

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2013 · BY LUCY

INTERVIEW · DION HORTSMANS



White powdercoated steel sculpture by Sydney artist Dion Horstmans. Photo - Phu Tang.

In writing this post I have realised how rarely we feature sculptors here. We're always banging on about amazing painters, but the poor old sculptors never get a look in! Aww sorry guys! Major oversight. We're taking one small step to rectifying that today, with a look at the incredible work of Sydney based [Dion Horstmans](#)!

Working primarily in powder coated steel, timber, plywood and sheet metal, Dion creates abstract geometric forms which play with line, volume, light and shade. His work has been said to reference architectural forms, celestial constellations, spacecrafts and bolts of lightning! I'm totally in love with his powdercoated steel pieces, which seem at once rigid yet strangely delicate. Wallmounted seamlessly, these striking, angular shapes lend themselves so well to interior spaces – and throw the most amazing shadows!

Before pursuing his sculpture seriously, Dion spent 12 years working in the art department in the film industry. 'I worked on every big film production that came into town for 12 years, but after Superman I'd had enough' says Dion. After that, Dion gradually phased out the film work, concentrating more and more on his sculpture. He was picked up by Flinders Lane Gallery in Melbourne in 2009, and was included in Sydney's famous [Sculpture by the Sea](#) in Bondi in 2011.

There is a super excellent little film about Dion [here](#) which I highly recommend! It's only 3 mins long, and well worth a look for an entertaining and slightly more personal insight into this distinctive Sydney character!

Melbourne readers – if you're keen to see Dion's work in person, he has an incredible show entitled *Voltage* on at [Flinders Lane Gallery](#) this month, but it's only on until the end of TOMORROW! All info is [here](#) - get your skates on! He also has another exhibition entitled *Night Rider* opening next week in Sydney – all details below.

We are also SUPER chuffed to let you know that we'll be including a small number of Dion's amazing steel sculptures at The Design Files Open House in a few months time...! SO PUMPED about that. More to be revealed very soon!

Night Rider by Dion Horstmans**Open 18 to 22 September 2013****Gallery 2010****69 Reservoir St****Surry Hills, NSW*****Tell us a little about your background – what path led you to becoming a sculptural artist, and to creating the style of work you are currently making?***

I was born in New Zealand, my father is from Nuie, so I grew up between New Zealand and the Cook Islands. The graphics of the tribal motifs really resonated with me, being bold with strong lines, along with the palette of black and white, with splashes of red.

I've drawn since I could hold a pencil. I started working three-dimensionally 17 years ago, after being introduced to the medium by my mate [Aaron Crothers](#). My practice has since morphed from these organic lumpy roly-poly figures to where I'm at presently. Initially through necessity, the cost of bronze casting was crippling, so I started drawing from the imagery that had surrounded me as a child – graphic planes and lines, creating at first geometric panels drawn from tapa, stripping it back to where I am now, lineal geometric spaces.



Dion in his Bondi workshop. Photo - Phu Tang.

How would you describe your work?

I'd use the words fast, strong, dynamic, spacial, dimensional. Did I mention fast?!

What can we expect to see in your new exhibition 'Night Rider' at Gallery 2010 in Sydney?

I've tried to explore this idea I have using planes that include volume, area, and folded metal. I have incorporated lineal works with sheet metal and some drawing, and have continued to explore multi faceted works, which I've been playing with a lot lately.

Can you give us a little insight into your design process – what materials do you use? Is each work pre-planned or created very intuitively? Do you work on multiple pieces at one time? And how long does each work take to complete?

I continue to move backwards and forwards with shadows and lines, firstly working one-dimensionally until I feel comfortable to move into and work in the sculptural three-dimensional space. I don't have a master plan when creating a new work, I have an intuitive understanding of space and volume so I let this guide me through the process. I know what's working and know what's not.

I use solid steel round bar for the smaller works. The gauge will vary depending on the size and scale of the of the work, but generally I use a combination of steel tube, cardboard to mock up areas, bb plywood, and sheet metal.

Depending on the size of the work, I might create a large work over a few days or a bunch of smaller works in a day. I'll then come back to them and clean them up. Although that said, I'll have several pieces going on at once over both workshops. I work very quickly, ideas happen in a nano second, but realising the idea is the nature of the work!

What does a typical day at work involve for you?

Wake up at 5.00 – 5.30am, go to my studio, cast some shadows, then have breakfast with my partner and two daughters, and back to the studio via the coffee shop. Then I'll look at the shadows and work out how I'm going to put it together. Leather apron then goes on and I'll set up the studio for the day ahead.

I'll start hot burning, where metal generally flies around, it's noisy and hot, the welder flashes, metal melts – it's an assault on your senses, noise, heat, burning skin and hair. I love it. Then it's lunch and back to my studio where I tend to finish work for the day around 5.30 – 6.00pm, following this I will hit the gym or go for a run.

Can you list for us your top resources across any media that you turn to regularly for creative inspiration?

The net is pretty good, I use Pinterest, I read, I look at art books and magazines, I love movies, I talk to people, and listen to FBi, a local Sydney radio station.

Which other local artists, designers or creative people are you most inspired by at the moment?

I'd love to drop a bunch of names of people I find inspiring, but to be honest I don't know all of their names. I see their work in magazines or online and absorb them. I look at a lot of tribal and ethnographic art, I'm drawn to the bold lines and the graphics. I look at street art and buildings, I draw from nature, it's weird nature repeats itself, it's perfectly flawed.

What is your proudest career achievement to date?

Hard to say, I was pretty stoked when Claire at [Flinders Lane Gallery](#) asked me to be a part of a group show in 2009. I was also pretty stoked to get into [Sculpture by the Sea](#) in Bondi, and be a part of a show at The Cat Street Gallery in Hong Kong earlier this year, it felt like the world was opening up. This year has been my best year to date, with bigger and more exciting commissions and international shows!

What are you looking forward to?

A cold beer, a hot shower and bed. Getting up tomorrow morning and starting on a new body of work.

