

## Clare Belfrage - Key Note Speech SALA Launch - 26 July 2018 AGSA

Distinguished guest, ladies and gentlemen, I would also like to acknowledge that we are here together tonight on Kaurana land pay my respects to elders past, present and future.

Thank you to the SALA staff and board for putting on another amazing festival. It is a great honour to be the SALA feature artist and to have the SALA monograph. It's been an incredible process and journey creating the book, *Rhythms of Necessity*, so beautifully written by Kay Lawrence and Sera Waters. And I would like to express my admiration and heartfelt thanks to Kay and Sera and assistant writer Kirsty Darlaston, photographers of my work Grant Hancock, Pippy Mount and Rob Little, designer Rachel Harris, also Michael Bollen and Clinton Ellicott and the staff at Wakefield Press. This project has definitely made me more reflective and caused me to think about the experiences and forces that have been impactful on my life as an artist.

I came to Adelaide in 1991 from Melbourne to do the training program at the JamFactory out on Payneham Road. I planned to be here for a fast and furious six months but that's turned into 26 years with a few chapters elsewhere.

It's been a richly supportive place for me here – firstly the Jam to which I have maintained really strong connections. In fact I hire the studio every week to blow glass. I am very honoured to be the JamFactory Icon for 2018 and my exhibition, *A Measure of Time*, opens there tomorrow night. I've been supported by Guildhouse – they helped me get my first grant from Arts South Australia, from whom I have also received significant support including most recently a Fellowship last year. The Art Gallery of South Australia, who again has opened its door to us and welcomed us all in and continues to play such a pivotal role in the culture of South Australia. I'm so thrilled to have a significant body of work in this major public collection and have it all out on show for SALA.

But the community of artists here has been what's been huge for me, it's the people working in glass and then the broader craft, design and arts community that continues to provide a kind of sustenance. Glassblowing itself requires a team and there is a great pool of talent

here. I benefit personally and professionally from the care and commitment, the skill and the interest, the strength and the sharp eye of the team I work with including: Madeline Prowd, Drew Spangenberg, Lewis Batchelar and Liam Fleming.

So I've always felt like a city person, I love the energy of the city. But it's also always been important to me to spend time in nature. I wonder if that isn't the most obvious thing in the world. I did grow up with regular camping trips as part of the rhythm of each year. And from those holidays we got to experience a lot of freedom, walking, climbing, playing, but just being part of it, having the time to feel the spirit of a place

I don't think I was really conscious of what this meant to me because at some level you are just living your life, but in the early nineties I was jolted into a greater awareness sparked by a great interview journalist and writer, Caroline Jones did with Aboriginal activist, Burnam Burnam, that I read. I think it was conducted just after the 1988 bicentennial celebrations and protests, and I was deeply struck by Burnam Burnam's generosity and expression of the land, and how if you lived here, in this country, regardless of where you had come from, you couldn't help but be impacted by its strength, its beauty, its power, its spirit. As a young adult at the time that resonated profoundly and, I found it very affirming.

My parents were always open to any career possibility for me so when I chose to study in a design degree they were perhaps surprised but very receptive. Art had always had a presence in our lives. They had often taken us to art galleries. I particularly remember two exhibitions at the NGV. One was a show of Hans Heysen paintings, which I believe probably came from the Art Gallery here, and another was a Klytie Pate ceramics exhibition also at the NGV. She used flora and fauna as a basis for her pattern work. My parents took us on a trip around Europe when I was 12, which is when I first encountered Monet at Musee Marmottan in Paris. This was a transformative experience. And right now we have Monet here in our Gallery! I can safely say after six months of seeing numerous depictions of the martyrdom of poor old San Sebastian I was relieved and thrilled to see Monet, and deeply moved by these expressions of the natural world.

I mentioned earlier my love of nature and for many years now my work has been inspired by experiences from the natural world. It feels critical for me to maintain a deep connection to nature and have time immersed in the natural world. That's important to me personally but I think it's important as a human experience. Sometimes its not very far afield, its just my garden, but Monet liked his garden too right? Often I walk in Morialta Conservation Park, an absolute treasure in Adelaide, 10 minutes from my house and so loved by so many. Then 5 or 6 hours up the road there's the grand, mighty, gentle Ikara- Flinders ranges. A place that takes my breath away!

It is often the detail I focus on, looking up close at the minutiae. It's a big feeling of relative insignificance that I experience in the natural world as I observe the rhythm and energy, dramatic and delicate – it still holds my fascination as does the language and processes of glass.

Thank you.