

Sculptures make waves at Bondi

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Geoffrey Drake-Brockman's yellow Counter stands behind a giant frying pan sculpture by Andrew Hankin, titled *We're Fryin' Out Here*. Picture DAVID GRAY

This kind of exposure to the elements can't be beaten.

One of the greatest coastal walks in the world has hosted one of the greatest outdoor sculpture exhibitions now for 18 years, attracting up to 500,000 people annually to check out the artworks along the cliffs, parkland and beach from Bondi to Tamarama.

The wind, the sun, the pounding waves: you can see the slow, persistent sculpting of nature in action while contemplating the 109 installed things of stone and wood, and many other materials to boot, along the 2km walk.

Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi, the mothership to the smaller but no-less significant Cottesloe exhibition, has unearthed a mother-lode of opportunity for Elaine Clocherty.

The Margaret River artist is one of three 2014 recipients of a \$30,000 Helen Lempriere Scholarship to further her career through study and travel. The others are Victorian Joel Clutterbuck and Koichi Ishino, from NSW.

Clocherty's site-specific ephemeral sculpture Gamma Gamma Storm, which she moulded from collected seaweed, is inspired by high-tide traces on Tamarama Beach.

Clocherty, who won the WA Sculptor's Scholarship with a similar work at Cottesloe earlier this year, says the award is her springboard to exhibit and study in Europe where she will feature in the third leg of Sculpture by the Sea in Aarhus, Denmark.

"As a site-specific environmental artist, there is only so much of that happening in Australia but in Europe there is so much happening, " she says.

"I have come from home to Sydney and now I am going to Europe so I am looking forward to being part of bigger circles and getting bigger exposure for myself. I do feel there is a momentum right now."

Considered unsightly and smelly, seaweed is regularly removed from beaches in Sydney, so Clocherty hopes her work reveals its organic beauty while opening people's eyes to the variety and possibility of sculpture.

Her work also taps into traditional human connections to the surroundings, natural processes and the elements. "It is something we have lost and is definitely something we need to be calling back into our lives so I think that's why it resonates with people."

Another WA artist making waves at Bondi is Kerrie Argent, who was the joint winner of the WA Sculptor's Scholarship at Cottesloe with Clocherty last March.

The two artists share concerns for the marine environment and have responded in similar ways, although Argent's artwork Overconsumption deals with flotsam that is far from organic. Over four years at her home in the Wheatbelt town of Lake Grace, Argent collected and stitched together more than 76,000 plastic bottle tops into five big clusters to represent the islands of rubbish drifting in the world's major oceanic gyres.

Argent says her massive work looked much more at home washed up on the rocks at south Bondi than on the open sand of Cottesloe.

"It looks like rubbish washed up the rocks, which is what it is about, " she says of the work which won the \$5000 Waverley Council Mayor's Prize at the weekend. "It is about the islands of trash that float around in the gyres so I guess on the rocks it looks more authentic rather than just the positioning on the beach at Cottesloe. It was much more of a challenge to install."

Her sculpture was created with bottletops sent to her from around Australia and were stitched together with more than 180,000 plastic cable ties with the help of family and friends in Lake Grace.

Argent says the Bondi-Tamarama coast is more rugged and varied than Cottesloe, with lawns, rock ledges, clifftops and open beach providing a greater choice of where works can be situated. But Cottesloe is a more contained and accessible location. "There's no more of a stunning background because you get the beautiful sunsets in Cottesloe."

Sculpture by the Sea has now hosted 1000 artists at Bondi since the event began in 1997. Among the 40 first-timers for 2014, drawn from 500 submissions worldwide, are Czech enfant terrible David Cerny and Chinese artist Guan Wei.

Hardy perennial Ron Gomboc, whose \$55,000 work *The Moment* sold as soon as it was installed last week, is among the strong WA contingent of 10 artists, the most from any State outside NSW and Victoria. Mikaela Castledine's hand-stitched black plastic rhino, shown at Cottesloe this year, sits on Tamarama Beach alongside Geoffrey Drake-Brockman's bright yellow walk-through people-counting machine, which organisers hope will break the 288,601 record set at Aarhus in 2013. There also are works from Jennifer Cochrane, Lou Lambert, Noah Birch, Barclay Bailey and Brad Jackson.

The populist and the critically acclaimed sit side by side. School kids jump about in a 24m diameter frying pan while their parents contemplate Peter Lundberg's adjoining Ring, a contorted monumental circle of bronze which won the American artist the major \$60,000 Macquarie Group Prize.

"This is what I find to be the most tremendous part of the show - all these kids and all the inspiration they get from seeing the works," Lundberg says.

"These are the people who have to solve our problems. They have to be inspired, so how are they going to be inspired unless they get something like this?"

You have to look up to see the shortest-lived, but regularly recreated artwork, James Nguen's skywriting series of geometric designs which are slowly swept out of shape by the wind. Back on the ground, selfie-obsessed visitors can climb into Lucy Barker's Perspex cabinet to pose as living sculptures in #selfiesculpture.

New Zealand artist Chris Bailey, whose dramatic basalt obelisks on the headland are inspired by ancient Aboriginal stone blades found at Bondi in 1899, says exhibiting at Sculpture by the Sea is invaluable.

"The exposure these events give sculptors from around the world is amazing," Bailey says. "My piece here is like a hook and this is an amazing fishing ground and the media exposure we are getting here is like amazing burley bait that goes out for all your bites."

Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi, runs until November 9; Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe, runs from March 6-23.