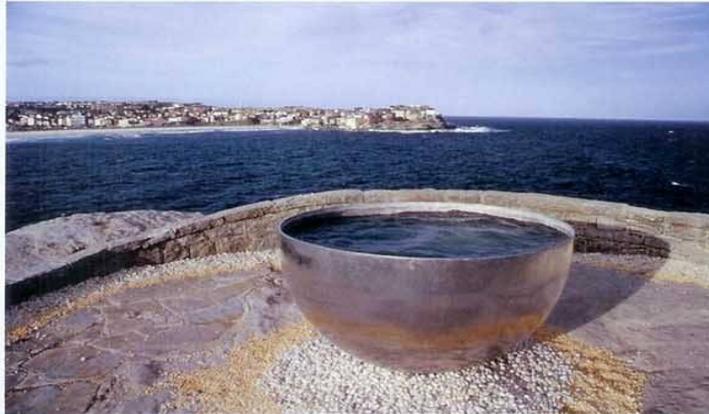


In just six years *Sculpture by the Sea*, a free display of local and international sculptures along Sydney's Bondi to Tamarama coastal cliff walk, has become phenomenally successful. It has grown from a one-day event, which was organised from a lounge room and started with a bank account of \$100, to an event which spreads across three weeks, attracting 300,000 visitors. Now it is gaining a global reputation.

The growth of *Sculpture by the Sea* is evident in its increasing international flavour. This year over 50 sculptors from countries such as America, Britain, Sweden, Japan, France, Papua New Guinea, Norway, Indonesia and Italy sent submissions to the exhibition; 17 were chosen. And, following last year's showcase of Icelandic sculpture, this year there will be a mini showcase of British sculpture, funded by the British Council.

Curators, notably from Hong Kong and Singapore, are visiting and, for the first time, there will be an international judge. Professor Glynn Williams, Head of the School of Fine Art and Professor of Sculpture at the Royal College of Art, London, will join the two local judges, Laura Back, curator of sculpture at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, and Ron Robertson-Swann OAM, sculptor and lecturer at the National Art School. They will decide the \$20,000 Sydney Water Sculpture Prize. This year the Society is donating a prize of \$5,000 and the Task Force will once again assist



## Sculpture by the Sea goes global

WORLD ATTENTION FOR ART ON A SITE  
MADE BY GOD AND  
THE MAYOR OF WAVERLEY



the organisers.

David Handley, director and founder of *Sculpture by the Sea*, says he wants to make the exhibition better known internationally because he'd like to introduce Australian sculpture to the international sculpture world. Two years ago he sold the first sculptures from the exhibition to overseas collectors. John Petrie, for example, had his first major sale to an English collector, who installed the work in his chateau in the south of France.

"This need to showcase Australian sculpture really goes back to a bit of a personal chip on the shoulder," explains Handley. "When I lived and travelled overseas, the rest of the world

basically thought of Australia as a country with kangaroos and beaches that produces sports stars and the occasional movie star. I want in a small way to try and address that.

"And whilst the market in Australia is building up, I think it would be silly to ignore the potential for the exhibition, which is in one of the most internationally known locations in Australia, to showcase Australian sculpture abroad."

This year the exhibition features more than 100 sculptors (from a record 500 submissions), including Richard Goodwin, Jan King, Orest Keywan, Christopher Hodges and Michael Snape. In addition, Fiona Hall and Michael Le Grand are this year's JB Were Distinguished Invited Artists.

There will also be an inaugural *Sculpture Inside* exhibition at the

Bondi Pavilion, held simultaneously with the main exhibition. This will showcase smaller works by the sculptors.

Sculptor Ron Robertson-Swann, who has been involved with *Sculpture by the Sea* since its inception, continues to be enormously enthusiastic about the event and says that sculptors generally are very supportive. But, for him, the most important thing about *Sculpture by the Sea* is the public response.

"I think it has had a dramatic impact on the public profile of sculpture," he says. "The public genuinely enjoys discovering the sculpture. A lot of these people would never walk through the doors of a public institution or a commercial art gallery, and yet they are literally stumbling across it. It is one of the few arts events that people can really go to and enjoy and engage with."

Handley has joked that God and the mayor of Waverley, the council responsible for managing the coastal walk, got together to produce the most perfect site for an outdoor exhibition of sculpture. The spectacular setting, its accessibility to the public, and the fact that small sculptures can be placed quite happily next to monumental works, are some of the reasons why *Sculpture by the Sea* has been so successful.

Handley came up with the idea for the exhibition about eight years ago when he was living in Prague and went to visit a sculpture park set amongst 13th century ruins near the town of Klatovy in northern Bohemia. Returning to Sydney, he went for a walk with friends at Bondi and decided it was the obvious site for an Art by the Sea event, so-called



because at that stage he was thinking of including paintings, but soon dropped that idea once he realised the liability of the wind and rain.

"I started *Sculpture by the Sea* with an aim to produce a major free to the public visual arts event for Sydney, which would be known nationally and internationally," he says. "But at the time I was blissfully unaware of how difficult it was to produce these exhibitions and the problems some of these exhibitions, internationally, have had in the past. Generally this is because they have been artist-run and artist-focused and haven't dealt with the marketing and financial side or the security side of things.

And whilst we put a lot of effort into working with the artists, we also put a lot of effort into working with our sponsors as well.

"Now *Sculpture by the Sea* is generating a lot of interest overseas because no-one has really been able to pull off what we have done from scratch, to keep it going and to keep getting the numbers of people coming to the exhibition. It is really a combination of the site, the fact that so many people visit Bondi just to see the exhibition, the quality and diversity of the sculptures and the significant increase in sales that is attracting all these artists from around the country and world. It is extraordinarily exciting how quickly there has been this international interest, but really we are just at the start of it."

**BRONWYN WATSON**

*Sculpture by the Sea* is on from October 31 to November 17. For information phone (02) 9357 1457 or check website: [www.sculpturebythesea.com](http://www.sculpturebythesea.com). For details of our Contempo guided walks, see page 36.