

HART ISLAND

ia

DREAMS

STACI CRUTCHFIELD

12.12.21 - 09.01.22

intelligent animal and the **Darlington Installation Project (DIP)** present **Hart Island Dreams by Staci Crutchfield.**

Sales enquiries can be made via email: art@intelligentanimal.com.au
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ia acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation on whose traditional lands we live, create, meet and work, and their elders past, present and emerging.

HART ISLAND DREAMS

STACI CRUTCHFIELD

Hart Island Dreams is a memorial to the people buried at Hart Island NY due to COVID-19 related deaths. The exhibition culminates in an installation that features over 150 miniature clay cranes that represent the individuals buried on the island in context of a river to symbolise the paths their lives took.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Hart Island Dreams is a memorial to the people buried at Hart Island NY due to COVID-19 related deaths. Watching footage of refrigerated trucks and numbered burial boxes marked with generic identifiers such as, "hispanic male", "white female" "unknown youth" in 2020, I decided to bring together a work which commemorated the lives of these supposedly unknown individuals.

I reflected how in other circumstances, where more time and resources might have been allocated to follow up on identification, the families and communities of these people could have been informed of their passing. I was moved by the thoughts that these people would be missed. Many of their loved ones were left not knowing why they would not see or hear from them again and that these connections were now lost along with the dreams and hopes which had guided the deceased through life.

The ornate wooden picture frame references photographs many would have

of a family member, with the silver, white, brown and black chevron fabric reflecting a diversity of cultures. The salt fired terracotta heart shape on white material alludes to the loss felt by those who had known the people buried and the pain, albeit in some cases unrealised, of not knowing what may have happened to those they will not hear from again.

The river of over 150 small clay cranes representative of the individuals buried on Hart Island and the paths their lives took.

In researching the history of Hart Island for this work, first displayed as part of the Australian Ceramics Open Studios weekend 13 & 14th November 2021, I learned of the Hart Island Project and with more research for this iteration of the installation, of the Traveling Dreams Museum and Hart Island COVID19 Initiative. It was also of interest to me that the island was also know as a Potter's Field where red clay was dug to be used for ceramics. Part of the motivation for Hart Island Dreams is a heightened sense of distance and separation I have felt during the past two years.

My plans to return to the United States in 2020, having been born in Houston Texas in 1966, to reconnect with my family and history were interrupted by the impact of COVID-19 and other life challenges. Since mid 2020 more members of my family have died with whom I will now, no longer be able to share stories.

I was so pleased to read about the efforts of the Hart Island Project to

reconnect people with information about their loved ones and memories.

I am very glad to see the serendipity of these projects realised by nominating The Hart Island Project as the affiliated charity and thank the Darlington Installation Project and Angela Stretch of intelligentanimal.com.au for the opportunity to display this piece. Thanks also to Sandy Lockwood for salt firing the terracotta heart and Agatha Pupaher for assistance with the installation.

In memory of David.

ABOUT THE HART ISLAND PROJECT

Hart Island – Potter's Field was first used by the City of New York as a public cemetery in 1869 for the burial of people who died indigent or whose bodies were unclaimed after their death having been purchased by the Department of Charities and Correction for the purpose of setting up a workhouse for older boys from the House of Refuge on Randall's Island.

Burials were carried out by inmates of neighbouring Blackwell's Island and Riker's Island penitentiaries until the COVID-19 pandemic ended the use of inmate labour on April 3 2020. The 131-acre uninhabited island was intermittently used as a prison and homeless shelter until 1967 and is the only public cemetery in New York City. Prior to the use of Hart Island as a burial ground it had been a site where potters collected high quality, deeply red clay for the production of ceramics.

As of May 15th 2021 people with close ties to those buried on the island are

once again able to visit. The Hart Island Project COVID-19 Initiative is an attempt to help the larger community to locate the grave sites of people they know and support the families and friends of people buried in City Cemetery. Through engaged story telling the project hopes to enlarge the meaning of this landscape and to make it an inclusive rather than shameful resting place. A public charity incorporated in 2011 the project maintains an on-line database which is the foundation for a system of storytelling and visualisation called the Traveling Cloud Museum in an attempt to preserve the histories of those buried for present and future generations.

Official website: <https://www.hartisland.net/>

ARTIST BIO

Staci Crutchfield is an itinerant potter who has pursued a self-directed study of wheel and sculptural pottery techniques since 2005.

Her interest in clay, seeded while living in Japan during high school in 1982, continued through her tertiary education in Asian Studies at the Australian National University and work in the tourism and hospitality sector to now provide a creative antidote to the challenges of delivering social services to those who need them the most.

In 2014, Staci built a portable wood-fired kiln to further her understanding of high temperature wood-firing and the use of ash glazes. In conjunction with attending ceramic workshops and conferences in Australia, Italy and

Hungary, she has travelled to Mali, West Africa and Malekula, Vanuatu to experience the traditional clay arts and handicrafts of these cultures. Her current practice is based around carved functional vessels where the form directs the decorative surface treatment and sculptural work using found and altered clay bodies, which combine textured surfaces from the natural environment with small clay origami cranes.

A founding member of Claypool in Sydney, she has also been a member of the Bribie Island and Shorncliffe Pottery Clubs and is thrilled to have been invited to fire kilns with many of the wood-firing community.

Staci is interested in collaborating with makers in other media such as fibre, wood, glass and metal whereby her clay cranes or abstract forms could be incorporated into works with shared themes.

Staci has exhibited at Pine Street Creative Arts Centre and Yuga Cafe Gallery in Sydney.

All proceeds to Hart Island Project

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1	Exhibition	POA
2	Clay crane individual	\$5

Staci Crutchfield will donate all sales to the Hart Island Project, and he encourages people, even those not purchasing a work, to make a donation. Official website: <https://www.hartisland.net/>