

Simon Gilby

Gallery East, Perth
7 – 30 May 2004

Simon Gilby employs sculpture to comment on the physical and meta-physical aspects of modern humanity. His motif is the figure, sometimes complete albeit with added real or imaginary extremities, other times only the lower half of the torso is presented to serve as a support for a metaphorical comment.

In this exhibition Gilby contemplates the hero, that ultimate individual. Here the astronaut is employed as a symbol for the hero who, like all other intrepid explorers and adventurers before him, must disconnect from the world of social responsibilities and personal relationships before heading off into the unknown. The work considers the effect this dissociation from communal and emotional ties has on an individual's sense of self.

Gilby's astronaut may be interpreted as the corporate high flier, the lone sailor, or any other self-made man, who will deny his human needs

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227

for the sake of meeting a challenge or achieving a goal. The artist questions why this kind of personal detachment from humanity is rewarded and respected in our culture by conferring celebrity status on the hero. Gilby is also concerned that people are desensitised to global events: "So many social traumas are ignored these days," he says. "I want people to be moved by my work, to respond to the image, even before knowing what it is."

Gilby works with winterstone (synthetic marble), fibreglass or mild steel to produce life-size and plinth sculptures. His figures may wear a helmet delineated by stainless steel wire to suggest a sense of isolation. They may hover over the earth on rods to indicate detachment, or sprout a delicate pair of wings of fine wire referencing the spirit's ability to soar. His well constructed, dynamic figures seem to imply the physical body is but a host to our ideas and emotions, those attributes that make us human.

Gilby studied sculpture at Claremont School of Art and the University of Western Australia. He has steadily developed his signature style since 1989 by participating in numerous group shows, teaching sculpture at Edith Cowan University and Anatomical Sculpture at Central Metropolitan College of Perth TAFE, taking up artist in residencies, and completing large scale public commissions. He is represented in the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Bunbury Regional Art Gallery, Parliament House of Western Australia, Edith Cowan University, Murdoch University, the University of Western Australia and various private collections. This is the second solo exhibition for this prize-winning artist.

- Judith McGrath



Simon Gilby, *Grounded (Apollo 1)*, 2003. Mixed media (winterstone, wood & stainless steel wire), 70cm tall, base 45 x 45cm. COLLECTION AND COURTESY: THE ARTIST.