

Gregor Kregar

Preview Inga Walton

TRANSCENDENT, innovative, unexpected and diverse: such is the world of sculptor Gregor Kregar. The scope of this artist's output over the past decade strongly suggests that the intrepid Slovenian expatriate is yet to encounter an artistic concept he finds daunting.

Reflective Illuminations at Fehily Contemporary is Kregar's first major exhibition in Melbourne since his forest-themed installation *Reflective Lullaby* showed at the Melbourne Art Fair in 2008. It incorporates freestanding, hanging and wall-mounted works, expressive of Kregar's interest in creating an immersive environment which serves to disrupt the conventional gallery space and 'mirrors' the viewer.

"I wanted to experiment with reflective materials such as stainless steel and aluminium, as well as with works that are painted with new, subtle chameleon paints. These rely on the viewer's movement in relation to the piece to reveal the paints' multi-coloured properties and the hidden variability of the work," Kregar explains. "I have done a lot of research into prismatic geometry and I am interested in the connections between nature, mathematics and modular forms. My work echoes the elemental building blocks and strata of the natural world; those found in clouds, below the surface in rock and land formations, in complex crystalline geometric patterns, in molecules, and DNA. One of the components of the work that I am most interested in is the interactive element, where the reflection of the viewer and the space is changing when you move around."

This philosophy was dominant in Kregar's approach to one of the largest and most ambitious commissions he has undertaken, for the redevelopment of Christchurch International Airport. New Zealand architectural firm Warren and Mahoney created a new state-of-the-art facility, which involved the progressive demolition of the existing 1960 domestic terminal; plans for which were complicated by the series of earthquakes that struck the region between 2010 and 2012. After a lengthy vetting and consultation process, Kregar's proposals were selected: *Clouds For Richard Pearce* (2012) which comprises three truncated octahedron stainless steel forms with cold

cathode lights suspended over the atrium space, and the companion piece *Cumulus Gate Pavilion For Richard Pearce* (2012) which appears to float like a low-lying cloud over the lawn area in front of the new terminal and outdoor plaza.

The name may be unfamiliar to many, but the reference is typical of Kregar's extensive research and his abiding interest in science, engineering and aeronautics. Richard William Pearce (1877–1953) was a farmer and inventor born in Temuka whose pioneering experiments in aviation rivalled those of the Wright brothers. "It seemed like an ideal opportunity to commemorate Pearce and his visionary, inventive spirit through my work. His achievements were remarkable and really represent the resourceful character of the New Zealand people," Kregar says. "Considering the premise, I wanted to make structures that alluded to ideas of utopian flying machines on one side and natural cloud formations on the other. The appearance will change according to the weather and light conditions, allowing the works to continually respond to prevailing surroundings. I also intended the cloud-like appearance of the sculptures to reference the wider context of *Aotearoa* – 'the land of the long white cloud'."

Kregar's work was recently seen as part of the 'Art, Pattern and Complexity' exhibition at Adelaide Fringe Festival, after which his large-scale *Houdini Cloud* (2012) levitated into Depot Gallery, Sydney. He is a past recipient of the ANZ Private Bank and *Art & Australia* Contemporary Art Award (2009), and a finalist in the McClelland Sculpture Survey & Award (2010).

Principally based in New Zealand, with a studio in a large industrial warehouse in West Auckland, he spends many months in Europe pursuing projects and residencies. "It is important for me that my work has a wider dialogue with a larger audience," he says. "Moving between opposite sides of the world gives me a more active, fresher perspective on both locations and makes me appreciate them for different reasons."

Kregar's practice moves seamlessly between figurative and abstract elements, and encompasses materials as various as ceramics, metals, lights, glass, plastic,

photo-media and works on paper, audio soundscapes, new media, recycled and found materials, and some surprising moving parts. Kregar's contribution to the 'Sculpture on the Gulf' show of 2003, *Matthew 12:12 Live*, famously involved 12 live sheep in a paddock clad in coloured jumpers. Such was the response, he revisited this bemusing bucolic spectacle in Christchurch (2006) and Wellington (2007).

"I often explore the ways in which familiar subjects can be reinterpreted in a way that displaces the original meaning or function and transforms them from invisible and mundane into the focus of our attention. My work deals with issues of ambiguity and the uncanny, so I choose materials or mediums according to those concepts and ideas," Kregar says. "Part of what I find exciting about sculpture is the realm of possibility, to experiment with a range of different techniques and materials I can use in unconventional ways, taking them outside of their expected use or historical context, and pushing the limits. The pieces embody the contradictions of nature versus culture, and the mathematical versus a more intuitive artistic process." ■

Gregor Kregar is represented by Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne; Michael Reid Gallery at Elizabeth Bay, Sydney; Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland; and Bowen Galleries, Wellington.

www.fehilycontemporary.com.au
www.gregorkregar.com

EXHIBITION
'Reflective Illuminations'
8 November to 1 December, 2012
Fehily Contemporary

The Tenth Anniversary 'headland Sculpture on the Gulf'
25 January to 17 February, 2013
Waiheke Island, Auckland
www.sculptureonthegulf.co.nz

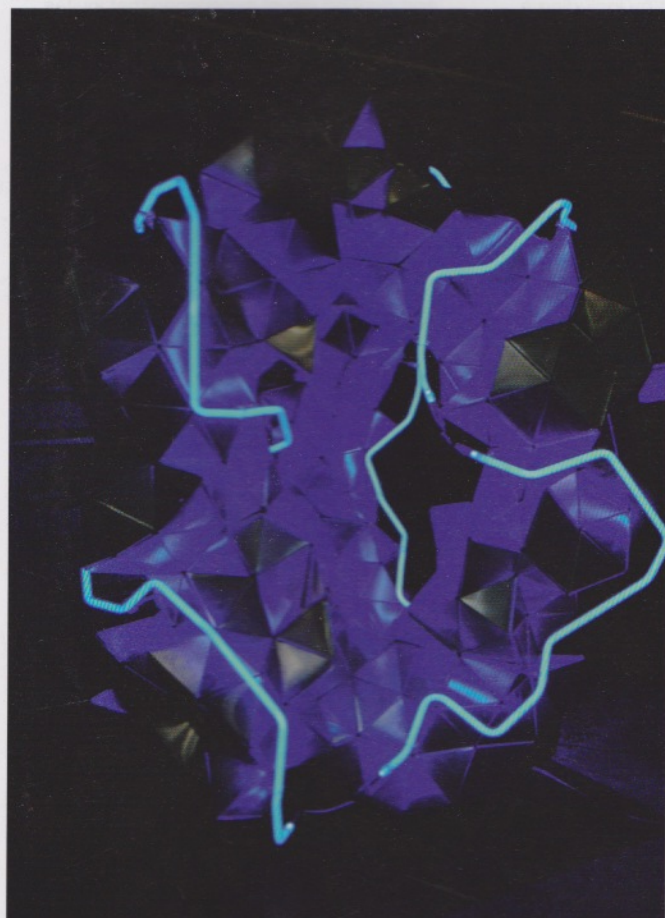
- 01 *Clouds for Richard Pearce*, 2012, stainless steel and cold cathode lights, three suspended structures each 500 x 500 x 500cm, Christchurch International Airport
- 02 *Reflective Illuminations*, 2012, aluminium and neon lights, 135 x 100 x 100cm
- 03 *Cumulus Gate Pavilion for Richard Pearce*, 2012, stainless steel and LED cluster lights, 800 x 600 x 600cm, Christchurch International Airport

Courtesy the artist and Fehily Contemporary



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