

**Jan King**

A SURVEY EXHIBITION

2003 – 2018

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Defiance Gallery at Mary Place  
12 Mary Place, Paddington

**4 July – 26 July 2018**

Defiance Gallery  
47 Enmore Road, Newtown

**27 June – 26 July 2018**



Jan King is doing something truly subversive in contemporary sculpture. She is not making spectacular coloured artefacts in fibreglass, 3D printings or monumental pieces of kitsch. Her works don't fire laser beams or boast a full repertoire of gags and gimmicks. For more than 30 years she has been making sculptures from steel, by herself, in the studio. The great advantage of such pieces is that they are low maintenance and don't need to be plugged into a power point. The disadvantage is that they invite quiet, calm contemplation – and who has time for such luxuries nowadays?

It's far too easy today to be dismissive of sculptors who persist in working with hard, intractable materials such as steel and stone. Contemporary culture rewards those who sculpt with ideas, employing assistants to do the manual labour.

This puts King at a disadvantage. Not only does she work with metal, she sees the content or meaning of a work as inseparable from its form. A piece will emerge organically under the guiding force of the artist's hand and eye, drawing on memories and observations. The result of such efforts is a body of work with a distinctive sensibility. King doesn't aim for a likeness, but a feeling. During the 16 years covered by this survey she has produced the most evocative works of her career.

Many of King's sculptures conjure a sense of place. Some of the smaller pieces resemble tabletop landscapes, with the sweeping arch in 'Bintubi' suggesting the paradox of a steel rainbow: an ephemeral moment of beauty captured for all time, albeit in a fossilised form.

In her large, vertical, freestanding sculptures one recognises the unruly forms of gum trees, their limbs and trunks draped with vines. It's not a snapshot of the forest but an abstract distillation of the life force that makes plants grow according to their own mysterious logic. This creative impulse is anti-monumental in the best sense. King's sculptures don't embody grand rhetorical ideas or memorialise great deeds,

they celebrate life in all its variety.

It's hardly surprising that most sculptors in metal have been men, but King has shown that such sculpture requires more than brute force. Her works have a lyrical dimension that sets them apart from the aggressively masculine efforts of many of her peers. They are dancers not warriors. Thin bands of metal weave graceful arabesques in space, twists of steel unfurl like plants reaching for the sun.

Few sculptors have a more precise understanding of how a piece touches the ground, striving to deceive gravity rather than declare it an enemy. As there are accomplished portraitists who can't paint feet so there are renowned sculptors that build their compositions on dense, lumpen bases. King does the opposite, imparting an air of lightness to pieces such as 'Ondinea' and 'Carica'. Many of her works feel like drawings in metal, with brisk lines connecting planes that never quite resolve themselves into geometrical perfection.

That same sense of lightness is apparent in King's wall reliefs that abandon the base altogether, perhaps aspiring to the condition of paintings. They may have sacrificed the third dimension but these works still invite us to look into them, as if they were windows onto an imaginary landscape.

When King places a slab of slate in the midst of a metal armature she introduces a different tactile quality. We feel the mass of this element – its hardness and brittleness, its geological origins. The steel becomes a framing device for the stone, a cultural construct declaring a relationship with a small piece of nature. It's almost a definition of art itself: a new object made in emulation of - or competition with - the natural world. That ceaseless dialogue unfolds in King's work with an almost effortless grace.

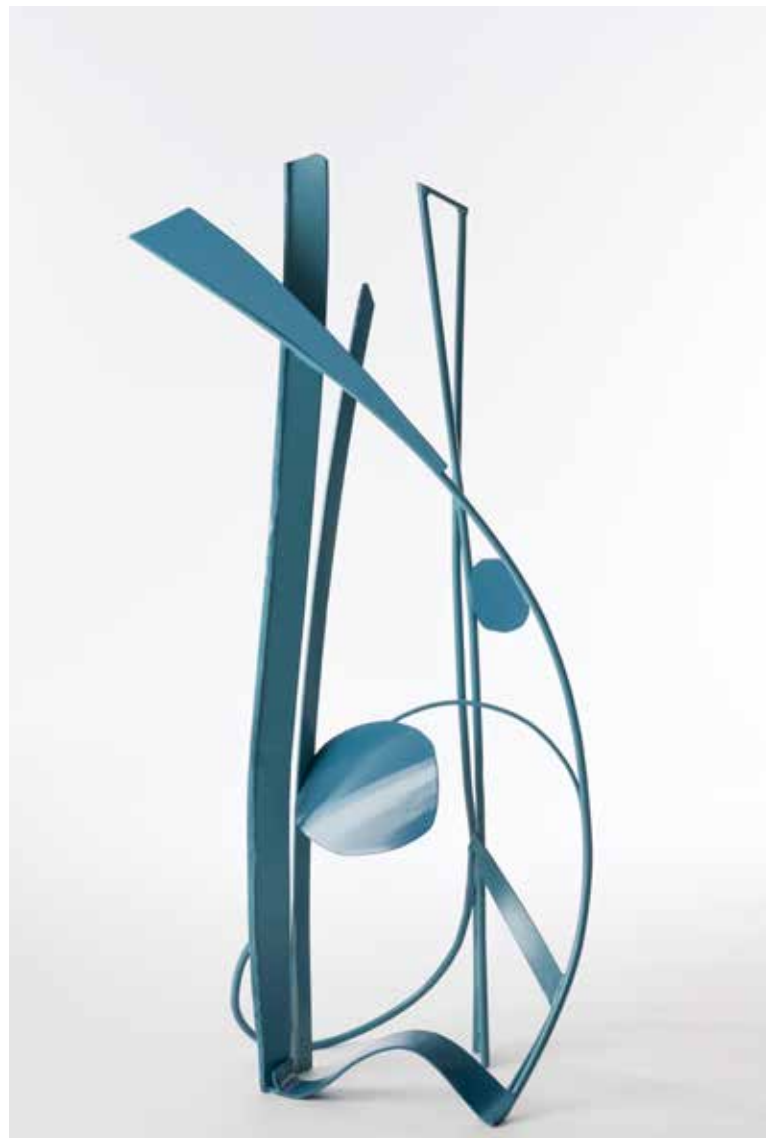
John McDonald 2018

'Making sculpture is creating form from the formless - exploiting the intrinsic nature of the material to create a unique experience. Compare this to music where each performance has a particular quality depending on the interpretation of the conductor and the sound of instruments. Every sculpture is a new experience, so I approach each one differently. The trick is to make the material express the individual character of each work. As with music, it is the combination of intention and material'

Jan King



'Monastery' 2006, steel painted, 198 x 110 x 70 cm



'Ondinea' 2018, steel painted, 187 x 78 x 48cm



'Carillon' 2015, steel painted, 169 x 68 x 75cm



'Donatello's Hat' 2007, steel painted, 189 x 66 x 57cm



'Frolic' 2015, steel painted, 174 x 73 x 58cm



'Carica' 2018, steel painted, 153 x 53 x 46cm



'Abyssinia' 2009, steel and slate, 189 x 104 x 73cm



'Tivoli' 2018, steel painted, 35 x 75 x 23cm





'Bintubi' 2017, steel and slate, 31 x 44 x 21cm



'Ubirr' 2016, steel and slate, 48 x 52 x 38cm



'Zagros' 2009, steel and slate, 22 x 29 x 42cm



'Manoora' 2011, steel and slate, 15 x 24 x 27cm



'Kaloola' 2011, steel and slate, 23 x 27 x 12cm



'Rudaki' 2009, steel and slate, 41 x 35 x 46cm



'Triad' 2012, steel and slate, 41 x 19 x 30cm



'Miroku' 2012, steel and slate, 46.5 x 31 x 8.5cm



'Karuan' 1993, steel painted, 107 x 172 x 12cm



'Antiope' 2014, steel, 40 x 38 x 38.5cm



'Acteon' 2013, steel, 35 x 40 x 38cm



'One O'clock skim' 2005, steel painted, 31 x 57 x 38cm



'Tumble' 2015, steel, 34 x 32 x 18cm



'Tirralina' 2018, steel, 41 x 22 x 20cm



'Masuke' 2018, steel, 49 x 29 x 20cm



'Beraja' 2018, steel, 44 x 22 x 17cm



'Minamia' 2016, steel, 37 x 18 x 16cm



'Chinese landscape' 2003, steel painted, 49 x 110 x 11cm



'Night wind' 2003, steel painted, 44 x 87 x 11cm





'Criss cross' 2007, steel, 35 x 41 x 9cm



'Biridu' 2016, steel, 54 x 62 x 7cm



'Warriga' 2016, steel, 78 x 35 x 7cm



'Visitation' 2014, steel, 33 x 23 x 8cm



'Welkin' 2012, steel painted and slate, 45 x 46 x 5cm

## Jan King

Born  
1945 Cunnamulla, Queensland, Australia

### Studies

1994 Art Omi, New York, USA  
1985 B.A. Visual Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney  
1979 New York Studio School, New York  
1971-75 National Art School, Sydney  
Alexander Mackie CAE, Sydney  
1970 Academia di Belle Arti, Perugia, Italy

### Solo exhibitions

2018 Survey 2003 – 2018, Defiance Gallery at Mary Place, Sydney  
Survey 2003 – 2018, Defiance Gallery, Newtown, Sydney  
2015 Recent Sculpture, King Street Gallery on William, Sydney  
2012 New Sculpture, King Street Gallery on William, Sydney  
2010 'Correlation', New Sculpture, King Street Gallery on William, Sydney  
2007 Recent Sculpture, King Street Gallery on William, Sydney  
2005 'New sculpture' King street gallery on burton, Sydney  
2003 'Recent sculpture' King street gallery on burton, Sydney  
2001 'Mythological meanderings' King street gallery on burton, Sydney  
1999 'Mountains and sea' King street gallery on burton, Sydney  
1997 Recent sculpture, King street gallery on burton, Sydney  
1995 Sculpture, King street gallery on burton, Sydney  
1993 Sculpture, King street gallery on burton, Sydney  
1989 Irving Sculpture Gallery, Sydney  
1987 Michael Milburn Gallery, Brisbane  
1984 Irving Sculpture Gallery, Sydney  
1982 Irving Sculpture Gallery, Sydney  
1979 Art of Man Gallery, Sydney

### Selected group exhibitions

2018 Defiance Gallery at Mary Place, Sydney  
2017 'Strings' Defiance Gallery, Sydney  
2016 'Save NAS' Defiance Gallery, Sydney  
'WAAM' Jervis Bay Maritime Museum, Huskisson, NSW  
'Sydney Sculpture' – Defiance Gallery at the Yellow House, Sydney  
7th Western Sydney University Sculpture Award and Exhibition, finalist  
2015 '20th annual 6' Miniature Sculpture Show", Defiance Gallery, Sydney  
2014 'Sculpture Off the Wall' - Defiance Gallery, Sydney  
'The Gathering 11 A Survey of Australian Sculpture' Wangaratta Art Gallery, VIC  
'Sculpture City', S.H.Ervin Gallery, Sydney  
2012 Defiance Sculpture Park at the Gate Gallery, Wollombi, NSW  
Fifth Uni. of Western Sydney Sculpture Award & Exhibition, finalist  
'2 X 2' Adelaide Central Gallery, Adelaide (Fringe Festival)  
2011 Korean International Art Fair Seoul, South Korea  
'Five Easy Pieces', Defiance Gallery, Sydney  
'Abstraction', Drill Hall Gallery, Canberra  
2010 Artscape Biennial 2010, Byron Bay, NSW Fourth Uni. of Western Sydney  
Acquisitive Sculpture Award & Exhibition, finalist  
2009 Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi - Distinguished Invited Artist  
'Personal Journeys 40 Years Of Australian Women's Abstract Art',  
Shoalhaven, City Arts Centre, Nowra.  
'West Via East' A Homage to Ian Fairweather', Damien Minton Gallery, Sydney  
2008 'Sculpture 2008 In The Elements', Brenda May Gallery, Sydney  
2007 'Jellyfish nature inspires art', Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney  
2006 'Thirteen sculptors two views' Chase Contemporary & Tribal Arts, Sydney  
Blake Prize for Religious Art, NAS Gallery, Sydney  
2005 Art Omi Australia, Cell Block Theatre, National Art School, Sydney  
'2005 The Year In Art' SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney  
'The 10th Annual Miniature 6x6x6' Defiance Gallery  
2004 Sculpture by the Sea' [sponsored by Sydney Water], Bondi Beach, Sydney  
'Sculpture in the MLC' MLC Centre [in conjunction with Sculpture by the Sea]

UWS Sculpture Prize, Uni of Western Sydney, Campbelltown, NSW  
 Sculpture in the MLC, SxS, Sydney  
 'Sculpture 2004' Campbelltown Bicentennial City Art Gallery, Campbelltown, NSW  
 2003 '2003 The Year in Art' SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney  
 'Sculpture 2003' Campbelltown Bicentennial City Art Gallery, Campbelltown, NSW  
 2002 Sculpture by the Sea' [sponsored by Sydney Water], Tamarrama Walk  
 The Lady Nock Sculpture Collection, presented by Defiance Gallery, Sydney  
 Woollahra Sculpture Prize, Woollahra Municipal Council, Sydney  
 Sculpture, Michel Sourgnès Gallery, Brisbane  
 2001 'Sculpture 2002' Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery  
 Woollahra Sculpture Prize, Woollahra Council  
 'The Studio Tradition-National Art School' Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre, NSW  
 'Sculpture 2001' Access Contemporary Art Gallery & king street gallery, sydney  
 2000 'Half Metre Square,' staff show, National Art School, Sydney  
 'Tribal Echo' Oceanic Arts Australia, Sydney; Campbelltown Bicentennial City Art Gallery  
 'Sculpture 2000' Access Contemporary Art Gallery  
 1998 'Figure in the Landscape' king street gallery & Defiance Gallery  
 'Inside / Outside' Sir Herman Black Gallery, University of Sydney  
 'Pas D'Accrochage en Publique,' Cell Block National Art School, Sydney  
 Bryan Niland Collection, Lewers Bequest & Penrith Regional Art Gallery, Penrith  
 'Rossmore Steel' (Jan King & Paul Hopmeier), Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Casula, NSW  
 1997 'The Biggest Little Sculpture Show in Town' Defiance Gallery  
 1995 'It's About Time' Ivan Dougherty Gallery, COFA, University of NSW, Sydney  
 1991 Graeme Sturgeon Memorial Exhibition, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney  
 'Into Space' Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane (& touring)  
 1990 'Common Sense' king street gallery on burton; University of South Australia Art Museum, Adelaide  
 1988 Sculpture Park '88, Gallery 460, Gosford, NSW  
 1987 'Painters and Sculptures- Diversity in Contemporary Australian Art' Queensland Art Gallery; The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Japan  
 Third Australian Sculpture Triennial, Melbourne 'Site Specific' UTS

1985 Ninth Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Mildura, Victoria  
 1984 Second Australian Sculpture Triennial, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
 1982 'Table Sculpture' Irving Sculpture Gallery, Sydney  
 Eighth Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Mildura, Victoria  
 'Abstract Australian Sculpture from 1970' Irving Sculpture Gallery  
 'Objects' Lewers Bequest & Penrith Regional Art Gallery, Penrith, NSW  
 'Women Sculptors' Irving Sculpture Gallery  
 1979 Sculpture Show, New York Studio School, New York  
 Survey Show, East Sydney Technical College, Sydney  
 1976 'Young Sydney Sculptors' Sculpture Centre, Sydney  
 Selected Exhibition VAB/SSC, Martin Place, Sydney

#### Awards

2002 Winner, Woollahra Sculpture Prize  
 1994 Art Omi Creative Grant, New York, USA  
 1983 Australia Council, Visual Arts Board Travel Grant, USA  
 1982 Australia Council, Visual Arts Board Studio Equipment Grant  
 1979 Australia Council, Visual Arts Board Studio Grant, New York

#### Collections

Art Bank, Australia	Clayton Utz Collection
Brisbane Girls' Grammar School	Macquarie University, Sydney
Liverpool City Council	University of Technology, Sydney
Woollahra Council, Sydney	University Western Sydney
Macquarie Bank	Australian National University
Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre & Regional Gallery, Casula	

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Jan King is represented by Defiance Gallery, Sydney.



