

# SIMONE EISLER

## THE ARMOURED FOREST

November 7–29

Shed E Howard Smith Wharves

THE 2009 ARC BIENNIAL AND  
ARTWORKERS ALLIANCE PRESENTS

## THE ARMOURED FOREST

ENTER THE NEW FOREST AND EXPERIENCE SOMETHING  
ANCIENT BUT ALSO A STRANGE SENSE OF THE FUTURE.  
A MAJOR NEW INSTALLATION BY EMERGING BRISBANE ARTIST

## SIMONE EISLER

Simone Eisler has created a mysterious installation that places you in a place and a time that is not now. What you will witness could have happened before but also could be a harbinger of a future world — the past and future seem interchangeable; beauty and darkness, the enchanted and the grotesque exist side by side. But in this ambivalent world rebirth and new life are not far away.

[www.simoneeisler.com](http://www.simoneeisler.com)  
[www.arcbiennial.com](http://www.arcbiennial.com)

You are invited to the opening night on

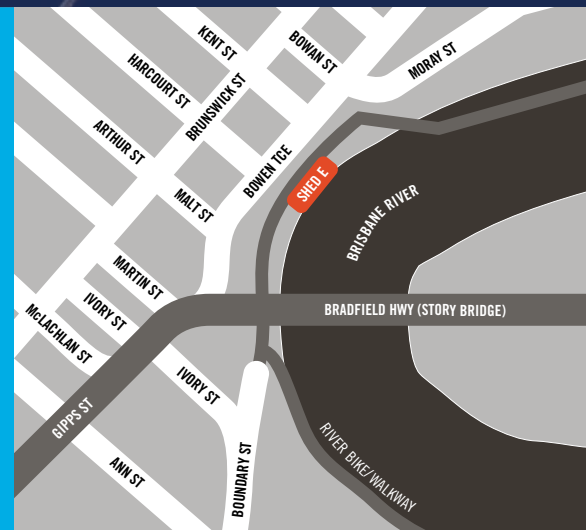
**SATURDAY NOVEMBER 7TH 6–8PM**  
**SHED E HOWARD SMITH WHARVES**

To be opened by Vernon Ah Kee



Queensland Government

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the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland





## THE ARMOURED FOREST

The artist is like a gardener, arranging her materials into an installation of sorts, balancing the natural line with the geometric, and the different textures and colours. Art and the garden are two human constructs that have a lot in common and some artists in particular highlight and delve deeper into the connection. Simone Eisler's work is about collecting specimens, growing them, connecting them, developing new hybrids, planting them in new configurations and eventually making a garden that encompasses all levels of life — avian, plant and marine. Like Derek Jarman's famous garden at Dungeness in Kent, Eisler's garden is less an artistic garden and more an artwork in its own right.

The seeds for Eisler's work go back to her childhood spent playing in her father's veterinary clinic and shed full of his collections and experiments. She spent many a day as a child dissecting animal testicles and ovaries, playing with the rich source of man made objects she found and generally trying to understand how everything works. I would classify Eisler as an artist who compiles art — an artist who makes the bigger image from lots of small parts. She's not interested in the large imposing smoothly finished sculpture. I am again reminded of Derek Jarman when he said 'if a garden isn't shaggy, forget it'. For Eisler if a sculpture isn't rough and ready and showing its construction then she's not interested. Also she's not interested in a self sufficient sculpture as a spatial concept; she is more interested in sculpture and sculptures as three dimensional drawing

Therefore it was not surprising that the smaller installations would grow into bigger statements as she wrestled with larger issues. Her gardens have now become forests in order to house her exploration into the adaptations and hybridity of all life forms. Whilst she has used a wide array of materials in the past she has concentrated in recent times on hard or tough materials from animals and fish — such as scales, skins and horn. She transforms these materials into new fantastical creatures, plant forms, and anthropomorphic clothing vessels.

All of this is not without a conceptual framework. Like many people today Eisler is strongly interested in climate change and the future of the planet. Her focus is on how species adapt to change and, in this particular work, how they develop protective armour to survive. This armour becomes omnipresent especially with the introduction of metal — the wood of trees morphs into metal and ghostly dark birds carry metal balls like bloated testicles and innards.

The world that Eisler creates is dense, baroque and fairytale Gothic but look more closely at the works and you will find some positive signs. The birds carrying the metal balls (sinkers) could also be carrying gifts — carrying lungs back to the sea and therefore reversing the evolutionary process of human emergence from the ocean. The cloaks of oyster shells and fish scales remind us that the original role of the materials was as a safe home and protector and now as a human vestment they silently speak of our need to join together with the animal kingdom.

Eisler's work is finally an art about transformation. The materials she collects come with a story and a memory, sometimes visible and more often than not unheard except in the private conversations between the artist and the donor of the objects. The artist refashions the objects, maintaining their histories and literalness but adding further levels of meaning in co-joining them with other materials and working them into recognizable images — cloaks, flocks of birds, plants living on logs of wood etc.

In an Eisler installation we are not in some future world nor in the past, but are actually experiencing fragments of a culturally constructed vision of the past and future and in the end this leads us to a world transformed but timeless.

**Kevin Wilson**

*Simone Eisler is represented by Gallerysmith, Melbourne.*

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