

Clarence Riverway Sculpture- Maclean

PRODUCTIVE LANDSCAPE

I have chosen the theme of “Productive Landscape” from the five suggested themes but it is impossible to separate elements of all themes when the creative links start to form.

Images of sugar cane, prawn trawlers and Scotsmen come to mind when Maclean is mentioned but my thoughts turned back to the river with images of early settlers transporting the bounty of the Valley to market, creaking wooden hulls and billowing sails.

Early development of the sail image came almost full circle with the emergence of the cane knife shape.

As you look at the sculpture, you see two cane knives embedded in a tree stump. The knives twist upward, turning on themselves like a blazing cane fire. The fires also remind us that fire was used to manage the environment long before there were European settlers here.

Stand back; now, take in the whole metal part of the sculpture. The universal image of a fish reminds you that the river has been, and hopefully always will be, a source of food and industry for the people of this area. The central blade tells us that timber has always been a mainstay of the economy of the whole Valley. From the earliest cedar getters who pioneered the river to the sustained plantations that now cover large tracks of the upper Clarence.

The stone suggests a tree trunk; the remains of a perhaps once majestic tree that has given our earliest residents a canoe, shelter, firewood and then timber to build a new country. We see it embedded in the earth to remind us that the Indigenous people have a solid and ancient connection to the land. In the stone base you see an incised pointed oval. This represents the canoes the Yaegl and Bundjalung people of the lower river used for fishing and transport.

The position of the sculpture provides the best line of sight, even visible from the deck of a boat on the river. The sculpture is over 4 meters tall and is made of stainless steel and sand stone.(both long lasting and low maintenance materials.) The concrete base is 1.8 X 1.5 meters, set 2 meters back from the kerb, proving a clear line of sight for everyone, including nearby residents.

Stuart Payne – Visual Artist

