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THIS ISSUE: Gill Gatfield
Sculptor | Problem solver | Ground-breaker



Hoisting 250 kilos of glossy black granite on to a coastal headland on a typically wild and windy spring day is not for the faint-hearted but Auckland sculptor Gill Gatfield isn't one to back down from a challenge.

Gill walked away from a successful career in law to take up the rather more precarious role of full time artist in 1998. It's a decision she doesn't regret for a moment. As she told a Herald Business reporter, earlier this year:

"I found I was sneaking away from my legal/business work to learn and practice my art," says Gatfield. "In law I learnt how small things can make an immense difference - the omission of a word in a statute, the meaning of 'person', the legal right to speak, the politics of process, and lots more. Those details continue to be relevant in my art practice."

Gill has practised as a solicitor, worked as a senior advisor on law reform, wrote a book on women in the law, and established her own consultancy business called Equity Works. After becoming a full time artist, she completed an MFA(Hons) from Elam. A consistent driver in her career choices has been an appreciation of precision, integrity and humanity.

That drive is evident in her long-standing support of the bi-annual NZ Sculpture OnShore in support of Women's Refuge. Starting quite literally from the ground up, her first contribution in 2006 was an installation called "Grass Roots" a feminist comment on domestic violence - the cause behind the exhibition.

This year's entry was inspired by an encounter with Henri Rousseau's surrealist painting La Charmeuse de serpents at the Musee D'Orsay. Her response was to reconceptualise Rousseau's painting as a sculptural tableau: the idealised jungle realised in an actual Pacific idyll. Gatfield's androgynous Eve is a slender 'I' column of black granite sited under the twisting branches of a pohutukawa overlooking the Waitemata.

This 21st century Eve presides over a world renown snake-free paradise but the peaceful scene masks hidden danger. Poisonous sea snakes discovered in NZ's coastal waters and land snakes smuggled across borders, challenge the Island nation's 'Godzone' status, and offer dark meaning to The Snake Charmer.

You can see *The Snake Charmer* and 100 newly created works at NZ Sculpture onShore, which opens tomorrow – Wednesday 7 November at Fort Takapuna Reserve.

www.nzsculptureonshore.co.nz

www.eventfinder.co.nz (Buy Tickets)

www.gillgatfield.com

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