

Apparatus for Transmission of Biological Discovery

The "Apparatus for Transmission of Biological Discovery" was gifted to the Bondi Surf Life Saving Club in 1908 to assist in monitoring the water for the increasingly large crowds frequenting the beach. The apparatus enabled the operator to identify hazards below the waves, in particular creatures which may be large enough to predate on bathers.



Concept Statement

I frequently explore 'imagined histories' in my art, developing fictional apparatus with accompanying narratives that prompt consideration as to whether or not they are "real". For this commission the 'imagined history' narrative highlights important information regarding the formation of the Bondi Surf Life Saving Club as well as the evolution of attitudes towards sea bathing ...

The "Apparatus for Transmission of Biological Discovery" was gifted to the Bondi Surf Life Saving club in 1908 to assist in monitoring the water for the increasingly large crowds frequenting the beach. The apparatus enabled the operator to identify hazards below the waves, in particular creatures which may have been large enough to predate on bathers. Very little documentation exists regarding the origins of this machine, with some speculating it was an elaborate hoax; the fantastical sea creature portrayed inside the viewing chamber seemingly supports this theory. Many long term locals however, maintain that the creature was real, pointing to an 1896 article in "The Queenbeyan Age"¹ which describes a very similar 9ft, furred and finned creature caught off Bondi. Originally located on the ocean front, the apparatus was decommissioned in 1912. Recently refurbished and installed at to its current site to the delight of residents and tourists alike.

The apparatus has an industrial, retro-futuristic aesthetic that includes a viewing chamber and crank handle. The chamber houses an automata theatrette visible through a porthole. Turning the crank handle powers an internal generator and lighting as well as rotating a small sterling silver sculpture depicting the fantastical sea creature housed within the theatrette.

From a distance, the work's striking form provides an orientation point within the streetscape while its seductive materials and detailed finish draw viewers in for a more intimate experience. At close range appreciators uncover the 'imagined histories' narrative, while their interaction (winding crank and viewing the internal work) further unfolds the experience. The many layers offer multiple connection points, creating an identifiable and memorable marker for the community as well as providing visitors with a 'photo worthy' object, connected to place.

The artwork's palette of robust materials including stainless steel, copper, bronze and brass will develop a patina over time further supporting the narrative that the apparatus is from an earlier era.

1. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/31172837>



Automata Theatrette

The apparatus includes a crank handle and viewing chamber housing an automata theatrette which is viewed through a porthole. Turning the crank handle powers an internal generator and lighting as well as rotating a small sterling silver sculpture depicting the fantastical sea creature housed within the theatrette. The creature will be developed after further research undertaken during design development stage of the commission.



Inspiration for automata theatrette



Examples of small artworks created for the interior chambers of previous sculptures



Kinetic artwork of a similar finish by Russell Anderson

Biography - Russell Anderson

Russell Anderson's art and design practice is a wide ranging exploration of public art and kinetic sculpture from micro to monumental. Working across public and private sectors, narrative, interactivity and play are key elements in his work which includes icon pieces, innovative urban furniture and bespoke playground equipment. Russell is best known for his absurd whimsical apparatus including Bubble Machine II, the tea bag jiggler series and his 'imagined histories' works.

Russell has highly developed fabrication skills including metal work, pattern making and casting, concrete, mosaics, timber, and the incorporation of kinetics, electronics, robotics, custom lighting, and solar technology his work. He employs traditional fabrication techniques alongside additive manufacturing technologies such as parametric modelling and high definition rapid prototyping to create beautiful, highly detailed artworks. By using technology as a process rather than a material its use is often invisible to the observer.

Russell has 17 years' experience as a full time artist specific to innovative public art practice, including design, construction, project management and installation. He has completed over 40 public art commissions over the course of his career.

Russell lives with his partner – jeweller Rebecca Ward – and their daughters Ren and Rata on acreage bordering a national park, in the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast. His off-grid completely solar powered workshop/studio is equipped with CNC tooling and a full machine shop.

Russell has a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) and a Master of Arts through the Queensland University of Technology.





Bondi Beach Historical Context

- Early 1800s Swimming at Sydney's beaches was considered a controversial pastime

- 1830's Sea bathing a popular activity despite being officially banned between 9am and 8pm

- June 1882 Bondi became a public beach

- 1884 The first tramway reached the beach

- 1902 Joe Gocher flouted Section 77 of the Police Offences Act which prohibited bathing between 9am and 8pm. Following this, sea bathing was allowed.

- 1903 Waverley Council built the first surf bathing sheds

- 1907 In response to concerns about public safety the world's first formally documented surf lifesaving club, the Bondi Surf Bathers' Life Saving Club, was formed

- 1908 **First reported use of "Apparatus for Transmission of Biological Discovery" by Bondi Surf Bathers' Life Saving Club**

- 1912 **"Apparatus for Transmission of Biological Discovery" decommissioned**

- 1929 An average of 60,000 people were visiting the beach on a summer weekend day

- 1930s Bondi was drawing not only local visitors but people from elsewhere in Australia and overseas. Advertising at the time referred to it as "Playground of the Pacific".

