

## SINGAPORE

### Michael Cartwright at the Substation Gallery

Great art speaks for itself, independent of the creator, but the collection of Michael Cartwright's work at the Substation Gallery sings with ancient rhythms and enchants viewers. Spectators are drawn into a harmonious world, at once mature and firmly placed and yet fluid, brimming with a childlike joy.

Cartwright's first exhibition in Singapore displayed his adept use of a range of materials; his work in wood, bronze, and granite is elemental while his manipulation of curved steel adds industrialism to his vision. The various materials are not allowed to clash but create fresh resonances.

*Fish over Ruins* (1995) is an exemplary piece fusing the rough, chiseled finish of a tall granite pillar with the sensual smoothness of a meter-long slab of redgum wood. The viewer's eyes, and inevitably hands, are drawn from the elegant curves of the redgum fish down to the course, reassuringly abrasive stone beneath. The fish, complete with sculpted handmarks



Michael Cartwright, *Fishing Over Ruins*, 1995, bronze and redgum wood, no dimensions given.

is everything transitory on which we depend for temporary survival. The granite, flecked with swirls and lines of moving, is permanent and will outlast us all.

The tranquillity of *Fisherman at the Pier* (1994) is fragile and heightens awareness of the delicate balance between humans and the elements. A robust, arrow-shaped granite pillar, the pier, supports a precariously perched granite boat. The silhouette of a sleeping fisherman is hewn into the boat and the night sky above firmly places the supine figure between two infinite spaces. The boat seems on the verge of falling off the pier and away into the ocean, the jagged sky looks capable of unleashing untold power onto the vessel. The ancient roughness of the stone pier complements the smooth, blue finish to the sky. Both are brought crashing into the industrial age by the brown steel base.

This truly postmodern ability to borrow from a variety of styles, cultures, and ages runs Cartwright's work and hints at a fascination with countries

and peoples rich in tradition and heritage.

*Fishing over Uluru* (1995), strikes the viewer with the incongruity of an uneven, linear bronze structure supporting the graceful crescent-moon arc of a simple fishing vessel. The small bronze piece crackles with spontaneity. It appears to leap up from its base, thrusting the boat into the air. The youthful, rugged lines of the support capture the fresh atmosphere of the whole collection of work which allows the viewer a taste of a joyous world of discovery. Hopefully Singapore will not have to never wait long for a second chance to share in Michael Cartwright's world.

Ben Monroe