



Intertwined is a giant woven public sculpture by Darwin contemporary fibre artist, Aly de Groot. The artwork was commissioned by the City of Darwin so as to secure a major work of excellence and fulfill their agenda to add to Darwin's cultural collection whilst fulfilling the Council's goals to support the growth and development of the arts. The two giant jellyfish forms stand proudly, like gatekeepers, at the entrance to East Point Nature Reserve in Fannie Bay, Darwin.

The artist explains-

The large woven jellyfish forms were created using basket-making techniques along with reclaimed rope that I collected whilst working on a GhostNets Australia weaving project with Indigenous rangers and school children in North-East Arnhem Land. I was joined by Larrakia Elder, Bilawara Lee, who is a respected healer and teacher with over 62 years experience with working, living and being part of a very large, vibrant, Aboriginal family in Darwin.

The woven rope forms were then fabricated into bronze by Phillip Piperides in his Brisbane foundry. Cyprus born Piperides is an internationally acclaimed fine art sculptor. Recipient of the Churchill Fellowship in 1990 in recognition of his achievements with bronze, his experience and passion allowed my ethereal woven forms to become permanently embodied in bronze in a way that for me has never before been achieved.

Before work commenced, Bilawara ceremoniously prepared and smoked the creative space with cockatoo feathers and burnt sage, to set a beautiful and focused start to the project. The following day we wove the jellyfish bells together and feasted on amazing Greek food, prepared by Phil and his wife, reminding us of our fabulous and famous Greek Glenti (festival) at home.

As an Australian fibre artist with Dutch ancestry I recognise the importance of cross-cultural exchange through learning and sharing traditional and contemporary basket art skills with a broad cross section of the community. Kevin Murray, respected researcher and writer on contemporary fibre art developments in Australia says: *Trade in Baskets is thriving. However, it's not just cash that is being exchanged. Baskets are a currency for new dialogues that are bringing people and cultures together* (Murray, 2005, Object Magazine, p18).

Harboring cross-cultural exchange, whilst marrying the old with the new and the traditional with the contemporary, the many woven strands coming together represent numerous reasons why East Point is a significant and important place to many people – and creatures of course. Interwoven and entwined together, like the ropey jellyfish tentacles.

Intertwined was installed and officially launched at East Point Nature Reserve, Fannie Bay, Darwin, in September 2014. The ceremony was a joyous occasion where more than 100 people gathered. There were pedal powered smoothies and a barbecue to be enjoyed, and Lord Mayor Katrina Fong Lim cut an ochre coloured ribbon.

Bilawarra Lee enveloped the artworks in healing smoke to cleanse and welcome the giant creatures, whilst explaining the significance of the artwork: *Jellyfish totem speaks to us of simplifying our life - that we should go with the flow of the currents and allow things to take their course. She shows how to rest in the earthly realm and not to rush. We are encouraged to take a walk; get close to nature so you can see the world in a better light. How apt is this wisdom - it fits perfectly with where Aly's wonderful jellyfish children are located. It encourages us to slow down and take life easier – not to be dominated by stress and worries* (Bilawara Lee, 2014).

Over the two years that it took *Intertwined* to come to fruition, I also conceived, gestated and birthed a child. I affectionately refer to the two figures as my jelly babies, and the sculptures are monuments for my two children - my teenage son, Zion and my baby girl, Stella.

Public sculpture can divide communities - some embrace it wholeheartedly whilst others bleat despairingly about seemingly wasted spending. I see *Intertwined* as my gift to the City of Darwin and her many visitors. I harbor hope that the artwork will have personal significance for the many people who ride, run, skate, skip and drive past the sculptures.

Hopefully many a glorious sunset will be viewed from the strategically placed rocks that play an integral role in the overall ambience of the artwork, creating a space where people may linger longer and enjoy the view, ponder the art, and perhaps even fall in love. I have already witnessed signs of this occurring while picnicking by the sculptures with my family when a girl rode past and said to her friends, *'The big one, that's my mum, the little one is my brother.'*

This creative adventure has taught me that public sculpture, like our children, does not belong to the maker, we are the vessels that channel them, gifting them to the world to find their own position on the earth and in people's hearts. □

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