

mossgreen
GALLERY

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Streamline No.2, (diptych), 2005,
twigs and lichen on board,
126 x 126 x 5cm (detail)

Shona Wilson
Align

Shona Wilson: Ineffable Beauty

There is an ineffable beauty about Shona Wilson's work that transcends words. It is the beauty that knows itself and remains without name. It has no parallels, yet calls on that of nature, recreated, its completeness being a combination of the most delicate and the most powerful. She delights in the paradoxical acknowledging, that it creates tensions both visually and intellectually. Hers is an art that has the strength and delicacy of a web of light. It is a marriage of transience and permanence – the twig and the fortress, beauty new found in the detritus of nature, allied to sculptural forms of inner and outer strength. That which is precious was discovered in the discarded. She speaks of nature being the source, not subject of her art, metamorphosed into doorways of perception, of past and present at one in the cycle of eternity.

The theme of Wilson's exhibition Align, which has taken three years to put together, is 'twigs', of the common and the underrated, the simple and the minimal. The natural look of the 'Streamline' series, so visually engaging and appealing, is, however, really an artifice, carefully and adroitly assembled to ensure a mesmerising harmony of shapes and contrast of textures. Although the largest of these pieces, the diptych Streamline No. 1, took eight months to complete, it is, nevertheless, not weighed down by any sense of laboured dexterity, delighting instead in its mastery of understatement and freshness of vision. Its simplicity is as overwhelming as the profundity it engenders. From a childhood encouragement and engagement, Wilson rediscovered nature when living in Sydney. This is now fed by where she lives and works - Sydney's northern beaches and the Blue Mountains. Her medium of twigs comes from the predominant gum and casuarina, the she oak particularly because of its beautiful texture.

Although Wilson says she works 'quite intuitively. I let the materials speak to me.' - the creative mind can be felt at work in all she does. They are too clever and dexterous to be pure acts of happy instinct, but likewise, mere reason could not conjure them up unaided by sensitive inspiration. Her ploy is both, presented so naturally that they seem self-grown. For hers is the art that disguises art, where reason and effort are sublimated by their natural appearance. They are as they are, for that is the way they must be. And they carry lots of meaningful messages. As all things human grow more machine-like under the hypnotic sway of technological advancement, Wilson indulges in a little irony. An assembled piece may take its inspiration from computer circuits, but its metal might has undergone a sea change into coral fern and twigs. Another employs insect wings and seedpods, or crusty claws of crabs and blue bottles of diaphanous enchantment. In a world inebriated with disposal, Wilson's recycled art is sobering in its recreated beauty. These fecund works echo nature's cycle of rebirth. Her message of conservation draws deeply on the environment and is a lesson so needed in our time.

Part of the appeal of Wilson's work lies in the inventiveness of her selection, allied to the wondrous metamorphosis these objects undergo. This same magic imbues her sculptural pieces in the transformation of clay into something solid and powerful as a fortress. Changing that as unbecoming as mud into productive stoneware is no new trick, and different cultures over the millennia have produced an extraordinary array of objects both useful and beautiful. So, although Wilson has lots of competition in making statements new and aesthetically pleasing, she does it so simply by locking into verities and exploring again those things that have no words or names.

The vessels of clay in this exhibition are called 'fortresses', solid, grounded forms, sprouting twigs, contrasting the man made with that of nature. They all have strong architectonic qualities and individual personalities, opening up through tiny windows. The escape hole for air during firing takes on notions of becoming an entity, the eye of the building's body, an entrance, a doorway, a view in and out. Describing the building as a metaphor for the body, Wilson refers to them as 'spaces difficult to enter and difficult to leave.' She speaks of a refuge for ourselves, hence the 'fortress' concept, exploring the fine line between protection and repulsion, and exclusion.

This must be seen and felt – not explained – for these marvellous shapes contain many ideas and much being. The materials she uses and her new-found creations are keys to experience, unlocking gates leading to journeys into the wondrous. Her use of the aesthetics of minimalism lead to contemplation, yet their ravishing beauty places them firmly in this world, helping us to see it anew.

Today, as we stand the world on its head by turning creation into chaos, Wilson's optimistic art offers a renaissance, a rebirth, a laudable recycling. It is neither abstract nor representational, pushing traditional concepts of both sculpture and painting. Nor is it craft, although its is superbly crafted. Instead, her evocative art transcends categories to explore verities, especially those found in or inspired by beauty.

David Thomas
Melbourne
September 2006

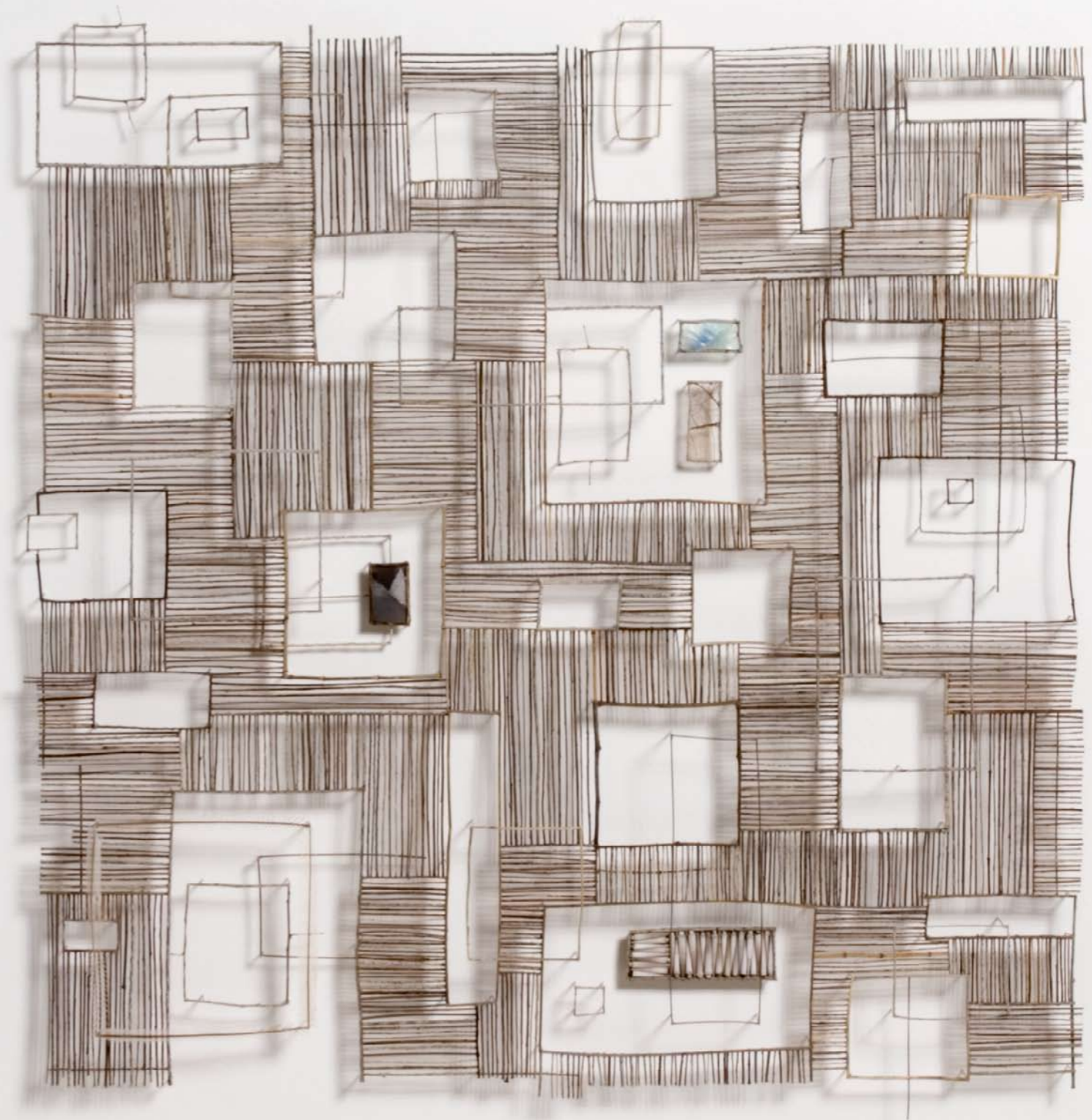
Fortress No.7, 2006,
ceramic, twigs and seedpods
50 x 45 x 25cm





Left: Patternation No.2, 2006, (detail)

Right: Patternation No.2, 2006,
twigs, bluebottle, leaf, feather & sea-urchin
67 x 67 x 7.5cm (framed)





Streamline No.3, 2005
casaurina twigs & coral on board
115 x 122 x 5cm



Fortress No.5, 2006
ceramic, twigs & banksia flower
27 x 19 x 10cm



Fortress No.8, 2006, (detail)
ceramic, fan coral, copper wire &
seedpods 58 x 29 x 18cm





Streamline No.1, (diptych), 2004
twigs & banksia flower on board
91 x 315 x 5cm



Left: Ley-lined, (detail)

Right: Ley-lined, 2006
twigs & coral on board
87 x 87 x 5cm





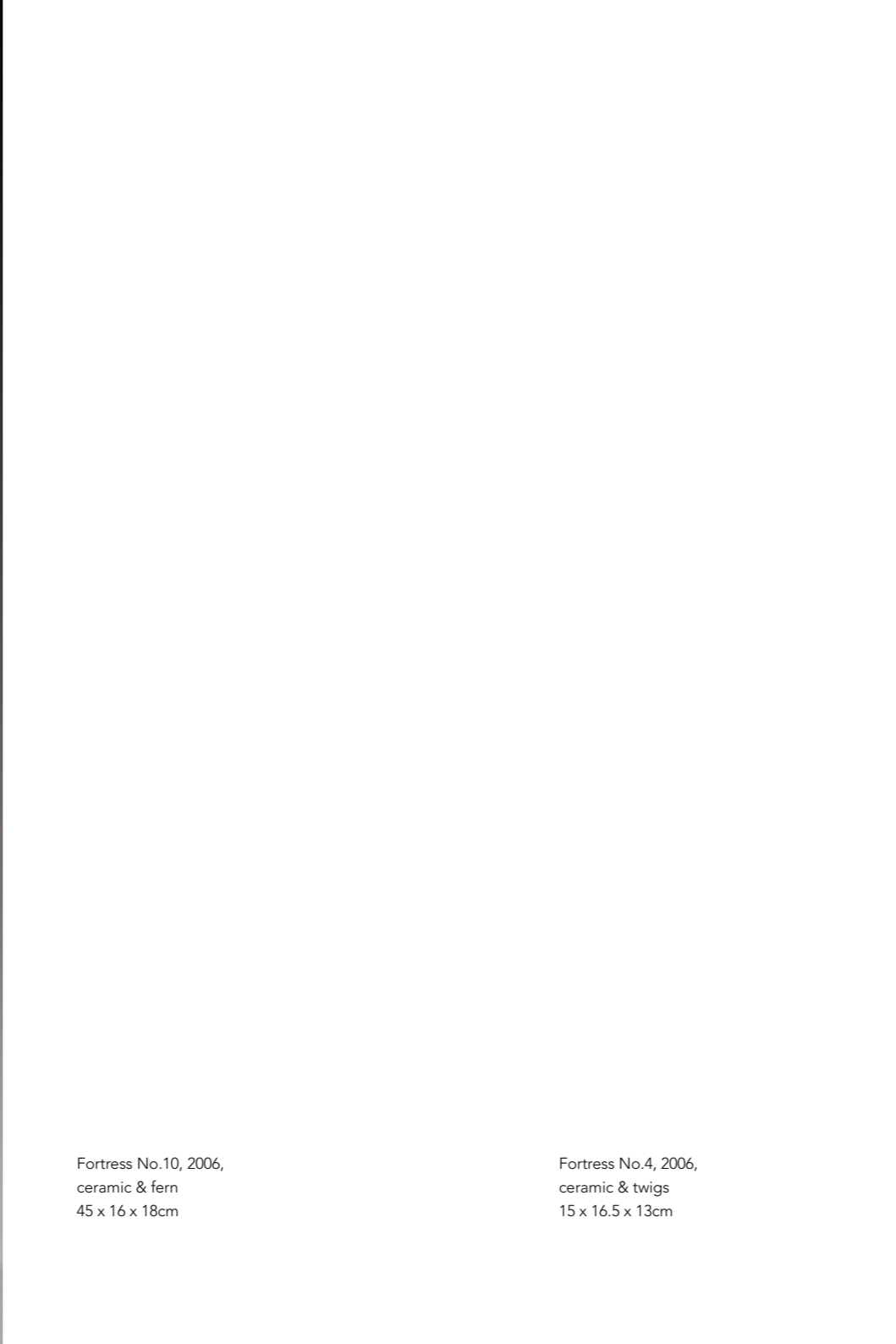
Left: Faultline - (detail)

Right: Faultline, 2005,
twigs & coral on board
87 x 87 x 5cm





Fortress No.10, 2006,
ceramic & fern
45 x 16 x 18cm



Fortress No.4, 2006,
ceramic & twigs
15 x 16.5 x 13cm

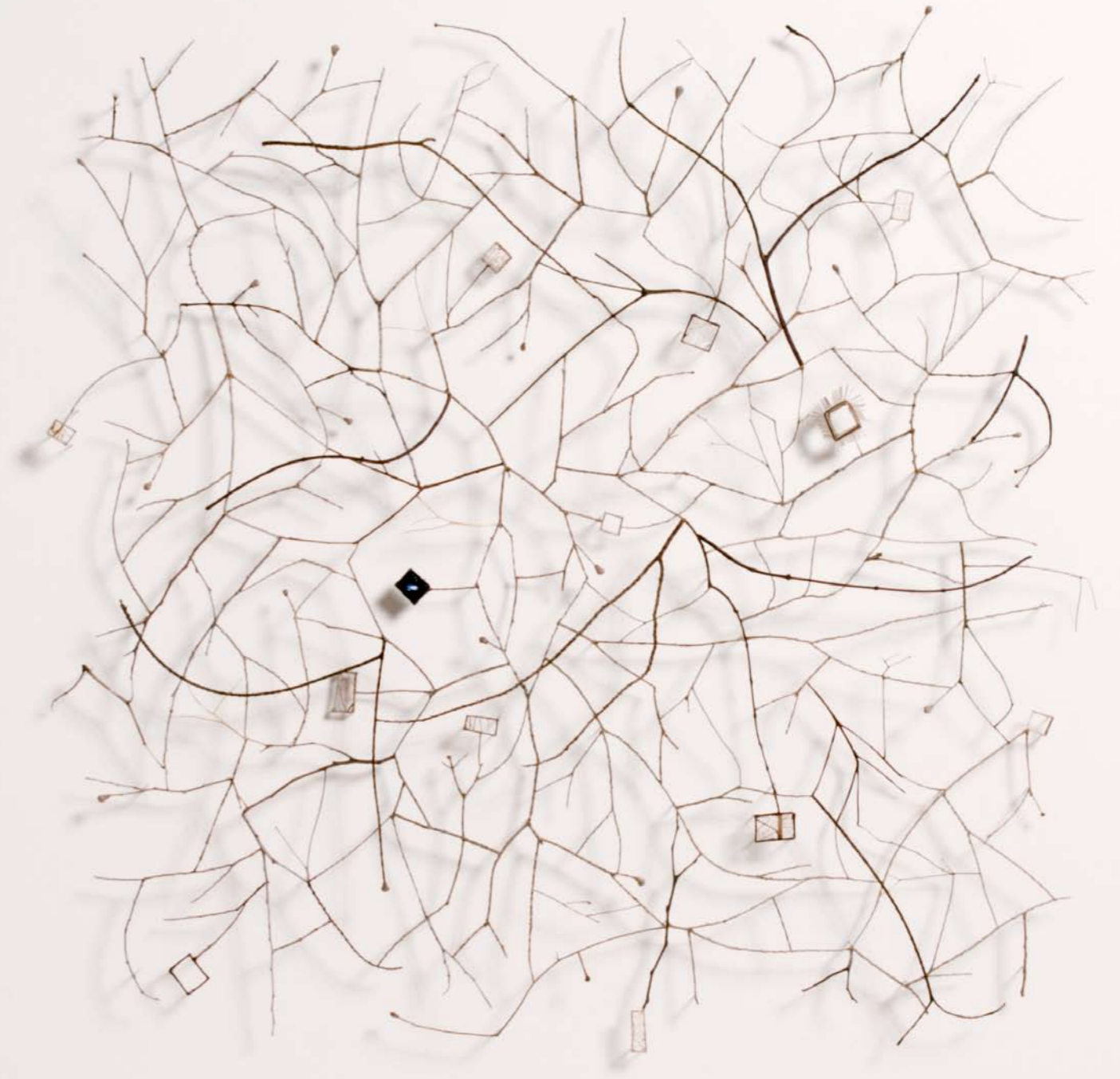
Fortress No.8, 2006
ceramic, fan coral, copper wire & seedpods
58 x 20 x 29cm





Left: Patternation No.3, 2006, (detail)

Right: Patternation No.3, 2006,
twigs, feather, wings & leaf
67 x 67 x 7.5cm (framed)



Shona Wilson

Solo Exhibitions

- 2006 *Align*, Mossgreen Gallery, Melbourne
- 2005 *Re – Kindle*, Manly Regional Art Gallery and Museum, Sydney
- 2003 *In Material*, Michael Nagy Fine Art, Sydney
- 2002 *New Work*, Gallery 101, Melbourne
- 2000 *New Work*, Michael Nagy Fine Art, Sydney
- 1998 *New Work*, Michael Nagy Fine Art, Sydney
- 1997 *Recent Work*, Federation Zen Artefact Gallery Clovelly, Sydney
- 1996 *Recent Work*, Federation Zen Artefact Gallery, Clovelly, Sydney
- 1994 *The Solar-Powered Bat-Pack* 'Festival of the Winds' Bondi, Sydney

Group Exhibitions

- 2003 *Second Life –New Life*, Manly Regional Gallery, Sydney
- 2001 *Extinction Denied*, Volvo Gallery, Sydney
- 1998 *Colony*, Sculpture By The Sea, Coastal Cliff Walk, Bondi-Tamarama
- 1997 *Cluster*, Sculpture By The Sea, Coastal Cliff Walk, Bondi-Tamarama
- 1994 *Air-Pocket*
Entis Eidos, Eco-Design Foundation Rozelle, Sydney
- 1993 *Batmania-* The Water City of Wax Associated Project of the 5TH Australian Sculpture Triennial, Yarra River, Melbourne
- 1993 *Batmania-* 'Cities', First Draft West Gallery, Annandale, Sydney

- 1992 *Socket*, First Draft West Gallery, Annandale, Sydney
- 1991 *Osmosis*, Airspace Gallery, Redfern, Sydney Selected Group Exhibition

Education

- 2002-03 Surface Treatment- Ceramics Training Programme Northern Beaches TAFE Sydney
- 1991-00 Part-time studies in Ceramics Bondi Pavilion Pottery Randwick TAFE National Art School, East Sydney
- 1988-90 Bachelor of Visual Arts- Sculpture Major Sydney College of the Arts Sydney University Balmain, Sydney
- 1987 Part-time studies in Sculpture, Printmaking and Life-drawing National Art School, East Sydney

Bibliography

- 2006 *Craft Arts International* - Issue 68, "Salvage and Detritus", Bridie Macgillicuddy
ABC Television, "My Art – Shona Wilson", *Sunday Arts*, Sun, 28 May, 2006
"Most Collectable Artists List", *Australian Art Collector*, Jan 2006
- 2005 McDonald, John, "Warm the Spirit, Tickle the Eye" (Review) *Spectrum* – Visual Art, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Aug 2005, pp 20-21.
Mullholland, Henry, "Review", Sydney: ABC Radio 702, August, 2005
- 2004 Waller, Richard, "The Shore Thing", (Profile) *Vogue Living*, May/June 2004

- 2002 Weiss, Karen, "Shona Wilsons Other Pathways", *Ceramics; Art and Perception*, No. 47, 2002.
- 2001 ABC Television, "Profile – Shona Wilson", Produced by Wendy Bonyton, *Sunday Program*, 24 June 2001.
"Gallery", *Art & Australia*, Vol 38 No. 4, 2001, p 602.
- 2000 "Generation Next – Shona Wilson", *Belle Magazine*, Oct/Nov, 2000.
- 1998 "Profile-Shona Wilson", *Object Magazine*, No.1, 1998

Collections and Prizes

- 2005 Manly Art Gallery & Museum Ceramic Collection, Sydney
- 2005 Macquarie Bank Acquisition
- 2004 Macquarie Bank Acquisition
- 2004 Selected Blake Prize for Religious Art
- 2003 Selected Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize, South Australian Museum, Adelaide, South Australia
- 2002 Shepparton Regional Gallery, Ceramics Collection Victoria
- 2002 Smorgan Family Collection, Melbourne
- 2001 "Art Houses"
Public, Permanent installation Arthouse Hotel Sydney