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Australasian Art & Culture

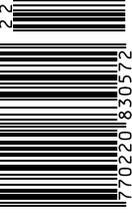


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Adelaide Biennial, Auckland Art Fair, Michaël Borremans, Candice Breitz, Bindi Cole Chocka, Teju Cole, Jack Lanagan Dunbar, Katharina Grosse, Lyn & Tony, Tom Polo, Prue Stent & Honey Long, Tin & Ed, James Turrell, Louise Weaver, Lee Kun-Yong & more

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LOUISE WEAVER

NATURE/ NURTURE

For the Melbourne artist Louise Weaver, art occurs in the spaces between thinking, making and living.

WRITTEN by NADIAH ABDULRAHIM

Soft music plays in the background, and there is a sense of calm as I walk into Louise Weaver's studio, which is in her home. There is no separation between work and home, or work and life, for the multidisciplinary artist. The room is tidy and sparse, and the walls are bare except for two works leaning against the wall: *Appaloosa (Ball Park)* and *In Falling Rain and Halfflight (Fold)*, both from 2016.

Weaver has been an artist for more than 30 years, but there is surprisingly little information about her online. She might just prefer it this way. The softly spoken artist says that even early on in her career, her focus wasn't on achieving gallery representation, though that has been a nice bonus. "It's always been about making art," she says.

Weaver lives in Prahran, not far from Melbourne's CBD, but her work is very much informed by nature and the environment. Weaver was born in Mansfield, Victoria, and grew up on the

land, on a "very isolated property" in the country. She was an astute observer of her surroundings from a young age, becoming very aware of the seasons and the Indigenous culture of the people who lived there. "Finding things like axe heads on the ground at school, that's kind of moving and elemental. You feel like you're just passing through, you don't own the land [...] not that we really did," she says.

Our conversation circles around time, history, change and destiny, and Weaver says she has always wanted to be an artist. "It always felt a bit predestined, really, if you believe in that sort of thing. It felt like it wasn't a choice. It was something effortless; something was moving me towards this outcome."

Weaver moves in her own time, but she is constantly creating, making and thinking. Art, she says, is not something she creates for the next exhibition. "It's never been that.

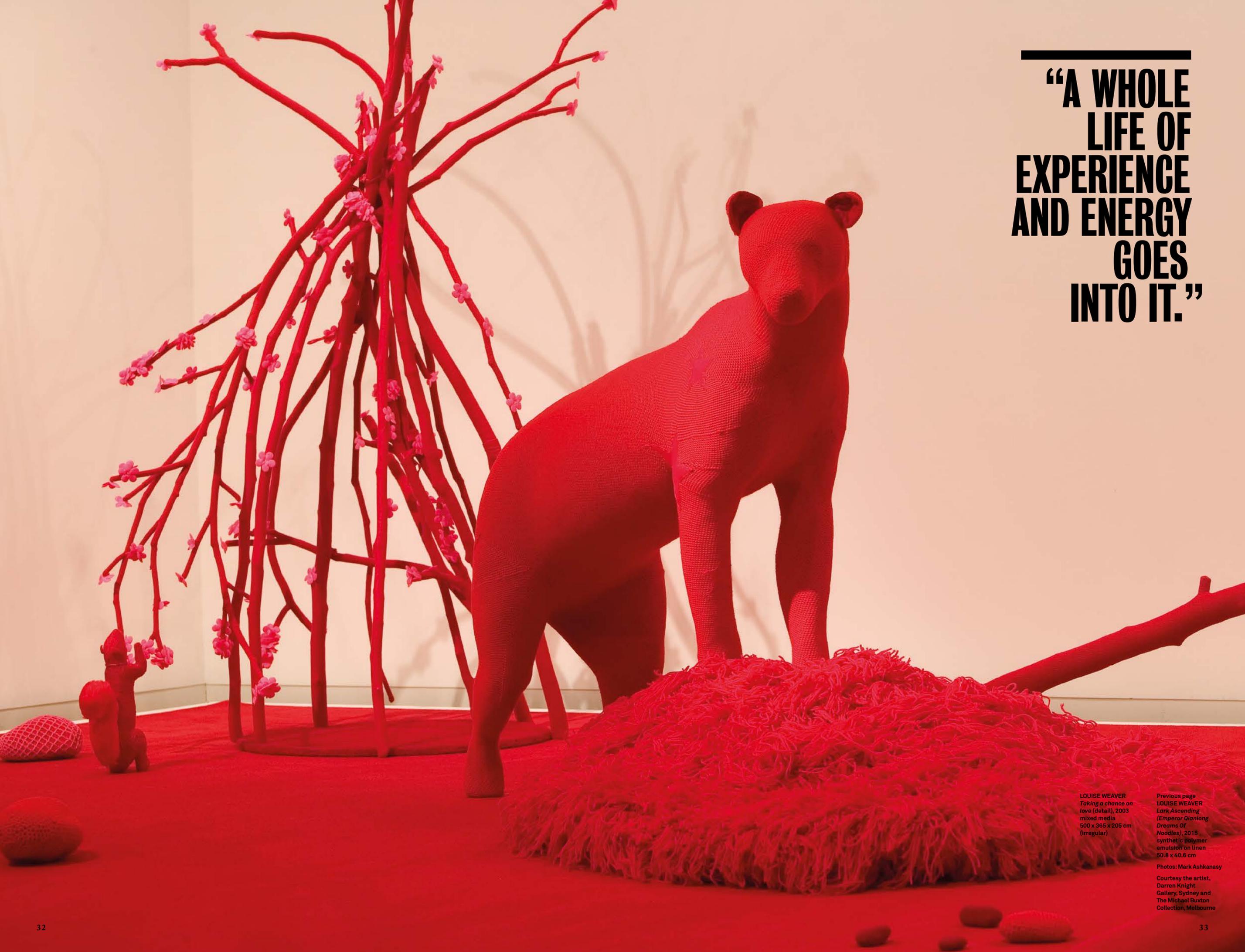
I think people get forced into that behaviour sometimes, through recognition – which is wonderful – and success. But learning to be able to cope with the long hours in the studio when that doesn't happen is all part of the same journey."

"Anything I've made, I've made the time to learn how to do. It has to come from you," she says. "You can't expect people to give you everything you need. You have the opportunity to do things, but if you really want to, you'll achieve it regardless of circumstances or financial means."

In 2012, Weaver's *Bird hide*, a work from 2011, was included in *Contemporary Australia: Women*, at the Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane. It's a screen made out of Japanese paper, plastic, linen thread and beads, among other things, and measures 450 x 540 centimetres. It took many hours of dedicated labour to construct, but that's not the sort of 'time' she likes to think



**“A WHOLE
LIFE OF
EXPERIENCE
AND ENERGY
GOES
INTO IT.”**



LOUISE WEAVER
*Taking a chance on
love* (detail), 2003
mixed media
500 x 365 x 205 cm
(irregular)

Previous page
LOUISE WEAVER
*Lark Ascending
(Emperor Qianlong
Dreams Of
Noodles)*, 2015
synthetic polymer
emulsion on linen
50.8 x 40.6 cm

Photos: Mark Ashkanasy
Courtesy the artist,
Darren Knight
Gallery, Sydney and
The Michael Buxton
Collection, Melbourne

LOUISE WEAVER
Apparition (Crystal Yeti), 2017
 152 x 106 cm
 synthetic polymer emulsion on linen

about, or even necessarily how she likes to quantify her work. She relays an anecdote about asking a Zen calligraphy master the amount of time it took to create a calligraphy work, saying it might have taken ten seconds, but also 80 years. “A whole life of experience and energy goes into it.”

Evolution, metamorphosis and growth are major components of Weaver’s work and life. It is clear that the two are interrelated and interchangeable. One of her philosophies is that things are never really at a point of resolution. “I have to spend time with things in order to appreciate them, or learn to love them,” Weaver says of her work. “But that’s often the most rewarding – when I’ve had to struggle to get somewhere, often through a circuitous route.”

Weaver’s first love was painting, but she has also produced sculptures and objects over the years. In fact, she is probably better known for her bright, crocheted and stitched sculptures and installations, including the arrestingly red *Taking a chance on love* (2003). According to Weaver, the use of that particular red was an experiment with optics: specifically, how staring at a particular shade of red for some time produces an afterimage that is green. She calls it a “greening of the environment”, despite the fact that all you can see is red.

Her recent works are more two-dimensional, but she still sees them as objects. Conversely, she tends to look at her sculptures from a two-dimensional



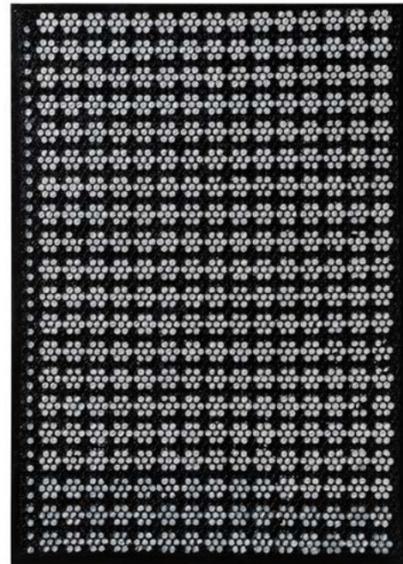
LOUISE WEAVER
White Flower, 2017
 152 x 106 cm
 synthetic polymer emulsion on linen

perspective. “For me, the joy of being an artist is that you constantly experiment, that there’s a new discovery every day. You have to see that to feel energised, otherwise you’re in a vacuum.”

The end result is always dictated by where the ideas and experiments lead her, and she is not one to shy away from pushing the boundaries of the material she works with. “At the moment [my work is] predominantly two-dimensional with canvas support. But it’s more about how far I can take the potential of paint as a medium, how far can that be manipulated or altered while still needing to have some sense of it being grounded in a convention,” Weaver says.

Weaver’s current aim is to try and do more with less – as a moral responsibility towards the environments, and also in terms of actual material and colour. “How much do we need to take from our environment?” she asks.

Despite the more muted colour palette, her recent abstract works are anything but. Over a metre in height and width, the works are atmospheric and possess a quiet, humming energy. These paintings may be abstract in appearance, but they recall familiar impressions, scenes and textures, often with help from the titles Weaver has given them. She sees titles as a bridge towards recognition and understanding, and often her titles draw upon her interests, including Zen Buddhism, Greek mythology, ancient history, architecture and archaeology.



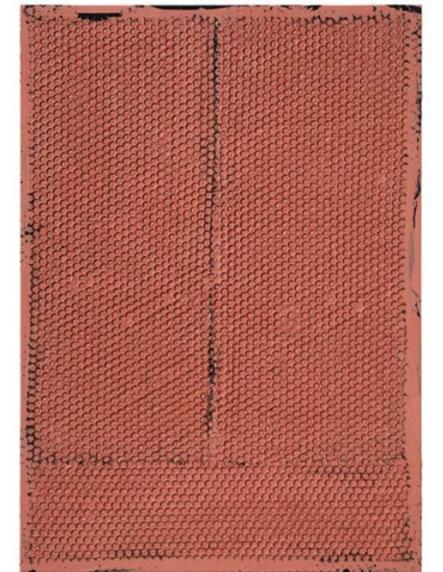
Installation view
 LOUISE WEAVER
Animate/Inanimate, 2013
 TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, Victoria



LOUISE WEAVER
Backlit against the blaze (fire song), 2016
 synthetic polymer emulsion on linen
 152 x 106 cm

Photos: Mark Ashkanasy

Courtesy the artist, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney and The Michael Buxton Collection, Melbourne



One of Weaver’s recent works is titled *Avalanche*, a nod to Turner’s 1810 painting, *The Fall of an Avalanche in the Grisons*. *Avalanche* is both a recollection of her firsthand experiences of being in the snow, and her impression, and exploration, of environmental and natural disasters. These are not normally positive experiences, but Weaver counters this by saying, “out of cataclysmic change, there’s a force of renewal and regrowth.”

Weaver’s view of the world is an incredibly affirmative one, and she readily admits it. “I have to live my life with optimism and hope, and wonder at what could be possible,” she says.

Before the end of our meeting, Weaver shares another anecdote – this one is about the wall at the Imperial Palace in Beijing missing a brick. “[It] means there’s the potential and possibility for growth, that something can keep evolving. It’s not ever complete or finite.” If people can take that away from her work she’ll be happy, she says – that would mean success. **V**

Louise Weaver’s works show at the Art Gallery of New South Wales as part of *The Lady and the Unicorn* until June 24, 2018. Weaver will also show as part of *Soft Core* at the Horsham Regional Gallery from May 19 to July 22, 2018 and *Obsessed: Compelled to Make*, an Australian Design Centre touring exhibition at the Cairns Regional Gallery from April 15 to June 17, 2018.

Louise Weaver is represented by Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.
 darrenknightgallery.com