

ANZ Private Bank and Art & Australia Contemporary Art Award

Talia Linz



Gregor Kregar

From live sheep to ceramic piggy banks and giant, floating geometric shapes, Gregor Kregar's sculptural menagerie suggests that he is not an artist seduced by a single subject. Nor can one material tie him down; he picks and chooses between glass and steel, plastic and terracotta, cardboard, video, photography and livestock. Like the varied combinations of polyhedrons he creates, this Slovenian-born, Auckland-based artist is indeed multifaceted.

Take 'Piercing the Clouds' at Sydney's Tins Sheds Gallery in 2008, an exhibition akin to a futuristic landscape; all colossal shiny forms and seemingly endless space. Here Kregar fashioned numerous and fractured cloudscapes using sculpture, video projection and three-dimensionally rendered photographic works. Along with other site-specific installations (*Brick bay polyhedron*, 2006, *Sky housing project 1*, 2007, *Shelter structure 1 and 2*, 2006) there is a definite dreamy quality to this work, yet underneath a structural and scientific logic is at play. His large, angular shapes might tap into our collective cultural image bank of sci-fi or apocalyptic visions, but the artist is quick to point out that they are in fact comprised of the simplest and most basic shapes in use since Ancient Greece and Neolithic Britain. These forms reference external spatial arrangements as well as internal ones; imitating naturally occurring molecular systems of which triangular forms are the building blocks.

Kregar's unique constructions both stand out from, and blend into, their surrounds. Their mirror-polished stainless steel faces literally reflect the colours and shapes of their settings, whether natural or simulated. Kregar sees his sculptures and their landscapes connected through structural logic:

The way I build my recent forms has more in common with the forming process of clouds or structural formulas of organic matter than with the way we build buildings.¹

Whether towering ominously or floating majestically, Kregar's structures activate space by altering visual perspective. Objects are lost and found in the visual flick of the eye back and forth, up and down, across his many planes and angles:

Materials are very important; they carry the idea. The reflective quality addresses the viewer and creates another dimension of space, breaking perspective and creating the possibility of self-awareness and self-reflexive impulses.

This gentle jostle between appearance and disappearance also manifests itself in Kregar's figurative work. His glazed stoneware piece,

Vanish, 2008, installed on Waiheke Island in New Zealand, comprises 160 doppelgangers of the artist ranging from 140-centimetres tall down to 40 centimetres. Depending on one's viewpoint, the army of Gregors either burgeons steadily forward or vanishes into the distance. No need for wordy critique or theories about the power of the viewer to induce meaning, here perspective literally and instantaneously determines the artist's growth or diminishment. The work extrapolates on an earlier piece, *I appear and disappear*, 2003–04, of which the artist writes:

Something gets lost every time you double yourself ... taken to its inevitable conclusion, this self-cloning self-portrait would reduce me to a wisp of clay.

Questions of identity and ego, particularly to do with that of 'the artist', follow the thread of pop artists who have questioned the paradigm of the lone genius forging the singular masterpiece. *Vanish* is one of a number of Kregar's works that draw on the multiple as the enemy of individuality. The romance of the artist is lost in this exponential growth; death by reproduction.

Yet here again with Kregar, all is not as it seems. These serial works may simulate the cheap factory-manufactured copy, but they are actually the result of individual modelling and casting. Kregar's replication process is one of lengthy and detailed craftsmanship – *Vanish* was four years in the making.

Kregar's work investigates the seduction and psychology of the crowd, the relationship of the individual to the collective, and vice versa. His is a portrait both specific and general; profiling the lone figure lost in a sea of anonymity, as much as it cites our desire for distinction.

¹ All quotations are taken from interviews with the artist via email in October 2009, and from the artist's website, www.gregorkregar.com/.

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Gregor Kregar, *Piercing the clouds*, 2008, stainless steel, video and lambda print photographs, installation view, Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney, courtesy the artist.



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