



# art review

with Bernadette Ashley

**Buried Light** at Umbrella Studio until February 27



DETAIL: *I, pendulum* by Robyn Sweeney

**B**URIED Light is a timely exhibition to have coincided with Cyclone Yasi. The works reveal thoughtful contemplation of the natural world with its cycles and mystery, and exude a deep sense of respect for nature's vicissitudes.

Subject to nature's arbitrary power as Queenslanders have been lately, we are forced to rethink our relationship to the environment, to stand back a little in awe.

Local artists Bernadette Boscacci and Robyn Sweeney appear to have been paying due attention all along, as their sculptures, paintings and prints range from detailed depictions of the microscopic to interpretive Mappae Mundi (world maps styled on early cartography), imbued with imagination and reverence.

Flanking the entrance to the exhibition are two contrasting works: an imposing sculpture by Boscacci, and a delicate installation by Sweeney. Boscacci's *Soothsayer - Grim Chimera* stands over 2m tall and uses twisted branches to form the limbs of a mythical winged creature stretching out its long black, beaked head, as if trying to escape the confines of the gallery. If its

“ We are forced to rethink our relationship to the environment, to stand back a little in awe, and to view our world with enhanced attention to detail

ominous, unnerving presence is intended as a portent as its title suggests, the news is not cheerful.

Sweeney's *I, pendulum* installation lies somewhere between a Renaissance science experiment and a work of art. A quill pen hangs suspended by a magnetic pendulum above a large, square sheet of paper. The movement of the nib has drawn a series of fine repetitive lines which branch from a stem to form a split cloud.

Sweeney has pre-painted a perfect gesso circle on the square paper, effectively containing the drawing and tying it in with the recurrent circular motif in many of her pieces. The work presents evidence of a timeless, delicate balance, another reminder

that natural forces shouldn't be trifled with. The circle form appears often in both artists' works, suggestive as it is of everything from the cellular to the universal and spiritual.

Boscacci has woven a mini-satellite dish from pandanus palm in *Satellite Spotting - Aurukun*, a tongue-in-cheek melding of organic, found materials with the idea of a technological eye to the sky.

Sweeney's mixed media works, *Nano Ephemera I* and *Other Worlds*, are among many she has produced that contain circles within circles.

They could be images seen through a telescope or a microscope.

Both artists have incorporated a broad range of unexpected materials, including bone, resin, wax, soil, gold leaf, antique Chinese gold thread, salt, and decayed magnesium sulphate crystals.

The extensive body of varied work in *Buried Light*, along with the interesting textures and large variety of media, indicates the willingness of Boscacci and Sweeney to take risks in their art practice, while illustrating and honouring their environment.