

Sculpting environment

CQ artist and grazier creates a sculpture trail examining land management and climate shifts

"I always knew I would create an artistic response to the flood" Sue Gedda

UPROOTED trees, driftwood and farm equipment- the detritus of climate events like flood, drought and fire- have been transmuted into a dramatic abstract sculptural trail in the heart of beef country: Sue Gedda's Clima(c)tic.

"It is about the tension between pride in earning a living as a beef producer and concern for the natural environment," said artist and grazier Sue Gedda.

In 2017, a cataclysmic torrent wrought by Cyclone Debbie swept through Markwell Station, rising 4.6 metres higher than previous records. The family fled to spend the night in the car on a high hill, as below large logs were thrust into high tree forks, 100 year old farm sheds and electricity towers were minced. While fortunately no lives- human or cattle- were lost during the flood event, it was cathartic for the quietly spoken Gedda Family, with three generations producing beef across 50 years on the property in the Lotus Creek district west of St Lawrence.

While Sue and husband Simon had already transitioned to regenerative practices like in-pasture mulching and shade-tree revegetation, rotational grazing, and introducing drought-hardy cattle breeds, the couple became advocates for action on climate change.

"Water came into the upper level of our house, and that really shocked me into thinking about climate change and our role within it," she said.

"In the chaos that ensued, my mind was going 'is this self-inflicted?' We are all consumers, we are all complicit in carbon emissions, just by living. We were already doing things about our carbon footprint, but it really shocked us: we never dreamt that something as extreme as this would ever happen.

"We've all experienced the higher temperatures, the longer summers, and the prolonged fire seasons. Where is winter? It is definitely changing. I have been

here 30 years now, after coming over from England, and I can definitely see a change in the weather patterns."

Simon has spoken up publicly on issues around climate and water for farmers and graziers, urging shifts in land and vegetation management practices and potential for farmers to participate in the carbon economy. Clima(c)tic is Sue's articulation around climate and her concern for the impact of people on the natural world.

"I always knew I would create an artistic response to the flood, but imagined it would be through painting or drawing. However, I found myself drawn to the idea of found objects," she said.

What has emerged are works showing dynamic tension between organic and man-made materials, all the more poignant for their placement at the ground-zero of an extreme climate event. Unprecedented

features flood-deposited timber and steel pickets, forming a tendril-like cascade seemingly bursting from a shed wall. Eyrie: an eagle's nest constructed of gleaming silver fenceposts perched on a rocky outcrop, others, Dead Weight I and II feature long-discarded tree-clearing chains and blocks originally found half-buried in mud.

On September 26 2020, 60 guests gathered at Markwell to experience the ten-work Clima(c)tic exhibition, supported by three conservation groups: Birdlife Mackay, Wildlife Carers Sarina, and Mackay Conservation Group. The exhibition will enjoy longevity with a multimedia experience viewable at suegedda.com.



Take a look at Sue's work at suegedda.com