

Clarence Riverway Sculpture - Yamba

'FURCULA'

The Clarence River has a rich history of fishing, gathering, aquaculture and river based recreation, the rituals and symbolism of these activities form the concepts for the sculpture. Boats are synonymous with the river, and the river mouth adjacent to Turners Beach is where they must cross the "bar" to go out to sea.



I envisage the sculpture will pay a quiet and subtle recognition to the boats that have gone down when crossing the bar, and more importantly, to the people that have lost their lives. It is tradition that sailors past, and perhaps present, include superstitions and rituals when going out to sea. Many of these rituals have a practical function such as rhymes to remember weather patterns or navigation, and other more frivolous rituals.

As a river bar can be a dangerous part of the river it could induce superstitious behaviour or rituals to bring luck for a safe crossing. This is where the sculpture will have a conceptual context.

Although not necessarily a maritime ritual, two people pull on a forked furcula bone until it breaks, and whoever gets the largest piece can make a wish. This custom of breaking the wish bone or "Merrythought" has had origins as far back as 17th century. One may say that it could be the crew of a fishing or pleasure boat that makes a wish for safe passage out of the mouth of the Clarence River, over the bar and into the open waters of the Pacific Ocean.

The formation of the four wish bones are also symbolic of the ribbed armature of boats, especially older style ones. Boats washed onto river banks after flood, and derelicts left to decompose, reveal their internal structures. Also, the wish bone is reminiscent of a large marine mammals' ribcage, such as a whale. Whales are perhaps something one would encounter washed ashore after rough weather, disease, or an accidental event.

This sculpture, due to being situated in a harsh marine environment, is cast in bronze. Bronze is a beautiful and enduring medium, and the soft patina that will develop with age, as well as polish marks where people touch the sculpture will, in itself, be a work in progress. As bronze is a non ferrous metal, it will not rust, it will simply patina over time. Patina is a film that forms over oxidised bronze and appears greenish in colour. The basic weathering nature of bronze is proven, in that it has been used for centuries. The surface will mature and take on its own personality over time.

Cass Samms – Visual Artist

