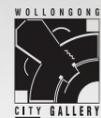


Lizzie Buckmaster Dove: Pool, the Alchemy of Blue

Lizzie is grateful for the assistance and support she has received from Nick Buckmaster, Caroline Baum, Jane Fullerton - Smith, Bob Clinch, MAK Engineering Projects and her local community.

Lizzie Buckmaster Dove: Wollongong City Gallery, 12 April - 16 June 2013

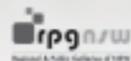
Cover: *Studio Maquette*, 2012, various dimensions  
Photograph: Lizzie Buckmaster Dove



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Above: *New Moon*, Coledale rock platform, 15 October 2012, found concrete, 6.5m diameter  
Photograph: Bernie Fischer

Right top: *Full (blue) Moon*, Coledale rock platform, 31 August 2012, found concrete, 4.7m diameter  
Photograph: Bernie Fischer

Right below: *New Moon* (construction), Coledale rock platform, 15 October 2012, found concrete, 6.5m diameter  
Photograph: Bernie Fischer

## FOREWORD

Contemporary art can at times be a challenge to the viewer. Often conceptual in nature the ideas in these works can be difficult to navigate through. This is made even more problematic when the artist works with installation, work that doesn't fit within the familiar framework of paintings, drawings, sculpture, photography and so on. However, when contemporary installation art is done well, goes beyond the concept and is made accessible to the viewer it can provide one of the most powerful experiences between artist, idea and audience. It can create a connection that for the viewer goes beyond merely looking at an artwork to becoming immersed or an active participant in it.

There is something almost primordial about Lizzie Buckmaster Dove's Pool, the *Alchemy of Blue* installation. It tugs at our collective consciousness, at indistinct or imagined memories of prehistoric ancestors gathering rocks and stones and arranging them in symbolic patterns at significant sites. The installation evokes a sense of deep connection that draws on powerful natural forces. There is something spiritual and ritualistic about both the process of gathering the random and irregular pieces of concrete, remnants of the Coledale sea pool, and reassembling them cairn like far from their place of origin.

In the Gallery Lizzie subverts the very nature of the material, its intrinsic mass, by suspending it, making it for all intents and purposes weightless, evoking the powerful yet graceful swell of the sea. The sea's ebb and tide also resonates strongly in the flaked blue paint on the concrete pieces. These patinas of blue are a constant reminder that for much of their life water was ever-present and sustained their purpose.

Wollongong City Gallery would like to thank Caroline Baum for her essay which is both highly readable and gives some wonderful insights into Lizzie as a person and as an artist. Of course we would also like to thank the artist Lizzie Buckmaster Dove for sharing her unique perspectives and for her ability to articulate her ideas in interesting and engaging ways. We hope you enjoy the exhibition.

John Monteleone  
Program Director

It is good to collect things  
but better to go on walks  
Anatole France  
1844 - 1924



The [satin bowerbird](#), a resident of the northern Illawarra, collects blue things to attract a mate. It is very particular about the shade of blue, but less choosy about the form in which that blue manifests - bottle tops, pegs, straws, are all welcome when it comes to fashioning its display.

A couple of years ago, a male bower bird - all hopping gait and shiny feathers as its name suggests - graced Lizzie Buckmaster Dove's Coledale garden with a bower. He could not have guessed how resonant and appropriate his choice was. Just a few years earlier, Lizzie, who has often drawn inspiration from the natural world, had turned her attention to birds, creating a series of them by carving out the pages of old books with a surgeon's scalpel to shape delicate wings, beaks and feathered breasts from paper.

As a collagist, Lizzie has the careful method and sensibility of a naturalist, assembling compositions of organic material and constructing almost childlike towers of paper cubes captured beneath glass bell jars, reminders of a nineteenth century collector's cabinet of curiosities, pushing the naivety of childhood craft with scissors and glue to a sophisticated extreme of almost Japanese precision and delicacy.

Her interest in birds perhaps mirrored her own migratory habits fuelled by a restless need to experience new places. She tried on personae like vintage dresses: country girl in her childhood, then city girl in early adulthood but always, no matter how landlocked, she found water to walk beside or to swim in.

For many years she was frequently on the wing before nesting on the south coast, where she has settled her brood (the fact that she married a man with Dove as a surname is just one of those delicious accidents of fate that Lizzie seems to take as part of the natural order of things).

Today Lizzie is no longer a girl dressing up to play a role. She is a woman who lives on the coast, in the fullest sense of those words: no longer drifting, her nomadic soul now anchored by a sense of belonging to the place she calls home.

Daily walks to the nearby beach and rock platform have turned Lizzie into something of a bowerbird herself- a collector with a discerning eye for the ocean's flotsam and jetsam.

The walks themselves have become an integral part of her artistic practice. Part meditation, part fossicking exploration, they set up a mental as well as physical cadence, prompting the subconscious to do its work: an internal tide that ebbs and flows sifting and polishing the pebble of an idea until it is smooth enough to slip into the conscious world, but also a current that carries Lizzie on a slipstream of creativity, connecting her to other artists - Simryn Gill, Mark Dion, Fiona Hall, Cornelia Parker, Andy Goldworthy, Shona Wilson, Rosalie Gascoigne - navigating their imaginary trajectories in a dialogue about the handmade versus the man made and the tensions and complexities of humanity's footprint on the planet.

A discerning beachcomber, Lizzie's gaze is directed to what she finds at her feet, bending to pick up the detritus of the man made world: plastic lids, bubble blowing wands, soy sauce fish from takeaway places, carelessly discarded gelato tubs, but also heavier objects,

pieces of concrete and brick. When Virginia Woolf filled her pockets with stones, she was weighting herself down for death. The very opposite is true of Lizzie: the more her pockets bulge, the more she brims with vitality, her trophies affirming life in all its messiness, celebrating the transformation of the worthless from discarded debris and ruin to cherished treasure.

Like other artists working with found objects washed up on the shore she combines a love of serendipitous discovery with an appreciation of pattern, texture and a metaphysical connection to the environment, its seasons, moods and extremes. The very mundanity of her harvest, cleaned and sorted by colour, suggests an archaeologist of the present, cataloguing and archiving what it means to live right here, right now but there is also a more poetic dimension to Lizzie's method, a desire to capture fragments of the more ethereal qualities of existence.

Her own curiosity, sharpened by an energetic appetite for life in all its physical and intellectual manifestations, is prodigious. There are always adventures in the offing, books devoured, film and exhibitions consumed. But there is also an anchoring to the domestic, to baking cakes and making clothes. Busy Lizzie. Her hands and her mind are always dancing.

Blue is rare in nature in the Illawarra: there are few blue flowers or berries, so why this colour is the one that appeals to the bowerbird is a mystery. But blue brackets Lizzie's world, where she lives on a narrow ribbon of land sandwiched between the sky and the ocean.

When the Coledale pool was emptied to be renovated in 2011, Lizzie's inner bower bird asserted itself fully, claiming fragments of its blue lining, gathering up hefty chunks of concrete and stacking them underneath her house with as clear a sense of purpose as if she were luring a mate. She collected, stored, sorted, and was often seen with a barrow of blue crossing the road, friends and family in her wake.

She had, meanwhile become bewitched, as many who dwell in the tidal zone do, by the moon, its push and pull, its rhythmic dance of wave on sand and rock. She marked dates in her diary, inviting friends to join her in creating stone circles attuned to the lunar calendar beside the Coledale pool, inspired by British artist Richard Long's similar circles. For the first, timed to coincide with a full blue moon, she and her helpers filled in the circle with aqua hued pool fragments; for the next new moon, she inverted the design, defining a perimeter and leaving the centre empty.

Seductive as a siren, Lizzie drew people to the water's edge to participate in the magic of making - a friend set up a barbie to feed the workers who bent, hands gloved, collecting chunks of concrete, scattering them around a chalked out circumference. It was quickly done, Lizzie a gumbooted general, very much in charge. Then the water came and played its part, rinsing, licking, flushing and flooding, til the work disappeared beneath the waves, all evidence erased by the tug of a force that still retains an element of mystery even for those who understand the science.

Eventually, Lizzie's bowerbird decamped, as suddenly as he had arrived, moving on to new seductions. Fortunately for us, Lizzie has no such intentions. No matter how far she flies or walks her ultimate destination is always the beach - and the pool - she calls home.

Caroline Baum  
2013