water storage unit at Watford House in Avoca.

The ceiling rose, usually viewed above our heads, sits on the floor and the grand pediment is also bought 'down to earth'. The grand house may be something only existing in memory for future generations as the earth enacts a rage of global proportions, where humans are no longer in control and the elements take back the landscape, reshaping it as nature intended.....

Dr Megan Evans – Visual Art Curator





UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS 2017

MOUNTAIN MOVES – Opening 8th November – 24th December

GALLERY CLOSED FROM 25th December 2017 – 7th January 2018



WYNDHAM ART GALLERY

177 Watton St, Werribee, Vic 3030

PH: 8734 6021

Visual Art Curators:

Maree Clarke maree.clarke@wyndham.vic.gov.au

Megan Evans megan.evans@wyndham.vic.gov.au