

# LOOKING CLOSELY AT *Installation*

Rosalie Gascoigne came late in her life to the making of art. After a long association with Ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arranging, she professed that she couldn't draw, but could arrange and that she did not become an artist, but that she was one. The sheer originality of her vision and practice confirms these statements.

Clearly living in the harsh environment of Mt. Stromlo, near Canberra, sharpened her visual awareness, giving her an insight into the nature of the land and its elements.

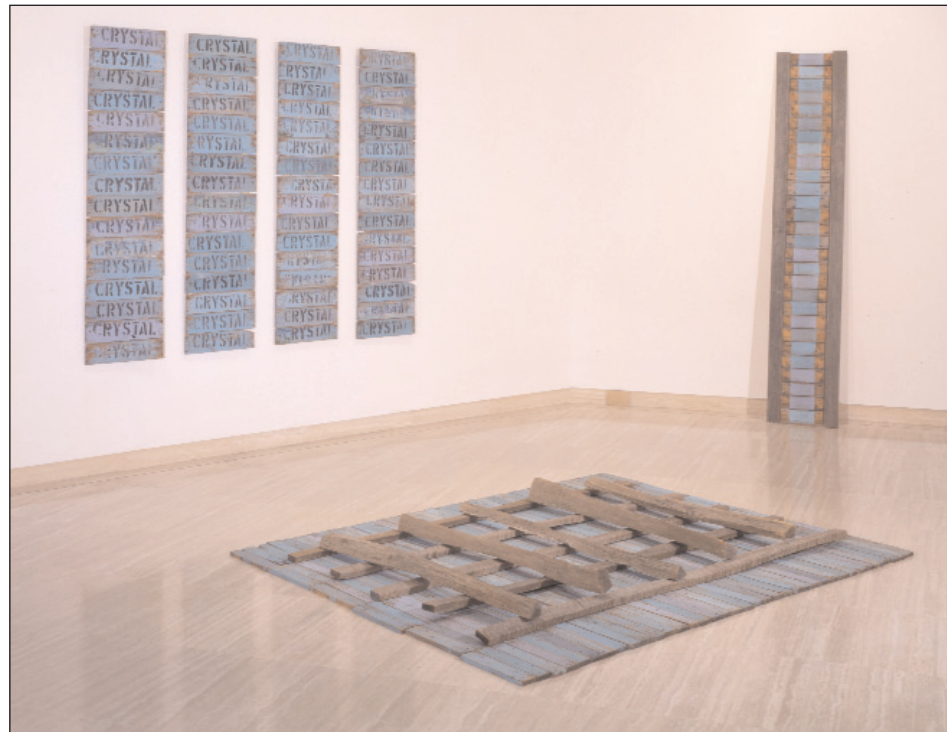
## **The Australian Landscape**

There is a strong tradition in Australian art of looking at the landscape. The art work of Rosalie Gascoigne follows this preoccupation. Her particular response is to find beauty and poetry in the ordinary things that represent and allude to the changes in terrain and climate.

Through the selection and arrangement of objects that have both responded to their environment, and on which the environment has had a physical effect, reveals both an emotional and intellectual response to her surroundings.

## **Modernism and the Grid**

The movement in art, architecture, music and literature known as Modernism flourished at the beginning of the twentieth century. Based on idealism and new ideas, a key visual element of many of the art works of the period was the grid, a square or a rectangle divided evenly. An underlying linear foundation against which a work is constructed.



Rosalie Gascoigne: *String of blue days* 1984. found wood

## **Installation**

*assemblage: sculpture using pre-existing, sometimes "found" objects, that may or may not contribute their original identities to the total content of the work.*

**Installations, or assemblages, are an integral part of art practice in the late 20th century. The collection and placement of items to make a work of art that has a message, or draws attention to an issue, is a powerful and challenging medium. The display of this type of work can in itself be unconventional. For example, elements may intrude on to the floor or project from the walls. The choice of materials is often intentionally confronting, challenging the viewer to question and make judgements.**

Much of Gascoigne's work is based on a tightly structured arrangement of fundamental shapes - squares, rectangles and their composite variations - within a grid.

The artist uses found objects, collected over long periods of time and kept until they could be incorporated into an assemblage, as the basis of her palette, achieving rhythm and movement through the repetition and patterning of multiples of what was once industrial debris.

## **Abstraction and Selection**

The work of Rosalie Gascoigne could be described as non representational. However, through the selection of particular materials and motifs, she clearly refers to the physical world around her.

Her works are highly evocative, general statements that reveal detail, feelings and sensations. By careful placement, without altering or modifying the materials themselves in any way, the artist is able to convey very accurately a sense of a particular place.

## **Re-cycled Materials in Art**

The use of ready-mades and re-cycled materials for works of art is also a characteristic of the *Modern* movement. Equally a concern for the environment and the disposal of waste material, a practice of the *Green* movement, has also gained interest within the arts. The inherent beauty of found objects is also exploited by many artists in their work .

Art changes the way we see the world

Produced by the Art Gallery of Western Australia with the aim of making art more accessible for visitors

# LOOKING CLOSELY AT

## *String of blue days*

The title of the work, *String of blue days*, suggests a series or a sequence of elements. Perhaps also a period of time. Does it conjure up feelings or emotions? Does it suggest a season? What time of the year could be described as a string of blue days?

The work is made up of three elements, one on the floor, the other two vertical, one hanging on the wall and the other leaning against the wall. Do you regard it as one work, or do you think about each part separately? For example, do the parts stand on their own or do they need each other? If you were to remove one what would be the overall effect?

Conventionally two dimensional works such as paintings are traditionally displayed in a frame, hung on a wall. The artist has made a frame for one part of this work. This part is not hanging, but standing on the floor leaning up against the wall. Why has the artist done this ?



Rosalie Gascoigne *String of blue days* 1984. found wood

There are very few colours in this work. How would you describe the colours? How do they make you feel? Do they evoke emotions or are they reminiscent of a time of year?

### **Repetition and Movement**

The artist is interested in ideas of repetition, movement and rhythm. selecting the materials for her works very carefully. Notice that there is a regularity about the size and shape of the pieces of wood that make up the assemblage.

The evenly placed nail holes also contribute to the pattern effect. Other holes, made by worms and animals are also visible. Randomly scattered over parts of the work they also contribute to the story, giv-

The composition of the whole work is based on the square, the rectangle and the grid. There are only right angles in the composition.

The parts are essentially flat except for the square that is placed on the floor, which has a grid construction made of buckled and weathered pieces of wood. This contrasts to the two vertical parts which are made of cut and shaped wood. The unpainted wood of the floor piece however, still retains the crooked shape of the tree from which it was cut. Why do you think the artist did this?

### **Found Materials**

The type of material used in the art work is a particular favorite of the artist. Do you recognise where the pieces of wood came from? For example, do the words repeated on the wood give information about their past use? What effect has the climate had on the materials chosen?

Do the materials also tell you anything about the country of origin of the art work or is a location suggested by the elements that make up the work?

Do you think of a rural or urban landscape when you

Rosalie Gascoigne does little to the materials that she finds preferring to leave them in their natural state and allowing them to tell their own story.

There are layers of paint on much of the wood in this work. Which colour was the first and which the last layer of paint to be applied? Do you think it was the intention of the person who painted the wood that several colours show through?

