

Nicole Grech

Biography

Nicole Grech is a Sydney-based sculptor who began her formal art studies in Italy at the Academia di Cesare Crespi in 1997. She returned to Australia in 1999 and continued her studies at The National Art School (NAS) in Darlinghurst, completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree (majoring in Sculpture) in 2001.

Since graduating from NAS, Nicole's sculptures have featured in more than 25 exhibitions including *Sculpture by the Sea Bondi* (2002, 2004, 2006), *Sculpture by the Sea Cottesloe* (2006, 2007) and *Robin Gibson Gallery's Annual Sculpture Survey*. In 2003, Nicole was one of only two Australian sculptors selected from over 800 international submissions to exhibit at the *Toyamura International Sculpture Biennale* in Japan.

Nicole held her first solo exhibition in 2004 at Maree Mizon Gallery, Sydney. She has since had three solo exhibitions and her work is now represented in numerous private and corporate collections in Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Japan and Italy.

Nicole's work is figurative and revolves around the recurring themes of "relationships" and "the roller coaster journey of life". Her sculptures often encompass a group of figures engaged in some sort of dialogue and interaction. She likes to call these sculptures "encounters" and they appear to the viewer as a moment captured in time. The "encounters" are drawn from real moments or incidences in Nicole's life, and the relationships around her, however she aims to achieve an underlying sense of ambiguity so that the viewer can apply his or her own story to the work.

While developing her interest in the "contrasts of life" – the ups and downs, the beautiful and the ugly, the good and bad – Nicole started to explore the half animal, half human form as a more effective means of expressing her ideas.

In particular, Nicole has been working for many years with the figure of the Minotaur – the half bull, half man creature of ancient Greek legend. The Minotaur has become a strong "motif" for Nicole, serving the artist on a number of levels. The Minotaur is not only a connection with her passion for history, mythology and ancient Greek art, but also her obsession with the contaminated "human" form and the complexity and contrasts of life.

In more recent years, these same principles and ideas have been expressed through half human, half dog figures. Her current series of dogs is inspired by issues she has observed and experienced in today's society. These include the constant power games at play, the widening gap between rich and poor and the increasing pace of life that leaves little time to spend on relationships. These are serious matters, however Nicole manages to express them with her signature sense of humour and quirkiness.

Nicole works with a variety of materials including resin, cement, plaster and bronze. She has developed a distinct and unique style of modelling, no matter what material she is working in. She enjoys the contrast of working with different mediums – from quick-setting plaster to the long and methodical process of bronze casting. She is particularly passionate about bronze casting, using "lost wax" methods that date back to ancient Greek times. Nicole is proud to continue this rich tradition of sculpting while expressing her views on modern society.