

SALA Podcast Transcript: Anna Horne

00:00

[music]

Steph 00:21

Hello and welcome to the SALA podcast. My name is Steph and today I have the pleasure of catching up with sculpture artist Anna Horne ahead of her exhibition at Hugo Mitchell Gallery. We are meeting on the lands of the Kurna People today and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge them as the traditional owners of this land. Anna, thank you for squeezing us in today, I know you're really really busy.

Anna 00:48

Hi Steph, thanks for having me. It's all good.

Steph 00:52

I know obviously, you've got lots of very exciting stuff coming up. But I would love to cast your mind back to the beginnings and ask you how you came to be an artist.

Anna 01:04

Um, well, it wasn't a conscious choice. In a way, I was classic 'went to art school straight after high school' person. I've always been surrounded by art. My mom is many things; she's a farmer, radiographer, but also an artist.

Steph 01:22

What a combo

Anna 01:24

It's crazy. But she actually went to [Adelaide Central School of Art](#) where I studied. She has a sweet anecdote of going to classes pregnant with me.

Steph 01:34

Oh, so you've been going for ages

Anna 01:36

Well yeah. I did art in year 12. And I didn't really like year 12 much, but I did enjoy art. Yeah. But even then I wasn't thinking of studying at all. I actually really enjoyed photography and I have no idea why I'm not a photographer now. I'm only 36, so I feel like maybe a medium change is coming. But I was the classic school leaver where I enrolled in a bunch of uni courses, biology, Bachelor of Arts, just sort of anything, and I was very undecided, and Mum said to me "just do one year or six months of art school, and see how you feel about it. And it might give you some inspiration" or whatever. And I don't think people realize how hard art school is sometimes it was really overwhelming, but in an exciting way. And

it does introduce you to a lot of things, a lot of processes; painting, drawing, all of that. But even then I don't think at any point, I was thinking 'I'm going to be an artist'. Yeah, I nearly sort of fell into it. Yeah. And I did do it full time. And then by the fourth year, I was still doing it. And I didn't know I was going to be a sculptor 'til I think the end either.

Steph 02:57

Oh, that's interesting.

Anna 02:58

Yeah. Yeah, I just really was kind of going with the flow really

Steph 03:03

Flow is good, flow is good.

Anna 03:04

Yeah, I still feel like I'm going with the flow, just seeing what happens.

Steph 03:08

It's a good vibe to continue.

Anna 03:10

So I and also, we were surrounded by people who are teaching who are artists. So you, you were aware that it could be a professional career.

Steph 03:20

It could be done.

Anna 03:21

It could be done. Yeah, you became aware that it could be done and that you could be your own boss and make for a living. And I do like making things, I have an urge to make things. So yeah.

Steph 03:33

so it just happened. I love it.

Anna 03:35

Yeah. But I guess when you... on reflection, when you think about my upbringing and little things, but still, I'm not even sure.

Steph 03:46

And Anna how would you describe your practice? I know that is a really challenging question, and that kind of depends on 'who am I talking to?'

Anna 03:57

Well, I'm a sculptor; I would say my medium is sculpture, which is broad in its own self. But I always say

that I'm a material and process-based artists which sounds wordy. But all that means is that I'm interested in exploring materials and the process of making art in my studio. So I'm very much interested in play and experimentation and building things. And that leads to the artwork itself, I would say. I kind of only make art in my studio, and I use techniques like kind of usual sculpture techniques like assemblage and molding and casting particularly, I'm interested in casting concrete. So using those things lead to my ideas. Which I'm interested in contradictory things in sculpture. And I think it would make more sense if people could see my work. Yeah. So to describe my work, I often have these cast elements, which are made from molds that I sew up out of fabric, and I cast concrete and heavy kind of casting materials in there.

Steph 05:23

There's already a contradiction in that isn't there.

Anna 05:25

Yeah, so I make these soft-looking objects, and then I will get someone else to help me weld a steel frame or I make a structure, and I kind of combine different materials with these cast objects. And that's how I would describe my practice. But it is very much abstract sculpture and with some familiar elements in it. I'm usually referencing architectural materials, and I would say I'm referencing the 'built world', in a way, but I don't like to say anything too sort of broad and big, because I want to people... I think abstraction is like that. I think you need to experience it, there. And it is about my process and how I got to that point, that gets me to the end product.

Steph 06:15

Yeah, and it's such an important thing to note, because that does separate your practice from something that is, you know, 'I pictured this, and then I made it'. Yeah, it's more significant than it might seem.

Anna 06:27

Yeah, and also, I don't do projects. So one exhibition wouldn't be about one subject. It's kind of the accumulation. My practice is one whole thing I feel, and each exhibition kind of leads... of course, all artists are like this, but

Steph 06:44

but it's nice to not have like, a clear bookend to one, and then go, 'oh, this is gonna be so different'. So there's a nice flow, again, going through it.

Anna 06:54

And it's not representational, but it's abstract but there are familiar elements to it. Yeah. It is hard to, it's hard to...

Steph 07:02

I really threw you a hard one there. Sorry.

Anna 07:05

No, it's good to be able to articulate this part of practice, I think,

Steph 07:10

yeah, it's a good struggle; worthwhile.

07:12

[music]

Steph 07:35

Just thinking back to my first encounter with your work, I think was [FELTnatural](#) in 2014, in Rymill Park, and you had, yes, these [concrete works](#) encased in rope and tethered to trees. And it was, it was a great, because the whole sort of premise of that show was sort of this site-responsive, you know, walking through the park discovering artworks, which was fantastic in itself. But it was as if your sculptures were like weighing down the branches in a way. And it was this yeah, great contradiction of materials. The concrete had these sort of ruts as if the rope was cutting into it. So yeah, and I still see. Yeah, like you're saying that flow is still there. I don't even know what question I'm asking. There's, I can still, you know, an Anna Horne work when you see one for sure. What is the... like, is concrete the main material? Or do you have quite a few that you just kind of?

Anna 08:33

I like that you brought up that show because that was actually the point where I started using concrete.

Steph 08:39

Oh!

Anna 08:39

I felt like that was, that show, FELTnatural... was also a great show, because you had this little thread to hold on to, the 'site-specific'. So yeah, reacting to the trees, and they were slumping. And I did have just that kind of one idea of, how can I make it look like my sculpture is pulling down the tree rather than the other way around?

Steph 09:01

Yeah it was great, this tension.

Anna 09:02

Yeah, the tension. And I was like, well, it was outside. So I literally had this thought of 'what is heavy, but someone can't take it away'. But because I had to be outside for 10 days. And what looks heavy. So of course, it was concrete. It was just such a like 'Oh, okay, that's obvious'.

Steph 09:26

Yeah that makes sense.

Anna 09:27

And then, I had not done molding and casting for a while since art school, and it was this... I like to

approach a material in this nearly experimental way and try to push it its limits a little bit or kind of take it in a new direction. So I don't always kind of look into how to exactly do something. I might have a play with it first. And then maybe I'll watch YouTube videos and try to figure out things. But that one was very much like 'okay, well I'm I want it to look light, look heavy'. So I found pool floating devices, like those kinds of beach balls and the ring, the kind of donut shape

Steph 10:13

oh yeah. floaties

Anna 10:14

floaties Yeah. And I was like, Okay, well, I'm going to try to put cast concrete in those. And it was the process of trying to make that work. And then that led to the rope. And then the back the kind of macramae bag that I used to hang it; it was cast in that and it was a way of holding up this flexible thing. So it's kind of chaos in my studio, to be honest,

Steph 10:38

Oh I bet. Yeah.

Anna 10:40

And even though concrete is quite a simple material to use, I don't think, yeah, it's sort of so heavy and I think people... unlike plaster or something, you don't find it at an art shop. You can't approach it in the same way; you don't have the same sort of knowledge of it. And yeah, so I think everyone has probably made a -I don't know, a paver, or mixed some concrete for the garden or-

Steph 11:05

[sarcastically] Yeah, sure. No, I leave it to you.

Anna 11:09

Yeah. But it was this nice discovery of that material. And, again, it was those little kind of discoveries along the way in the process, where I realized that concrete can really pick up the surface of anything, I was very surprised at how sort of delicate it was in a way.

Steph 11:28

That is surprising.

Anna 11:29

Yeah. So it really picked up that soft surface of the floaties. And it just created these sort of weird, lumpy, soft-looking shapes in Rymill Park, pulling down with rope around them. So I re-added the rope later, yeah, that I used practically to hang it. But no, that kind of led me to using concrete a lot, really. And I'm interested in using the same materials over and over again. And I think you can create a bit of a visual language, as you said, you kind of know what my work is. And I really think that is just time and energy and process that you end up making your own visual language in some way. Because you're kind of working incrementally at the same materials and the same thing.

Steph 12:19

Yeah, and pushing

Anna 12:20

And pushing it yep. And pushing it into different directions a little bit every time. So yeah, that was the pinpoint of the concrete phase,

Steph 12:28

I had no idea!

Anna 12:29

I might go into a different phase, maybe. I haven't sort of got rid of concrete yet.

Steph 12:34

I think it's working very well for you. Yeah, and what kind of other materials have come up in your practice?

Anna 12:42

I use kind of steel frames as well. And recently, it's been kind of interesting, because I've had other people help me fabricate things that I can't do myself. I can't weld very well.

Steph 12:57

You can't do it all.

Anna 12:57

So artist, Jimmy Dodd of [Double Diamond](#) helps fabricate some things. And also I have this guy that casts things in aluminium for me. So I've started to use polystyrene and foam and sort of sculpt those things to get that cast in aluminium. But it's been interesting to take, for someone to sort of take a bit of that process away. So that's been a nice step, but maybe an awkward one. Because I'm very much a hands-on, need to be in the moment, kind of person.

Steph 13:30

Yeah that's an interesting what that does to the dynamic and your process.

Anna 13:34

Yeah, but I pretty much I guess the majority of my practice is creating the molds, like sewing up molds and creating that and yeah, but other materials. Yeah, haven't branched out too much.

Steph 13:48

No that's good. You got your language, you're on it. And yeah, interesting talking about that studio time. Do you have to, like get in a zone? Because if it's so experimental, and you don't know exactly what you are going to end up with and... you know, do you have any tricks or special albums or anything that you do to get in that zone? Or is it sort of by virtue of being in the space of a studio, that you kind of just get into that routine?

Anna 14:22

I think it is, by virtue of being in the space. I do find if I pass that threshold of the studio out into the real world... you know, you go home and you think about other things and you get distracted. And, of course I think about work outside of the studio, but really, it is about being in that space. And you know, as advice to anyone that wants to have an art practice, you just you have to be in the space, in your zone, to kind of think about it. And, it is... yeah, time. Time spent in the studio and you might have some ideas, and you see some things, or you see some connections between things. But also you need 'busy work' I think. Creating the molds and sewing up the molds is often busy work, just you might be thinking... put a podcast on or one of these podcasts on, I don't know

Steph 15:10

Yes definitely this one.

Anna 15:14

And then you kind of stop and start because you'll be distracted by something else and you're using your hands to make something and then you go, Oh, I'm gonna try this thing. You have a little moment where you try something.

Steph 15:28

So you almost have, is it kind of like having two channels running in your brain?

Anna 15:32

Yeah

Steph 15:32

Like, kind of hands are doing something that they kind of know what they're doing, but you can kind of tick over in your brain at the same time.

Anna 15:37

Yeah. I think I might be an impatient person, though. I think. I'm not sure I can sit down for too long. I've discovered that I... even though I'm sewing a lot on the sewing machine, I'll get up and like, have a thought and go off and do something. And I'll go back to whatever kind of time-consuming thing I've got going on.

Steph 15:56

Yeah. So you've got to keep busy. Yeah. Sorry. I hope that aircraft doesn't interrupt too much.

Anna 16:03

But yeah, I've thought about this a lot, and how much... I know other people might journal more or do a lot more kind of research outside of the studio before they even start a work. But for me, it's the little discoveries I make

Steph 16:21

sort of along the way

Anna 16:22

along the way. And you kind of -I was talking to someone the other day, another artist. About you have this moment. And you think it's... like a material moment. And you [think] 'Oh, my God, that is it. That is it'. But then 24 hours later, you're like, 'that is not it.' Why did I even think that was a good idea? Like it's these ups and downs that are just quite...

Steph 16:44

Yeah. I like that too: a 'material moment'.

Anna 16:47

Yeah, and I think again, it's about the visual language I've created for myself that I can maybe see when something is working. -After that, 24 hour period.

Steph 16:59

After you've waited

Anna 17:03

Yeah, so I think it's important to kind of follow your gut a little bit, because, but only because I mean, so it's time and accumulation of time. Yeah.

Steph 17:12

And I guess, knowing what your way of working is, you know, if you say, I'm a bit of an impatient person, you know, maybe just knowing that about yourself and saying this is how I work best.

Anna 17:22

That's only a new discovery I think.

Steph 17:25

I'm not saying it's true.

Anna 17:28

No it is true. I can harness it though.

Steph 17:31

Yeah well that's the thing, make it a good thing. Yeah. And are there any less evident places that you do draw inspiration like from, you know, even pop culture or, you know, artists from other areas, like musicians or particular objects, or movements or anything like that, or

Anna 17:54

I feel like I'm, I've thought about this a lot as well, that there are a lot of artists that nearly their whole life is about, you can see it in their art, so maybe movies they watch or music or listen to, or their job or their background, family background. But for me, I do wonder like, what the connection is. But I do pick

up little... because I'm referencing the built world, and very much, that's, I feel like that's something that everyone can kind of connect to; this environment that we live in. But for me, I have two sort of approaches for inspiration: I often watch a lot of videos of artists talking in their studios.

Steph 18:37

Oh that's interesting.

Anna 18:38

Yeah. So I find that the most kind of inspiring or interesting language. So I think of [Art21](#) videos, you can find them on YouTube. There's loads of stuff online that you can just watch artists and I don't even necessarily watch... I do like to watch artists I love. Especially kind of big artists like [Phyllida Barlow](#) from the UK, and [Alison Wilding](#), and you can watch them talk about their practice and I feel some sort of connection to their practice -materially or process wise. But I do even watch videos of artists who may be, our practices may be completely opposite. I don't know. I just enjoy hearing them talk about the even the small things like the little thing. Like they'll get distracted by this little collection of objects they have in their studio, or they don't really even talk about the big ideas. They talk about the small things within... it's like they feel comfortable within that space. Yeah, spaces.

Steph 19:39

Is it kind of the candor that you know, yeah,

Anna 19:42

I really like that for some reason that I'm attracted to that. But also things... I find myself, I cycle to work when it's not boiling hot or raining. And I find myself really noticing bits of architecture. Ah, yes. And even fence lines and kind of sort of noticing or being slightly inspired by little bits of architecture here and there. Yeah, that's cool. Is it only on the bike? Yeah it's weirdly only [on the bike]. Maybe it's because I...

Steph 20:17

maybe it's another zone?

Anna 20:18

Yeah, it's really like meditation on the bike.

Steph 20:21

Or maybe you're going so fast that things occur to you that wouldn't otherwise. That's quite cool. And that's nice, because that's sort of built into your life as well.

Anna 20:29

Yeah.

20:30

[music]

Steph 20:43

Now, let's get to the exciting stuff. You have an exhibition coming up very soon at [Hugo Michell Gallery](#) called [Colour Me Soft](#). Could you please tell us about that show?

Anna 20:53

Yeah, it's an exciting opportunity. I love that gallery. So this show is new sculpture work. And there's going to be maybe five to six smaller works, and three large works in the back space of Hugo Michell [Gallery].

Steph 21:11

Lovely.

Anna 21:13

And yeah, I'm really excited about this show. I think this show has been kind of a offshoot of two shows I've had recently. So I had a few works in [Neoteric](#), for the Adelaide Festival, focusing on mid-career artists and that was a big [group show](#).

Steph 21:34

At the [Adelaide] train station wasn't it.

Anna 21:35

Yeah at the train station. And that was amazing; it was a really great opportunity. And I felt like I was tapping into more of emotion in sculpture; more I was trying to kind of tap into this feeling of anxiety in a way. And those works explored a few different things. So I might have, again, I don't want to kind of talk too much about the reference of something I'm looking at, like research I'm doing or something I'm reading because I don't think the work fully shows that. Like it gets so far from that.

Steph 22:16

But it was still a thread.

Anna 22:18

Yeah, a thread at the start. And it was kind of nearly a negative show, in a way, because I guess it was pandemic time, and there was coming out of it, and there was a lot of sort of anxiety in the air. And this second show was for the Center for Creative Health. There was a small [group show](#) at Dentons on Gouger [Street] called '[shifting](#)'. And it was actually a really nice group show. And the curatorial theme was 'shifting', and each artist could take what they wanted from that. And, that was kind of broad and vague, but it was kind of good, it was something I could kind of hold on to and think about. And I started thinking about temporary shelters, and this feeling of things. So I think about the aesthetics of the built world, the feelings around how we feel about stability and instability. And you know, it's in this moment where, you know, we're thinking about the environment, and we're thinking about housing, and there's all this stuff in the air about instability, from all different angles. So I really wanted to, with that show at Dentons, I really wanted to explore more of these materials about this feeling of building up and trying to sustain something but it might crumble, it might eventually degrade. It's that feeling that we have where you you want a home and you want to maintain it and you want a roof over your head and

Steph 24:04

and know that it will continue

Anna 24:05

and know that it will continue but inevitably it's going to, you know, degrade. I think it's just human. I'm interested in this human desire to kind of keep going keep building up non stop, and nearly avoid this idea that things will change and that struggle with change.

Steph 24:25

Yeah it's almost like if you do enough, you can outrun it.

Anna 24:28

Yeah, so I guess there was a kind of a negativity to that feeling, like this anxiety. And I've been thinking about how sculpture work -especially abstract sculpture work- can hold an emotion and feeling through material. So but I wanted this show, [Colour Me soft](#), and it's a play on that kind of term 'colour me something,', you might say colour me an emotion. And I wanted it to kind of suggest something more positive about these materials. So I've kind of created along the lines of that neoteric work and the shifting work, playing on those materials of architecture and temporary shelters and lots of things. So there'll be like rope and tape and bubble wrap and spray paint. I'm very much in this, like my kind of work. But yeah, there's gonna be incorporated a bit more color this time, which has been an interesting choice. Because I often use inherent colour, I will add colour to my concrete or just use the colour that comes with the thing. But this time, I've made a lot of colour choices, as well. So contrasting colours a bit more bold, more happy colours.

Steph 25:56

This is such an interesting point then, to be like, yes, I've had those two shows build up to [this]. So yes I'm very excited to see.

Anna 26:03

Yeah. So I think it's important to mention those two other shows and maybe look up images of those work. Yeah. We'll put them in the show notes. But colour has been interesting. I'm interested in opposing colours.

Steph 26:19

Yeah and that contradiction that's not new [in your work]

Anna 26:23

But yeah, feels new for me.

Steph 26:27

Yeah. Well I'm definitely excited to go and check that out now. I feel like you've just given me a teaser of what to expect. Do you have -casting back to you know, the history of your practice- do you have a favorite memory of someone interacting with your work?

Anna 26:47

I do. And again, it's from that FELTnatural show that was outside.

Steph 26:52

I had no idea that that was such a crucial piece.

Anna 26:55

I know! When I talk about my practice, I realize that was a real moment. But um, I have a funny little anecdote about that show. And some people think it's a bit negative, but I've put a positive spin on it, and I see it in a positive way, so I'll just say that. So because it was one of my... actually it might have been my first time I've had to install something outside in public. So there was all those considerations, which led to using concrete. But because of this visual kind of play between is it light/is it heavy; basically it was outside for 10 days. And we had to de-install on a Sunday. And a friend of mine, my housemate at the time -bless him- had to do a bit of work after this. But we rocked up to pick the work up. I needed an extra hand because they were probably somewhere between 30 and 50 kilos each, to really put people off. But when we rocked up to the park one was missing. So we were like 'how's that possible?' And then there was

Steph 28:06

the rope as well? or just the

Anna 28:08

Well, no, there was evidence, like so the rope was sort of a few metres away. But then there was -I don't know if it was relevant- but then there was sort of a vodka bottle

Steph 28:16

there's a story here.

Anna 28:18

because it was a Sunday morning and it was near the city. And I was like, Did someone get drunk and take the work? But then we realized there was all these little bits of like rope and that kind of bottle leading to the Rymill Park lake.

Steph 28:33

Oh, yes, the lake.

Anna 28:34

So we're like: 'it's in the lake'. So we went over there, and it was literally: someone had picked it -or people- had picked it up and thrown one of them. It was kind of this round very much a beach ball shape.

Steph 28:46

That's really ironic isn't it.

Anna 28:48

and had thrown into the lake. And some people were kind of horrified for me. But I was like, no, this is kind of hilarious, because they saw it as a challenge. They could say, they might have just been damaging artwork. I don't know. But I see it as they were like, 'no, I can pick that up'. That does look like a soft ball. I'm going to try to pick that up and do something with it. So and then my poor housemate, who was a bit stronger than me, had to get in the water at like,

Steph 29:19

they had to wade in!

Anna 29:19

had to wade in and ended up with this photo of him wading into the water, which I could probably send you

Steph 29:24

it can be our hero shot.

Anna 29:27

Yeah so, I thought that was -it didn't damage the work, so maybe that's why I've got a positive view of it. It really was just this challenge, I guess, of putting it in the lake.

Steph 29:37

Yeah and their view of the material based on how it was presented to them. Yeah. I like that. Only because it wasn't damaged.

Anna 29:46

Yeah, but I will say a positive thing. I was thinking about this question and I was like oh I'd better say something nice. But I have to say, a general interaction, my work, I get a lot of kind of great connection with other makers and artists, I think makers and artists are kind of really attracted to my work. So I have a lot of nice conversations with people like that about the work. And for me, that is generally the most positive interaction I have with my work. I know that's not a story, but yeah. Just to add to that.

Steph 30:24

No, that is nice. And yeah, I hadn't thought about it, but yes, your work would absolutely yes. There would be no holding back from 'how did you do ...?' and you know?

Anna 30:34

Yeah.

Steph 30:35

Amazing. Well, I won't dig too much deeper, because I think we just need to get along to that show, but where can we follow along with your work online, do you have a website, Instagram?

Anna 30:46

I mainly use Instagram.

Steph 30:48

Lovely.

Anna 30:49

I do have a website that I think is quite a good website, but I have not updated it in a while.

Steph 30:54

We're all guilty of that.

Anna 30:56

So yeah, [@Anna_Horne](#) on Instagram and [AnnaHorne.com.au](#) I think

Steph 31:03

Nice and easy. Yeah. Wonderful.

Anna 31:05

Yeah, I'm not a great social media person. But I try my best.

Steph 31:08

Well you're busy in the studio, your hands are covered in concrete. Brilliant. We won't begrudge you that. Thank you so much for your time, and we'll see you at the show.

Anna 31:18

Yeah. Thank you so much.