





# BOWERHAUS

*Jane and Tony Lennon create carbon neutral or carbon negative works and taking the bowerbird's lead, utilise abundant, locally gathered materials...*

JANE LENNON AND TONY LENNON have been making art in their Blue Mountains studios under the watchful and inquisitive eyes of satin bowerbirds, for over three decades. The satin bower birds construct bowers out of sticks and grass and decorate with bright blue objects. Using a wad of vegetable fibre like a paint brush, they paint the walls with a paste of charcoal, dark berries and wood pulp.

Combining influences from the 19th Century Arts and Crafts Movement and the German Bauhaus School the Lennons endeavour to unite fine art and functional design in a 21st Century context. They ask themselves how can they justify producing any more things in a world besieged by climate change and drowning in a sea of mass produced plastic. So they create carbon neutral (or in the case of botanic sculptures, carbon negative) works and taking the bowerbird's lead, utilise abundant, locally gathered materials.

Tony cultivates orchids, then gathers, sculpts and adapts objects like bone and stone for them to grow on. He sculpts sandstone onto which he ties paperbark parcels, containing the plant and a growing mix of charcoal and tree-fern. The jute string deteriorates as the orchid roots grow onto the stone. He considers the work to be carbon negative with the plant producing oxygen instead of carbon dioxide. Tony has a collection of these living works which date back to 1998. Tony aspires to what he calls an endothermic way of producing art. An exothermic process releases heat, (for example welding or firing clay) causing the temperature of the immediate surroundings to rise, whereas an endothermic process absorbs heat.

Jane up-cycles discarded office paper into sculptural forms and furniture. She pulps the paper and transforms it into a material which can be formed like clay but does not need firing. Once the paper mix is sun dried and sealed it is as tough as the wood from which it originated. Jane finds pulping paper a cleansing process – washing away the secrets contained within the documents. As the work dries, it shrinks, creating an uneven, landscape-like surface which is then sealed, painted and sanded resulting in filling the valleys and reducing the ridges. She applies many layers of different coloured washes until she is happy that the surfaces of her work depict images of deep space and planets. For the Bowerhaus exhibition Jane has focused on abstracted birds and hopes her work sparks joy!

Bowerhaus is at Sheffer Gallery, 38 Lander Street, Darlington, Sydney 15-25 May 2019

