

The cosmic and the rural co-exist in creative couple's work

- **Sasha Grishin**

Music, Theatre & Arts

David Jenz: *Cosmic Speculations*. **Wendy Teakel:** *Land: Place: Site (variation one)*.
Belconnen Arts Centre, 118 Emu Bank, Belconnen. Until April 28.



David Jenz: *Genesis*, 2018 in *Cosmic Speculations* at Belconnen Arts Centre. Photo: Supplied

A few months ago, at the Barbican Centre in London, the sprawling exhibition *Modern Couples: Art, Intimacy and the Avant-garde* was held.

It was an immensely ambitious exhibition, whose central theme was the co-existence of creative couples – artists living together – sometimes one person absorbing all of the creative energies of the other, on other occasions, artists co-existing and following their own parallel creative trajectories.

Examples of the latter, of creative couples who lasted together for a number of decades, included Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov, Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson, Sonia Delaunay and Robert Delaunay, Varvara Stepanova and Alexander Rodchenko, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Jean Arp.

Wendy Teakel and David Jenz can be added to this list of creative couples, living together on their semi-rural property at Murrumbateman just outside of Canberra and having pursued high-profile careers as professional sculptors over decades. Although since 1980, they have occasionally exhibited together or collaboratively, their art practices have followed separate and distinctive trajectories.

Jenz is the creator of baffling enigmatic objects where, although we can see how they have been fabricated and recognise the materials employed, a new and convincing reality has been constructed that seems to exist by its own rules. His work requires scale to breathe and to create an environment into which the viewer can enter and become immersed.

The five pieces by Jenz that constitute this exhibition – all made in 2018 – play with the notions of macrocosm and microcosm, where scale is difficult to determine.



David Jenz, *Strain*, 2018 in Cosmic Speculations at Belconnen Arts Centre. Photo: Supplied

In the catalogue, Jenz writes of his process of work, “My practice involves the construction and fabrication of sculptural objects that reflect on the patterns that underpin the intricacy of life. The simplicity in my work alludes to greater complexity and I view the work as fragments of a much larger whole. Regardless of how much we understand or how far we explore, there always appears to be a veil beyond which we may never know. In practical terms, I contemplate the world by engaging with physical materials: my working process is a journey from the known to the unknown.”

In *Strain*, *Ripple* and *Genesis*, the three major sculptural pieces in this exhibition, we experience a sense of amazement and bewilderment in the fantastic creations. There is an intricacy in the fabrication of the pieces as we are invited to suspend disbelief and enter into an amazingly attractive pattern of a new reality.

Teakel’s practice is less cosmic and universal and more anchored in an Australian rural farming environment. Her single piece in the exhibition, *Land: Place: Site (variation one)*, was originally conceived for *Sculpture by the Sea* at Bondi and now has been reconceived for the outside exhibition space at the Belconnen Arts Centre.



Wendy Teakel, *Land Place Site (variation one)* at Belconnen Arts Centre. Photo: Supplied

It consists of a large 5.3 metre equilateral cross, where a sheep fleece top is supported by a substructure of fencing wire and rusted steel rods. The cross is quite stark and effective and open to various interpretations but lacks some of the drama of its first exhibition in the spectacular environment at Bondi.

Both Jensz and Teakel in their sculptural practice benefit from an outdoor setting where their sculptures can more fully integrate within an environment. The white cube of the gallery setting is somewhat less sympathetic.