



BALANCE

Mirrored perspex, wood, branches.

Organised and funded by the Noosa Regional Gallery, Noosa, Queensland, Australia.

The Floating Land, International Site Specific Art Laboratory.

Curated by Kevin Wilson.

Wejba Creek, Noosa, Queensland, Australia, 2001.



Balance can mean an instrument for weighing. It can also refer to the imaginary scales of destiny, by which deeds and principles are weighed. It can mean the power to decide fate, to equipoise or to equalize. The boat in Attard's version counteracts influence: it is of the sea, reflecting water and therefore, life, but its load is a spent, dry one. It is a dead load of spent energy and entropy, the product of a civilization that denies life and nature, cynically. The "balance" of the title thus confronts us with the concept of judgement: Your deeds have been weighed and you have been found wanting. On the scheme of time there only remains the journey of dead values.

MARIO AZZOPARDI



Art, Land and Water: A Maltese artist's journey into the landscape of Australia.

In Noosa Attard chose as a site for his work *Balance*, the Noosa River, a place where the raw river and quiet suburbia meet. The Noosa River, once the lifeblood of a pioneer timber industry, and now, part of a tourist Mecca (Noosa Heads in Queensland, Australia), quietly disperses throughout a burgeoning suburban community as it nears the sea. Signs of a casual life are everywhere - jettys, footbridges, and of course the small boats anchored quietly awaiting the next outing. And yet despite this seemingly tamed image the river still maintains a roughness, an originality and a pristine quality.

How do you deal with the powerful image of nature in such a 'settled' context? *Balance* is in effect another one of those boats quietly inhabiting the river. It is a meditative work and yet one which sparkles like a gem. At once it is an everyday object and yet a magical metaphor. It is a regular boat to make short trips and yet a boat that speaks about thousands and even millions of journeys. Attard's totally reflective boat covered with mirrored perspex, with a clear base and filled with small tree branches, forces us to think about the 'big picture' - nature/civilization; entropy/sustainability, and even art and real life. Just as a boat will literally sink if it is not in balance so will life as we know it, if we cannot find harmony between the human and natural world. Aesthetically Attard's practice is formalist. *Balance* is the key. The strength of his vision lies in anchoring his sculptures to a ground. In '*Balance*' he literally anchors his boat, but more importantly the anchoring is achieved by eliminating the lines or edges of the object and its ground. The boat becomes the water or is composed of the water. At times it simply dissolves.

Balance is successful because it works on so many levels and has the rare ability to capture the viewer's imagination. It encompasses anything from the idea of a magical boat in children's literature to the science fiction of 'Robocop'. This was certainly evident from the huge variety of age groups evident in the people often found admiring and contemplating the work from an old footbridge above the work. *Balance* not only benefits from the boat as a metaphor for the journey but also from the boat as a carrier of meaning. In this case the boat carries an environmental load. The precious cargo is now the environment as well as humanity.

KEVIN WILSON







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