



Above:

Whelk Sea Shell, Jilian Culey, ribbed weaving with driftwood, rattan cane and red hot poker leaves (photo Irene Manioin)

Opposite page:

Top:

Jellyfish, Carolyn Dance, bangalow inflorescence, *Sea Nettle*, Ellen King, wet felted merino, silk (photo Ellen King)

Below left:

The Wave, Ellen King, wet felted merino, silk, shibori technique, Swarovski crystals and hand stitching (photo Ellen King)

Below right:

Coral Balls, Carolyn Dance, random weaving with five-leaf water vine, coral pea;
Coral Spawn, Carolyn Dance, random weaving with five-leaf water vine, coral pea, palm inflorescence (photo Irene Manion)

REVIEW

NATURE NURTURING at Braemar Gallery, Springwood

A MASSIVE WHALE'S TAIL swishes in the air above the viewer whilst a clown fish hides in a miniscule coral cave. Gigantic coral spawn float towards the surface high above the viewer. In the next gallery space one enters a place where tall grasses grow and a protective tree stands proudly. There is a wall of branches from which are suspended oversized seed pods. Elsewhere tall Wollemi pines cast complex shadows onto the surrounding walls as they move gently in the breeze.

Three skilful and innovative artists explore nature's delicate balancing act. The theme of their recent exhibition at Braemar Gallery highlights the critical symbiotic relationship between man and nature. If nature is cared for and nurtured, it has the capacity to thrive and replenish the planet in abundance.

Feltmaker Ellen King and contemporary basketry practitioners Jilian Culey and Carolyn Dance have used their chosen media to transform traditional materials into exquisite natural forms.

The artists worked collaboratively on some pieces and occasionally juxtaposed their interpretations of a common subject — as in a set of spikey, dark woven jellyfish beside a soft, felted sea nettle. Likewise, Dance's large woven *Mother Tree*, and *Saplings* by Culey and Dance in natural fibres, contrasted with King's felted *Wollemi Pines*.

Pairing The Wave by Ellen King and Carolyn Dance's *Coral Balls* and *Coral Spawn* was particularly successful. In her exquisitely detailed tiny sculpture King's rich coral-studded piece invited tactile exploration.

By comparison Dance's gigantic coral forms and spores made the viewer feel diminutive. Coral spores are miniscule and Dance had made them massively oversize. The loose weaving of these spherical floating shapes cast crisp lithographic shadows on the wall. The interplay of





Above:
Wollemi I and II, Ellen King,
 wet felted merino
 (photo Ellen King)

Left:
Hanging Pods 1-7, Jillian Culey,
 ribbed weaving with willow, red
 hot poker, watsonia and fairy
 fishing rod leaves

Snug, Ellen King, wet felted
 merino, silk and wire
 (photo Ellen King)

Below:
 Left to right:
 Carolyn Dance, Jillian Culey and
 Ellen King





the physical forms and their shadows transformed into a multitude and enhanced the effect of weightlessness.

In *Whelk Sea Shell* a woven spiral whelk wrapped itself tightly around a shaft. It looked alive and clung to the shaft in balanced symmetry. The ability to animate forms in such an original way is a tribute to Jillian Culey's inspired and original use of her medium, while her *Nautila* series was a highlight of the exhibition, exciting in its originality and animated fluidity.

Nurture, a magnificently conceptualised and executed garment by Ellen King was inspired by the weedy seahorse shielding a clutch of eggs, safeguarding them until release. This sculptural wearable has a felted under-layer in the rich contrasting colours of the seahorse. Silk shibori technique has been employed to create the miniscule eggs being carried by the seahorse parent until they are ready to be released into the sea. King has married concept with the demands of wearable art perfectly.

In *Nature Nurturing* these three highly skilled artists conveyed a message of a nurturing nature in original ways, using their skills to exemplify strong conceptual interpretations and a lush richness, so creating a cohesive statement that enticed the viewer to become involved.

Irene Manion

