



MARTIN HILL

NATURE'S DESIGN

THE UNDERSTANDING OF CYCLICAL PROCESSES

AFTER MANY YEARS AS A COMMUNICATIONS DESIGNER IN ENGLAND, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND I DECIDED IN 1992 TO TRY AND COMBINE MY LOVE FOR ART, WILDERNESS AND ECOLOGICAL DESIGN. I WAS INSPIRED BY THE POTENTIAL OF A NEW FRAME OF THINKING AND DESIGN, THEN BEING CALLED SUSTAINABLE DESIGN.

I understood that ecologists and systems thinkers were trying to influence the course of industrial consumer culture towards alignment with the living world. The aim was to create a flourishing civilisation in harmony with nature, our support system.

When I began making ephemeral sculptures in wild places and photographing them in such a way as to provoke a deep human response I hoped my work would lead to a closer understanding of the cyclical processes of nature. The sculptures are made from natural materials found at the site and soon return to nature to become a resource for new life. All that remains is the photograph. In this way the art is a metaphor for nature's regenerative design. Twenty five years later I can say that my images have captured the imagination of many, but the transition to a society that emulates these processes in industrial ecology is still a work in progress. I have found that living close to nature is the best way to understand natural systems and our relationship with them. I have had the privilege to live, travel and work in many wild natural places.

I live with my partner and collaborator Philippa in the Southern Alps of New Zealand. My studio has a reflecting pool which reminds me that each of us is made up of 60% water that flows through all life. Many of our sculptures are made in association with natural bodies of water, and often the reflection in a lake, a river or a lagoon completes the circle. Our inten-

tion is to refer to the mirroring of cyclical natural systems in the design and manufacture of our manmade environments.

Synergy was made from raupo stems held in tension by a network of flax threads. It uses nature's preferred construction method known as tensegrity. None of the stems touch, they are held in compression by the threads. This means the system is in total dynamic balance and stress is distributed equally throughout the system making the sculpture flexible. One of the properties of tensegrity is synergy, meaning the whole is more than the sum of its parts. My work expresses nature's cyclical design principles which I believe are gradually taking over from the linear take-make-dispose thinking of the past. Science is about knowing, art is about feeling, design is about possibility. Urban spaces are also ecosystems. They can be modelled on nature's design in which interdependence, diversity, self organisation, cooperation, recycling and flexibility are allowed to flourish. Natural systems are our life support system. Bringing nature into urban spaces through good design can help to bridge the gap between us and nature and inspire us to develop a more ecological frame of thinking and design.

With reference to his statement, Martin Hill provides following photos: Ice circle (1), Synergy (2), Interconnected (3), Autumn leaf circle (4). ■

For more information about the artist Martin Hill and his works please visit the following link <http://www.martin-hill.com>







