

INTERVIEW WITH MS JUDE SCHAHINGER
SCULPTOR, RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
RECONSTRUCTION & RENOVATION OF STATUES WITHIN
THE BALLARAT BOTANICAL GARDENS

BY DR JOHN GARNER

05 DECEMBER 2006

JOHN GARNER This is a video recording of an interview with Jude Schahinger who has had a significant role in the reconstruction and renovation of the Stoddart statues at the Ballarat Botanical Gardens. Also, the statues of the Thompson Bequest and the Flight from Pompeii in the Statuary Pavilion. At the moment she is in the process of restoring the Claxton monument. I will interview Jude on behalf of the Oral History Project of the Friends of the Ballarat Botanical Gardens.

JOHN GARNER Jude, on behalf of the Friends of the Gardens, I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate as part of their Oral History Project. We are here at the Claxton monument where you are presently working. Would you like to show me the sort of problems that you are experiencing and what you intend to do?

JUDE SCHAHINGER Sure. A lot of the problems with this sculpture are pertaining to water and dampness and water entry. Currently I have only just begun on this work, and what I am starting off doing is taking away some of the old mortar. There have been lots and lots of old repairs on this sculpture, and there is cracking along the joins of the previous repairs. What I am doing at the moment is actually hammer and chisel, taking out those old repairs so that I can get some air underneath the wrought iron elements here and do some treatment actually underneath to begin with, and then reseal all those areas using a different product.

JOHN GARNER There looks like a piece of wood down there at the bottom?

JUDE SCHAHINGER There is. There are some wedges underneath these blocks here. They have obviously had some problem with some subsidence in the past; there are about six wedges around this work. Part of the problem is obviously with vandalism, there's missing elements. This is a swan neck here, and part of my brief for this project is actually to recreate the lost areas. There is a dragon's wing, a swan's neck and a few other bits and pieces. These are made of limestone. I'll probably do the repairs out of an aggregate of various stable acrylic resins and fillers, silicone microspheres and possibly some marble dust, we'll see. It has also been painted in the past with a water-proofing agent to attempt to – being limestone it is very absorbent – in an attempt to help stabilise it. This paint is covered with lichen and it has been breaking down all over the place, so I will be taking all that paint off as well as the lichen, doing all the repairs, resealing it and again putting a water-proof coating on it, which unfortunately don't last forever.

JOHN GARNER It looks fairly solid, but is it?

JUDE SCHAHINGER Yes I think it is quite solid. I have just been re-pointing. You can see down here these are still damp. It is very important to have a water-proof seal on all the elements of an outdoor sculpture, particularly fountains. So the old softened and friable mortar has been raked out and new traditional mortar has been put back in, also at the back of the gargoyle elements here. They'd been taken off in the past in order to allow the fountain elements to be renewed. For whatever reason they left holes at the back there which were quite large and I have been sealing those up today. I'll be giving it an overall clean. Most of the elements up the top, the marble up the top, are in good condition – just covered with lichen and a bit of soiling matter. He won't clean up wildly; he will just be a little bit better than he is now, but the lower elements will look considerably in better condition than they are now. The iron, all the paint will be taken off the ironwork, any rusting stabilised and then repainted.

JOHN GARNER There's a gash down there that looks as though someone has taken a saw through it or something?

JUDE SCHAHINGER Well I think actually all of these have been taken off and I think when they took them off, they just nicked it a little bit down the bottom. I presume that in the 90s when they re-did the fountain pump and tubing elements.

JOHN GARNER And we have George Seddon who painted it in the 1970s on a previous record which incidentally I've got to show you when we get back.

JOHN GARNER Here we are in the Statuary Pavilion and these are the statues that Jude has dealt with already. From what she has been saying she has become almost attached to them, she has had them at home and everything. So tell us about what you did Jude.

JUDE SCHAHINGER They are actually in brilliant condition because they've been housed in doors every since they were made. The surface of the marble is in beautiful condition. So basically it was a clean. There were a few old repairs which often the adhesives used in old repairs oxidises and changes colour and looks revolting so it might have started off clear and ended up brown like old shellac or old animal glue. *Ruth* had quite a lot of old animal glue repairs across the front here and she's had one two three four five six, six sections there which all came out, all came apart and all the adhesive was taken off the back and then cleaned up and put back in. All of them have had a poultice cleaning treatment which uses a clay poultice with which I've used a very very mild one percent ammonia solution in it. It goes on the work in it's entirety, lots of testing is done initially to determine if there is going to be any change in gloss in the marble itself because these all have a beautiful patina on the feet, particularly *Susannah*, where people have touched her over the years and it is easy to disturb that patina.

JOHN GARNER That's the patina?

JUDE SCHAHINGER See down here, all these lovely soft polishes, it has just come from people touching it over the years. So it is important to retain that so lots of testing happens first before any major treatment is undertaken. All of these, the four girls, the four maidens, I think the poultice stayed on for a couple of days, it gets wrapped up with *Gladwrap*® so it stays nice and damp. Then the bulk of it is taken off by hand and then the sculptures are rinsed with an agent. It's got calcium carbonate in saturated solution because just ordinary water is often just that very slightly acidic, just left of pH7. If you add calcium carbonate which is the base material of marble, it just stops the possibility of any leaching of the marble itself or any etching of the marble itself. They've had all their manes regilded which makes it quite swish but basically they were a very big clean. Lots of problems *Flight*, with the, what do we

call that at the top? Whatever it is up the top there. Spiders. It is a haven for insects and what happens is all their debris and droppings fall on the back of *Flight* and around *Flight*. I got up there and cleaned it all out, sprayed it all with *Flight* covered up at the time. There is a little gadget up there you'll see, and that's actually a three-in-one repellent and we are not sure if it is working as they claim it does yet, but it has microwave/magnetic waves and something else. So you never know it may work but it would be good if that doesn't work that a solution needs to be found to the insect problem because that's the only problem in here for these works, particularly *Flight*. It is not a treatment you know, you might do it once every twenty years, it is not something you would do every year. They have come up particularly well.

JOHN GARNER You must be very pleased and certainly we are.

JUDE SCHAHINGER I am. I am very please. Particularly *Flight* has been a most dramatic clean, it is beautiful, so it is a privilege to be working on them.

JOHN GARNER Did you have any problems with the plinth as it were, with those figures that are on the base of it.

JUDE SCHAHINGER No, one of the panels has shown a bit of friability and a little bit of loss of the surface. This one particularly, and a little bit through here. After lots of testing, I did quite a bit of testing for salts and nothing came up positive, we made a conclusion that perhaps it was a by product of a previous cleaning product left in the stone, so it underwent exactly the same treatment as the rest of the stone. That is over a year ago now and there isn't any further particle deposits around it, so I believe the poulticing would have helped draw out whatever might have been left there, and sorted that problem out as well.

JOHN GARNER Very interesting. We might move on to the Stoddarts. We are back in the Conservatory and Jude is going to show us the Stoddart statues and mention the problems she had with each of them, because I don't think any of them got away without some sort of difficulty.

JUDE SCHAHINGER That's true. I'll just go back a little bit. The reason I have been involved with the works over here at all was because I heard about it on the news that the three figures, *Flora Farnese*, *Hebe* and *Leda*, had been vandalised and at the time I was just embarking on self-employment having worked at the National Gallery of Victoria for some six years. So I rang the Council and got put straight through to the Mayor and that was five years ago now. Since then I have done quite a bit of work. So these three here came to me in 56 pieces and I believe the left hand of *Hebe* was actually retrieved out of the Lake in addition to. They had lost that previously and it was actually found in the Lake when they were looking for all the other pieces. They came in really poor condition. All the noses were off because the heads had been rolled around. There were lots and lots of abrasions and minor nicks so it was about a four or five month project putting them back together. It started with a clean. All the pieces were cleaned before they were put back together and then all the major joins like the neck and the arms and the urn that *Hebe* has down here and the wrists are all pinned. They all got stainless steel pins of various dimensions ranging from 6mm up to 8mm in them, as well as adhered with epoxy resin on the inside and an acrylic resin on the outer edge of all the breaks because the epoxies will yellow and the acrylic that I use doesn't. So it was lots and lots of repairs like that, cleaning off of old lichen and soiling matter and then lots and lots of fills and restorations, like all the noses are my noses. These three noses are my noses, I think, or two or them I think *Flora* still has her nose. The fingers on *Flora* had been restored in the past but they didn't actually sit quite well so I just fiddled with them a little bit.

JOHN GARNER Which fingers, the ones on the top of the hair?

JUDE SCHAHINGER The three up the top, yeah. And her arm was off completely, her right arm was off completely at the join of the puffed sleeve. All the fingers were off and the head was off. *Hebe* was in the worst state actually because she had the um off, her wrist off, her arm off, her head off, a real mess. This is *Spring*, just finished only six weeks ago. She actually had been restored some years ago and those restorations were starting to fail and they were just cracking along one side and she was actually at risk of falling to pieces if she was moved again. As it turned out when she got delivered to my place, as soon as I had to lift her up to try to get the base off, as soon as I lifted her it all dropped off. It wasn't holding on at all. So she underwent the same treatment as the others here.

JOHN GARNER Could you just repeat that, what you used, so that in the future it could well be that people will want to use stainless steel pins.

JUDE SCHAHINGER They have all had stainless steel pins. It is really important to get the fractured faces, particularly if they have had old repairs, completely clean and free of anything that will stop a perfect join occurring again. So all the fractured faces get sealed first with like a 12% solution of acrylic resin called *Paraloid B72*[®]. This is a resin that is used internationally by conservators and it is stable for a minimum one hundred years, it doesn't discolour, it doesn't break down, it doesn't cross link but it remains reversible in organic polar solvents like *Acetone* and *Tolerine*. That is used wherever possible when you are restoring anything because it is such a quality resin. So the faces are sealed to give them a little bit more bite and then once the pin is inserted in a recessed hole which obviously needs to get drilled out, and when it is put together I use an epoxy resin called *Araldite M*[®] with a hardener called *HY956*, and that resin is used without any bulking agent on the break face, but not allowed to go right to the edge because it will yellow over time, so that last 10mm around the edges has that same acrylic resin there so that when it is all pulled up nice and tight, any excess can be taken off and any chip losses around the edge can be filled. The filling agents I use are again the *Paraloid B72*[®] in a solvent called *Pyridine* which is a savage solvent with Carrara marble dust, silicone microspheres and occasionally a little pigment to try to match it better to the surrounding marble. Basically that's it, that type of restoration will be used on any marble.

JOHN GARNER Very good. That's very interesting. Now what about the other statues, who have we got here?

JUDE SCHAHINGER Well she was one of the three that was very badly damaged, *Leda*.

JOHN GARNER *Leda*. That's right because *Leda*'s got a swan.

JUDE SCHAHINGER And the others all had a clean probably four years ago now with the same cleaning poulticing process. *Hercules* over here was with me only a couple of months ago and he was seriously fractured through ankles, the trunk of the supporting tree trunk at the base, and then across below the knees. He has been fairly well put together in the past, but the resin in the breaks has discoloured so I presume it was an epoxy that was used, impossible to get out again. Once they are together that's it so they need to be together in beautiful alignment. These weren't too bad so what I've done is actually clean out the first 3mm or 4mm of the breaks and fill it with that aggregate that I was mentioning before. I believe he was the one who went down to a stonemason with the possibility of getting a replica made and so he is covered with little crosses all over where he had done his measuring and he had a few extra bits of brass attached to him via liquid nails where he has obviously run a common line that he could measure from. All of those were repaired and I think everyone was surprised to find that he had the top of his clubs still there, that's the original. I think the only other thing that might happen with these is um, *Mercury* may

get her finger made up on the tip of the wing of his helmet. That's how we went and all done.

JOHN GARNER When you originally had them, they had been out in the air and exposed to all the elements for many many years, so it seemed to us that certainly on top of the statues there was a great deal of trouble associated with mould or

JUDE SCHAHINGER It's generally lichen and different micro flora, moss, algae. Because marble is quite porous and is made up of lots and lots of particles and soft, it is quite easy for the roots of these micro plants to get right in. You can see the staining on the top of *Mercury's* shoulder or *Bacchante's* tambourine. It is impossible to get out it will be there forever, it gets right deep into the stone. The same with any grey spotting you see, it's residue from the roots shadowing. But given their age and given where they've been for so long, they are actually in pretty good condition.

JOHN GARNER Yes, well let's hope that having had all this done to them and being in a sheltered environment in future and so on, that they'll maintain the way they look for many many years.

JUDE SCHAHINGER I hope so, I do hope so. All that remains is to implement a maintenance programme. Once or twice a year they get a very gentle dust with a very soft brush or an air compressor, but it needs to be done. Otherwise all of that soiling and cobwebs, it builds up just like a layer of dirt and insects are attracted to that, moisture is attracted to that, micro floras again attracted to that. So it is important that they actually get a little bit of a touch up once or twice a year. So to put my two cents worth in there to make sure it happens.

JOHN GARNER Okay off you go.

JUDE SCHAHINGER I'm looking at an article about the *Claxton* being restored in 1997 which is only nine years ago which I find appalling. Which goes to show where it is, very shady, very damp and as I found out this morning being watered by the sprinklers, these are probably not the best conditions for it. So hopefully the restorations I am about to do will last a little longer than nine years, we'll see. Maybe in nine years I will be out of the country and you'll never know. I'll never know, hahah.

JOHN GARNER I want to ask you how you got involved in all this business?

JUDE SCHAHINGER Sure. I came to conservation quite late in my early thirties, having done zillions of different jobs over the years but I have always been a fixer of things, a restorer of things. Picture frames, furniture, woodworker as well and a friend of mine kept telling me I should go and do this course in Canberra. She worked in the Heritage Commission in Canberra. She kept saying it would suit me right down to the ground and she was right. It is, how many years later? Thirteen, fourteen years later and I'm still doing it and when I graduated, so I did a three-year applied science degree at the University of Canberra in the conservation of cultural materials. In those days there were about fifteen or sixteen graduates every year, many of them went overseas because there wasn't much work here in Australia. I was lucky enough to be offered an internship at the National Gallery Victoria which I undertook in 1995/96/7 I can't remember, in the Objects Department and so most of my work while I was there was involved with the Antiquities Collection which was being prepared for display. About three thousand objects to be prepared for display for the first time in a long long time, so I got to work on some amazing, amazing objects including a little terracotta musician Egyptian 3000BC and when you turned it over there was thumb print in the clay on the bottom which was sensational. After the internship I worked on the relocation project at the Gallery as the conservator on that project responsible for packing systems, pot systems for sculpture and the team of

people on that project which I never quite saw the end of because I got a little bit ill for a couple of years and then I embarked on private practice which is quite different to working in an institution and I love it! I don't have to be anywhere at nine o'clock in the morning. My work lately is really firing along, I'm booked up to end of June and most of it is outdoor sculpture, but I also do gilded frames. Frames was my first love and one of the things I thought I would specialise in when I finished my course but as it turns out there is lots of marble and it is always getting damaged so I mix it up, I'll do anything really.

JOHN GARNER Very interesting. Whereabouts were you born? Were you born locally?

JUDE SCHAHINGER I was born in Adelaide and grew up in the Adelaide Hills. My father was a cooper for thirty years, but he was a violin/cello maker and a musician as well and whilst he didn't teach any of us four kids to play an instrument because he was too impatient, I think I got my love of timber and my ability to make things from him. To that end I have made quite a few canoes and kayaks and have been sent all over the place, overseas etc.

JOHN GARNER You have travelled in many places?

JUDE SCHAHINGER I lived in New Zealand for seven years and I've been to Europe a couple of times, a couple of times with work actually as a courier for an exhibition in Rome, but I'm not a great traveller, I'm a bit of a homebody.

JOHN GARNER You've been where these statues originated from.

JUDE SCHAHINGER Yes that's right. Apart from having the flu I had a nice time in Rome.

JOHN GARNER Now do you live locally here?

JUDE SCHAHINGER I live in Castlemaine, but I am right smack bang in the middle of relocating an old farmhouse to a property in Maldon so that's where I plan to be based for some time to come.

JOHN GARNER Jude, from my point of view you have been a very good interviewee and I do appreciate it and I am sure the Friends do as well. A lot of what you said is very important to us so that in future someone will be able to go back and if they need to they've got your excellent commentary on what you have done. We do appreciate it, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW _____

The Stoddart Statues

Twelve marble statues were selected by Thomas Stoddart during his visit to Carrara in Italy and were consigned together with Sicilian marble pedestals as a gift to the citizens of Ballarat. The statues were unveiled in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens on Empire Day 1884 by the Governor of Victoria with thousands of spectators travelling from Melbourne.

The Carrara marble statues have suffered many losses through vandalism, biological degradation and weathering.

The classic mythological figures presented were:

Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, Hercules, Pomona, Bacchante, Hebe, Flora Farnese, Leda, Mercury and Flora.

Spring and Hercules were smashed when vandals pushed them from their pedestals in 1993. Council engaged a Melbourne sculptor to undertake carving copies in Carrara Marble, however the artist was unable to complete the project. We have an incomplete copy of Hercules and a block of white marble as a legacy. Hercules and Spring were repaired by stonemasons and displayed in the Robert Clark Centre since 1998.

Flora Farnese, Leda and Hebe were smashed by vandals in 2002. Following this act and the saw cut to the leg of Autumn occurring, Council determined that the collection would be removed from their pedestals in the gardens and they have been stabilised and cleaned and placed on display within The Conservatory. Flora Farnese, Leda and Hebe are currently being restored to their pre- vandalism condition through use of stainless steel reinforcing pins, epoxy adhesive and joins and losses being replaced using silicon microspheres, acrylic resin and marble dust so that repairs will not be obvious.

END OF DOCUMENT _____