

Liz Truswell in her own words

"As a practising artist, and a research scientist, I am aware of the close links between these two activities (art and science). These occur at a fundamental level, reflecting shared intuitions about the natural world and the deeply felt need to respond to it.

It is notable that the arts and the sciences generate similar aesthetic responses. So what is it that underlies this aesthetic response, this charge of pleasure, this sense of rightness, this frisson that we might experience when confronted with a work of art, or an 'elegant' solution to a scientific problem? A very substantial literature is currently being generated in relation to this issue. Some of it comes from neuroscientists, some from art historians, some from polymath commentators on the world at large.

Typically, the kind of questions that are being asked are: Are we hard-wired for these aesthetic responses? Do they have some kind of evolutionary, adaptational value, now or in the past? Are there universal principles that underlie the making of art - principles that can be separated from an overlay of cultural learning?

As a system of thought, the earth sciences make distinctive contributions to a wider culture. These include a sense of time that is beyond human perception - a sense of the sublime - as well as narratives that centre on the universality of change, on the intensification of a sense of place, and a history that is based on detailed observation.

In my own experience, methods of making work, as a research scientist, and as an artist, are remarkably similar, each relying on a high level of observation, on imaginative visualisation, and the creation of mental models. The information to test these models is always fragmentary and incomplete. And there is finally of course, presentation to public view. Translating this view of the world into an art practice presents an ongoing challenge."

Biography:

Dr Liz Truswell was born in Kalgoorlie, WA. She has spent much of her working life as a geoscientist, holding an Honours degree from the University of Western Australia and a PhD from Cambridge University in the UK.

In 1971-72 as a post-doctoral fellow at Florida State University, she began an association with the international Ocean Drilling Program.

From 1973-96 she worked as a palaeontologist and environmental geoscientist with Australian Geological Survey Organisation (now Geoscience Australia) holding the position of a Chief Research Scientist from 1992-96.

