

roslyn oxley9 gallery

Caroline Rothwell

Falling Suspended, 2017

Caroline Rothwell has an abiding interest in humankind's interaction with the natural world. Her uncanny and sometimes precariously balanced sculptures hybridise human and non-human elements, appearing as either anthropomorphic flora or, like the much-loved bronze *Youngsters* in Sydney's CBD, plant or mineral-infested figures.

In her new photo-based paintings of indoor plants, Rothwell continues her critique of our attempts to colonise, tame and control nature. The *#rothwellofficeplants* are based on Instagram photos of office plants posted from around Australia and the world. Despite the international reach of the artist's callout, the plants are similar to each other and familiar to us all: specimens of palm and Monstera that are native to tropical climates and were once considered exotic, but in the Modern era have become the go-to plant for office buildings globally. Rothwell reanimates these often drab and dusty indoor plants by fleshing them out, literally giving them body that's contained within a tactile skin of hand-sewn metal or gold leaf. The tangled thread of the black stitching is left to fall out of the picture frame, encroaching into our space like abandoned spider webbing or long and unbrushed hair.

The artist's ongoing research into recent geoengineering experiments and initiatives is brought to bear in three new spindly bronze sculptures that resemble scientific retort stands but also winter trees, bereft of foliage. In a recent trip to the Galápagos Islands, the artist learnt of storm glasses used during Charles Darwin's survey of the archipelago in 1835 to predict the weather. In the tallest of the three Retort sculptures, a storm glass is balanced on its opposite side by a marine weather vane, perhaps referencing the Beagle and its scientific surveys. More broadly, however, this delicately balanced Giacometti-like sculpture with a magnifying glass for a head, proposes – with Rothwell's typically wry and nuanced understatement – that the colonising imperative of recent centuries is today replaced by a compulsion to gain mastery over nature and the climate itself, as if we have the power to avert the imminent and inevitable ecological catastrophe that defines the Anthropocene.

-Felicity Fenner

Caroline Rothwell has been exhibiting nationally and internationally for over two decades. Recent exhibitions include: *Inspiracje 2017*, TRAF0 Centre for Contemporary Art, Szczecin, Poland (2017); *Fragil II: Australian Art at the XII Bienal de Cuenca*, Kronenberg Wright Artists Projects, Sydney (2017); 13th International Cuenca Biennial, Ecuador (2016); *Antipodes Cut Apart*, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge, UK (2016) as well as major Sculpture Terrace Commission granted by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia, *Composer* (2016). Rothwell is also included in the forthcoming exhibition, *Another Green World: The landscape of the 21st Century*, Western Plains Cultural Centre, Dubbo (2017). In 2014, Rothwell presented *Urpflanze Street Plants* at the Museum of Economy Botany, Adelaide as part of the 2014 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: *Dark Heart* at the Art Gallery of South Australia, curated by Nick Mitzevich. Rothwell was also selected for the prestigious Omi International Arts Center Residency in New York (2014). Significant commissions include: *Cartwheeling Youngsters*, Rhodes Foreshore, Canada Bay Council (2015); *Youngsters*, City of Sydney, City Spaces, Barrack St (2013); *Symbiosis*, Central Park, Sydney (2012). In 2009, Fabienne Nicholas of London's Contemporary Art Society, curated Rothwell's *Dispersed* for The Economist Plaza, London. Rothwell's work is held in major public collections including: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of South Australia, Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia, Shepparton Art Museum, University of Queensland Art Museum, State Library of Victoria, Artbank, Auckland Art Gallery, Te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand. Caroline Rothwell has been exhibited with Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney since 2014.