

Carol Wyss

Imagine cupped hands shaking small bones, the hands are opened to release the bones which fall onto a mat. They settle and eyes scan their configuration, and the future reveals itself in the bones. This can be treated as just another superstitious practice, except that this it is more valid than supposed.

It is these outlines, frames, bases, matrix, that inform the work of Carol Wyss. A definite and methodical search for the reasons how things hold together, how and why they work, or more appropriately 'why things do not fail'. This concerted search for the structure of things has led to the drafting and making of maps. Not just any old map, but a meta-map that goes everywhere, a map of a site in Wyss' mind, a map made to investigate the nature of maps, a map of maps.

Maps show the network of routes around a place, the roads, rivers, the services, the habitations. By looking at a map it is possible to pinpoint distinctive nodes by the level of access or protection they have. Maps allow the traversing of a city in one's mind, to decode its framework. Bones serve the body the way main roads serve a city, they give it form. On a smaller scale, circuit boards - another of Wyss' interests - are stamped with a fine network of routes that allow them to efficiently move information, activating them and the machine they form a part of. These mechanical printed boards take on the organic forms of nature, making them kin to the human skeleton. Bones articulate and animate the body, provide structure, protect vulnerable organs, and determine the body's movement. The alternative is a mass of flesh and blood and sinew and veins and organs - immobile. Visions of lungs squashed under the weight of the very body they seek to serve come to mind - if bones are absent; flaccid, asphyxiated, dying bodies.

Bones literally carry the history of flesh, with no two skeletons alike, it is possible to tell the sex of a skeleton, the age at time of death, whether a person was left or right handed, and if they had a good diet, through their bones. Latterly, linked to dental records - the identifier of last resort - (teeth are bones after all), the address and bank details of their owner. Bones support and protect the body and its organs, silently serving behind much needed protective layers of skin.

Bones, especially skull bones are recognised symbols of danger. The way we link all exposed bones to death - bared teeth or long nails - evinces that they be avoided. Bones as tool - weapon or writing implement - tell of technology. Who can ignore the significance of the flung bone becoming a space station in the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

16m, a print in which all the bones of a male body are laid end to end to form a sixteen metre long scroll, didactically link all the body's bones, remove their mystique as human remains, transforming them into a long line of textual information. It reminds me of a 'Spiritual' based children's rhyme:

The foot bone's connected to the ankle bone
The ankle bone's connected to the leg bone
The leg bone's connected to the knee bone
The knee bone's connected to the thigh bone
The thigh bone's connected to the hip bone
The hip bone's connected to the back bone
The back bone's connected to the shoulder bone
The shoulder bone's connected to the neck bone
The neck bone's connected to the head bone

Ezekiel's vision of a valley of bones transformed to life as an army, this is the other aspect of Carol Wyss' work: Change.

Taking recognised structures apart and putting them together again to form new objects, allow

a reappraisal and appreciation of the 'familiar' which is often treated with the contempt of being outside of consideration for new revelations.

The minimal language in Wyss' work is obvious with the order and regularity of the forms used. This is not to ignore the harkening to Arte Povera at the level of using poor, available items to make art. But Wyss goes one step further and confounds the audience by rendering the very concrete order of bones into abstract forms by photographing the interior space of a human skull and producing *Urlandschaft (Ur-landscape)*; a twenty-four panel vista 5.2 by 2,5 metres in size, made up of steel plate etchings on 350g cotton printing paper (which highlights both the image's topography and depth of colour). It is not un-troublesome to relate the source with the image, and yet their relationship is clear, the mind is uncharted territory, the space it inhabits is only as small as our imagination. Another piece, *scripts*, uses bones as the basis of new writing to chronicle human interaction, this is a strong base for interrogating the nature of language itself. If deciphering the hangings is impossible, it is not cause for despair, it is the attempt to understand that produces enlightenment.

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