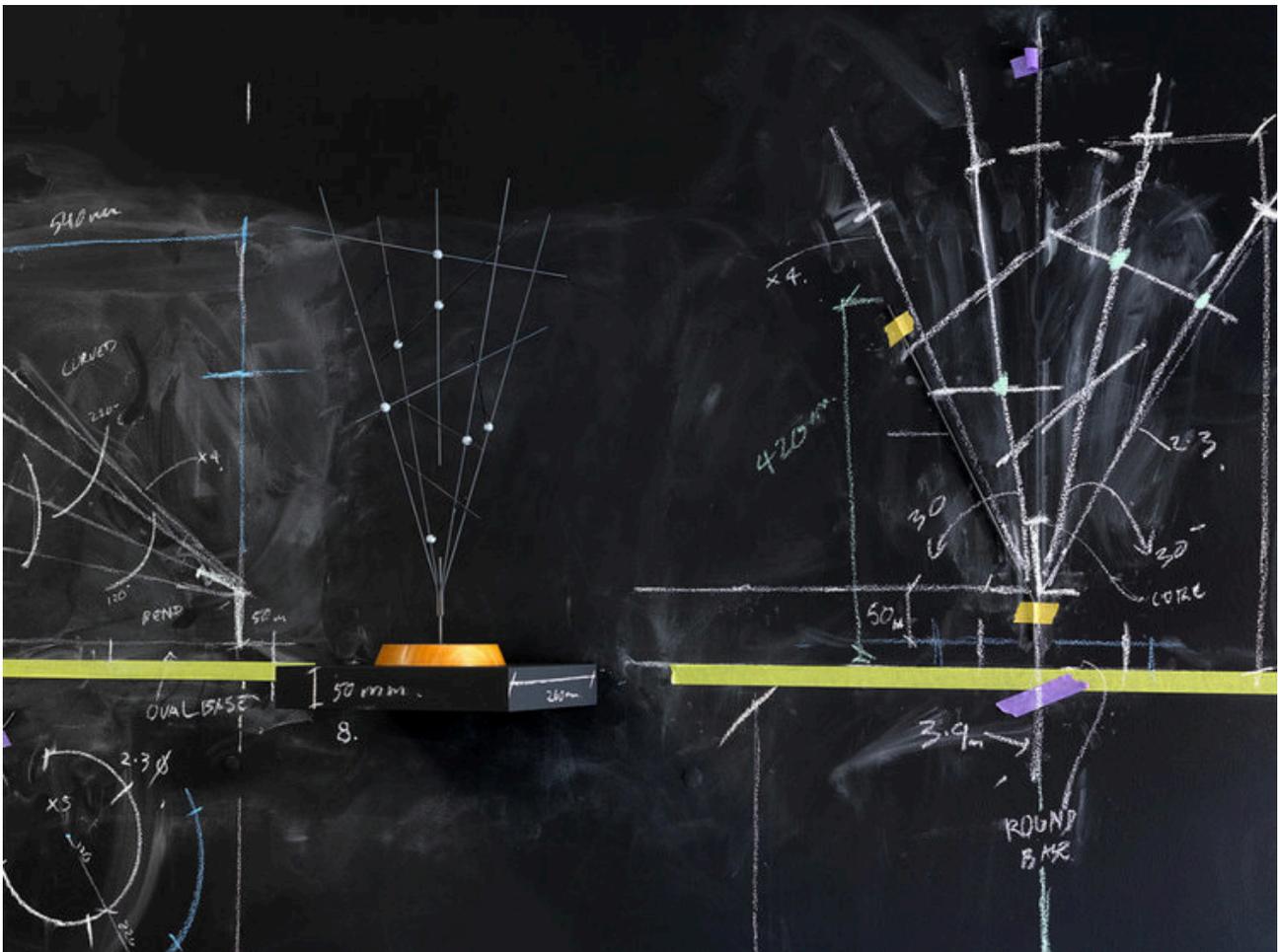


# RADIANT PAVILION

## Sue Lorraine interviewed by Natasha Sutilla

During Radiant Pavilion 2017, Sue Lorraine presented *Precisely*, a personal and touching solo exhibition reflecting on the life of her late father, Hans Lorraine. Through the reference and remake of objects left behind by Hans, Sue paid homage to his life as a father, architect and artist. I was interested in how Sue navigated the history of her father's objects and how this intimate portrait sits within the context of her practice.

NS: What I found striking about *Precisely* was the handling of a very personal subject matter through the language of making. Did you find that the sensitivity of the content challenged the way you approached making?

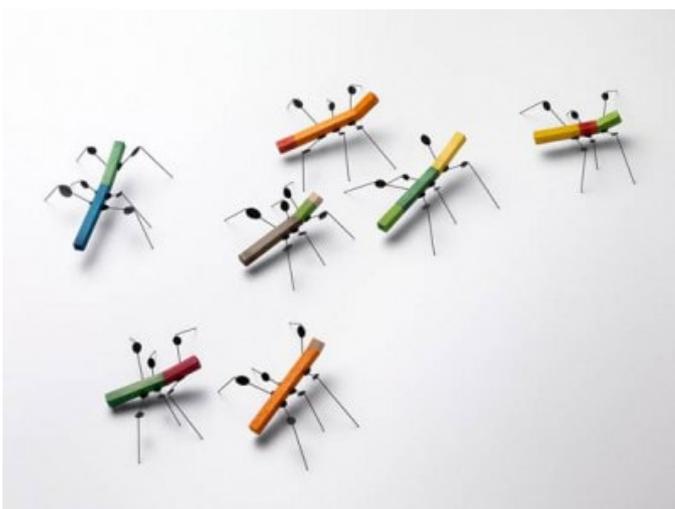


Sue Lorraine, *Catching time model*, 2017, Heat coloured mild steel, blu tack, acrylic paint, Tasmania oak base, and chalkboard diagram. Photo by Grant Hancock

SL: Having the time and space to make this work was a great privilege, it gave me the opportunity to reflect on my father's life and work, and on my relationship with him. One of Dad's characteristics was that he didn't like to waste anything, he didn't really believe in recycling, he just thought things shouldn't become redundant. He approached his artwork the same way, in that he would fix things up rather than start again. This is the polar opposite of the way I work, so for this body of work, I consciously tried to work the way Dad would have. I didn't start again when things went awry, in pursuit of the perfect result, I started and stuck to the piece...this was at times, for me, very uncomfortable.



Sue Lorraine, *Precisely* Installation view, 2017, *The Apron*, Desk-top vinyl, leather and waxed cotton thread and *Dragonfly* brooches, Clutch pencil, mild steel.  
Photo by Grant Hancock



Sue Lorraine, *Stick Insect* brooches, 2009, Cuisenaire rods and heat coloured mild steel.  
Photo by Grant Hancock

NS: I especially enjoyed the reference to incidental objects as part of your father's portrait. The curved bodies of the Dragonfly brooches for example, carry such a charming anecdote of Hans' collection of mechanical pencils (warped through a habit of carrying them in his back pocket and sitting on them). Can you speak about what draws you to these kinds of objects as a maker?

SL: The 'incidental objects' were the starting point for all the work. They were worn, personal and poignant and felt like treasures much more valuable than their material worth. The passage of time and use that each of these objects embodied was precious to me.

The Apron piece, for example, told a story of Dad's time in Australia. The original apron was a modest cotton apron hand-stitched and embroidered with his initials, made during his time as a Dunera internee in the early 1940s. The Apron work in the show is a copy of the cotton version, made from the 1960's vinyl sheet off Dad's drawing board. The piece is about time, transition, continuity and labour.

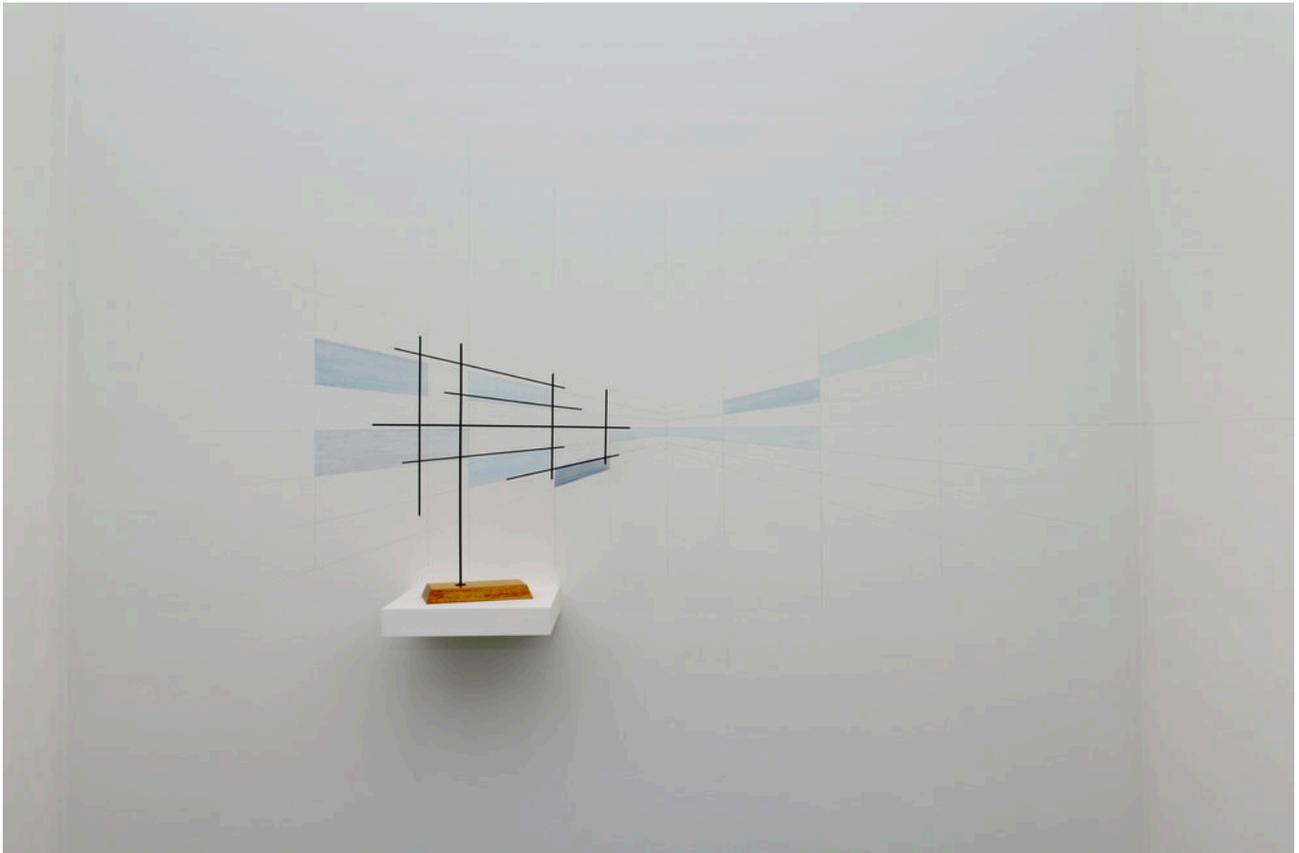
In this exhibition the personal objects were extremely important, but I have been using incidental object in my work for quite some time. I'm interested in the narrative of objects and the reinterpretation of these narratives. The incidental objects often provide the starting point, I generally work or think from the object out, rather than trying to find a thing or material to suit a purpose. I'm also drawn to more humble objects and materials; the common, everyday and often overlooked items. This is one of the reasons I like to use steel, it's not precious, the value of the piece comes with the love, labour and passion.

NS: In previous work, you've constructed jewellery and objects from Cuisenaire rods and employed the visual language of scientific models. In *Precisely*, we see the you create three-dimensional models representing sound and perspective. What draws you to create objects which have this kind of instructive quality?

SL: If I think back over the development of my work and practice I would say that the theme running through all of it is the retelling of a story. In particular retelling the narrative that our institutions present to us.

I am very interested in how we have shaped our relationship and understanding of science, biology and physics through public collections. Having spent a lot of time researching historic collections and museums of natural history and other scientific disciplines, I hope I have created work that offers another interpretation. I enjoy mixing historical and contemporary issues, traditional and non traditional jewellery materials, creating my own index of objects.

Basically I'm just curious about how things work, how we have come to understand the past and the present, through objects and how this understanding is shaped and shifted by the changing times, it's an imprecise science.



Sue Lorraine, *Perspective model*, 2017, Heat coloured mild steel, Tasmanian oak base, pencil and watercolour, wall painting. Photo by Grant Hancock

*Precisely* by Sue Lorraine  
was presented from 25 August to 28 September 2017 at  
Spare Room, RMIT University as part of Radiant Pavilion  
Melbourne Contemporary Jewellery and Object Biennial.

[www.radiantpavilion.com.au](http://www.radiantpavilion.com.au)