

MEL LLOYD - HOT WATER BOTTLE HOUSE

As a selector in 2016 for the Creekside Open (an open submission exhibition that normally has two manifestations, each selected by an artist choosing from the same submission) I selected Mel Lloyd's Hot Water Bottle House for showing in the exhibition of my selection.

It is perhaps worth saying that selection is made on the basis of digital imagery, so it's a bit of a leap in the dark. However, I was particularly intrigued by combination of dark subject matter with materials and motif. I was not disappointed when the work was installed. Indeed, it is one of three works that I selected as a prize winner and I thought then, and still think now. That the work should have a wider showing.

The ramshackle roof and the squalid interior with its dirty newspaper, contrasts painfully with the jolly colours of the outside and the neat arrangement in strict horizontal lines of the cast hot water bottles. These themselves are a bit dual natured, vaguely figurative and hung like skins outside a trapper's cabin, or game strung up in front of an old-fashioned butchers.

Clay objects are fragile and can break and Mel Lloyd uses the breakage of some of the casts in particular ways, firstly along the bottom row where all the necks are broken off, then around the top edges where broken parts form the upper course and finally around and in the cut-out window frame, where shards and smaller fragments are installed. Breakage is part of the story that she is telling and there is great empathy with both the broken lives and with 'cold-comfort' in this work.

They are after all not hot water bottles, but only cast copies, hard and unforgiving, they don't do their job of warming. To an extent this is substituted by their being used as cladding (making a shelter), although they also cover something up.

Richard Deacon

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