

# Michelle Kelly



## Inspiration

The inspiration for Kelly's work has been mycology, the study of fungi. The artist comments, "This fifth kingdom produces amazing forms and structures from a wide variety of species and it is an important life force for this planet. Fungi play an important role in ecosystems by breaking down and recycling nutrients."

## Visualisation

Kelly maintains an active visual art diary. In her sketchbooks can be found finely detailed and notional sketches, diagrams, photocopied images, all analysing or depicting different forms of fungi. She reads widely on the subject but admits that it's the images in books rather than the texts that draw her attention. On amassing information about fungi the artist's attitude remains, "I don't think you can have too much."

## Process

Techniques used in the production of Kelly's jewellery and metal work include cutting and punching, filing, sanding, hammering, annealing and patination. In her earliest jewellery work Kelly used (the relatively cheap metal) copper and learnt to create colours by annealing (using heat) and patination (immersing copper in an ammonium chloride/sawdust mix). The units within the brooch and neckpiece series have been produced by punching (hammering a shaped punch to cut units from sheets of metal). Finished units are then assembled by piercing, drilling, gluing and riveting. Large units are cut using a machine fly press or a

water jet cut process. Working on a large scale (such as *Basidiomycota*) is an expensive process. Kelly addressed this in *Basidiomycota* by restricting her range of units to four sizes. Full size cardboard shapes were used to model the appearance of the finished work to be installed on the wall.

## Realisation

Kelly's work walks a fine line between replicating the original source (fungi) and interpretation. The key relationship is structure. All of the artist's pieces replicate to varying degrees the structural relationships that characterize the clustering and layering arrangements of fungi. The *Bracket* series

"Fungi are amazing in their different forms, colours and textures. That's what intrigues me about them and the fact that I can emulate them in my practice"

demonstrates the artist's close affinity with nature and the experimental edge of her practice. The use of actual outer sections of trees (salvaged from a wood heap) adds a sense of authenticity but at the same time draws attention to the fact that the metal forms are not copies or replications but interpretations.



Necklace 1 (detail), 2008, sterling silver, 370 (extended) Photograph: Mick Bradley



Maquette for *Basidiomycota* (détail), 2007, painted copper, 300 x 350 Photograph: Grant Hancock



Golden Fruiting Bodies, 2007, brass, wood, 500 x 80 Photograph: Mick Bradley