

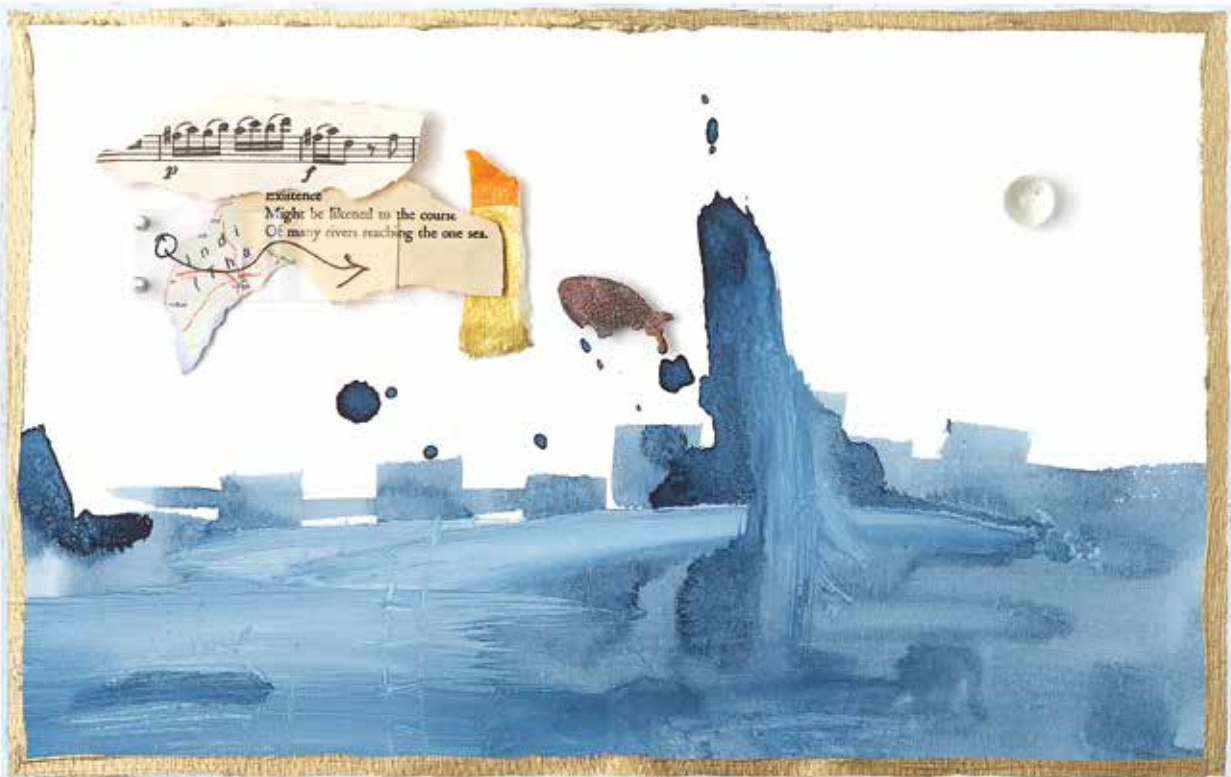
UNIVERSAL NATIONS

Dina Torrans

Canadian Sculpture Centre

April 11 - May 3, 2013

Essay by Mark Lipton



The Canadian Sculpture Centre
500 Church Street, Toronto
April 11 – May 3, 2013
Catalogue Essay by Mark Lipton

The aim of the Sculptors Society of Canada (SSC) is to promote and exhibit contemporary Canadian sculpture. Founded by Canadian sculptors Frances Loring, Florence Wyle, Elizabeth Wyn Wood, Emanuel Hahn, Henri Hébert, and Alfred Laliberté, SSC has been a driving force in Canada's art scene through its exhibitions since 1928. Most recently, the Society hosts public exhibits at its gallery *The Canadian Sculpture Centre* centrally located in downtown Toronto. This exhibition curates work from Toronto artist Dina Torrans.

Dina Torrans has been working as a sculptor and multimedia artist for over 25 years. Her award winning sculptures, paintings, and photographs have been exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions; her work is included in many private and public collections internationally. Her work has also been seen in the Elaine Fleck Gallery, Impressions Gallery, the John B. Aird Gallery, Triangle Gallery, Artscape Toronto, and during several Nuit Blanche events in Toronto. See <dinatorrans.com> for full details.

Torrans graduated with honours from the Art Centre of Central Technical School, where she subsequently worked as an instructor and technician in Continuing Education for 10 years. She has been a Visiting Artist and Instructor at numerous workshops and seminars at, among others, the McMichael Gallery and the Toronto Board of Education. Torrans completed specialized studies at the Ontario College of Art and Design in the early 90s. In addition to her artistic practice, Torrans also works as Creative Director at <artdesign.to>, a prized design studio, where she creates and oversees projects for both print and web.

Opening: Saturday, April 13, 11am - 4pm
Music by Gordon Hyland & Sam McLellan
Remarks by Richard McNeill
Sculptor, Vice President - SSC, Co-Director - CSC

Her previous solo show "Mapping Infinity" revealed how extensive travels in Europe, India, the Far East, and South Pacific broadened and influenced her work tremendously. In this past work, as in her current collections, Torrans evokes a dream-like playfulness exploring what it means to be alive. Always optimistic, forceful, and full of joy, Torrans' imagery points to ideas about our shared human belief systems, environmental consciousness, personal and planetary evolution, and our ultimate interconnectedness. She describes how imagery emerges from the inner workings of her mind: "I have found that in exploring the creative process, my work reflects various ideas and developments in my personal mythology. This mythology continues to inspire me to action and to dialoguing about our evolving world and times. It is one of my most valuable teachers." Torrans' work is reflexive about her creative practice, and the tensions between Nature and human environments.

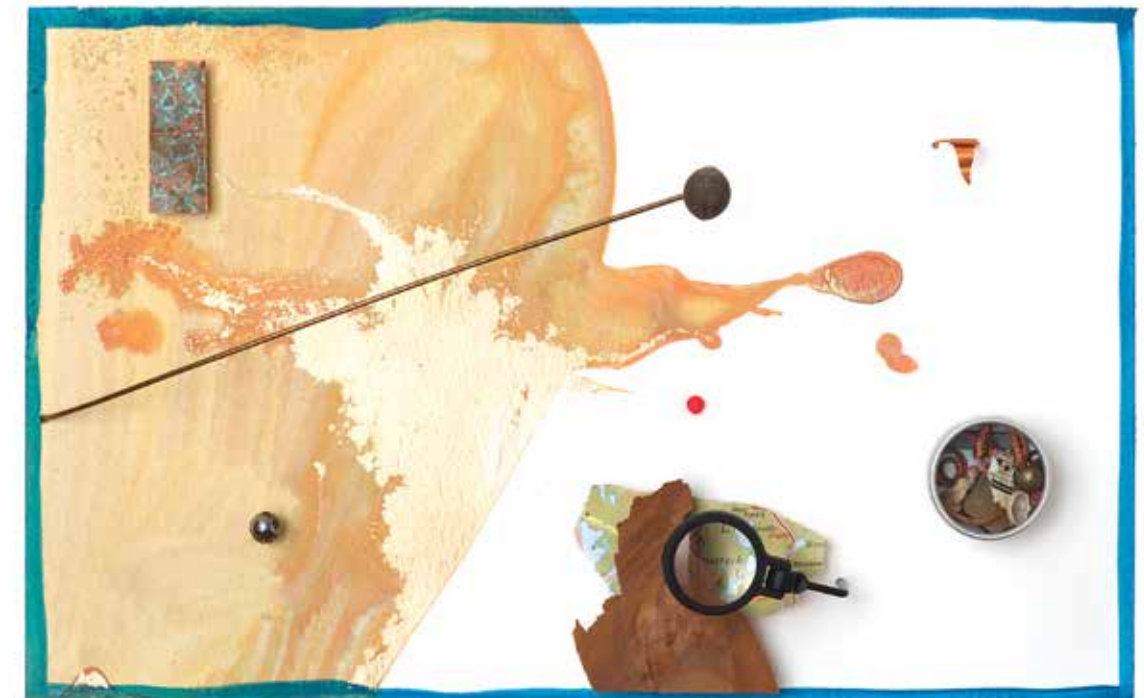
This current exhibition "Universal Nations" presents a series of complimentary works completed in 2012/2013. She includes a number of collections, representing fulfilled dreams on this theme of Nature and human environments. Applying mixed-media, these collections transgress traditional sculptural forms and seek to create a sense of awe and wonder while inviting viewers to experience her secret joy and wild imagination.

Cover image: Many rivers, one sea, mixed media, 26 x 38 x 5cm
Photographs by J. Michael La Fond

Adventures on Earth

"Adventures on Earth" is a series of thirteen intricate three-dimensional works on paper. Here, Torrans' delicately engages in acts of bricolage, playing with the meaning of found objects. Torn maps and sheet music, raw elements like bronze, copper, and stone, and an assortment of other mixed media such as feathers and children's toys are transported to Torrans' world in ways that sculpt strong narratives. Each work is like looking into a microscope focused on an imaginary Natural world. The strength of this mythology is enhanced by Torrans' ability to frame three dimensions on a two dimensional plane. This sculpture, collage, chine-collé ruptures the viewer's sense of perception by inviting an attention to detail to a creative process and a world of wonder.

Many of these works were painted outside the studio, on location in India, Mexico, and Canada. This environment clearly influences the landscape and geospatial quality of this collection, capturing moments in time, and introducing us to Torrans' focus of attention. For Torrans, each work is a poem open to multiple to interpretations. Yet acts of interpolation, where Torrans' focus attunes the viewer to her understanding of Nature – real and imagined – are made brilliant by her delicate use of colour and shape. Paint frames and creates a backdrop either of loud, soft, or dynamic feelings, providing a glimpse into Torrans' kaleidoscopic world. Looking at the collection together creates a sense of shared beliefs, yet each work alone stands as a testament to Nature, where a dreamscape explores and celebrates such myths as the intensity of love, the solemnity of prayer, and the universality of music.



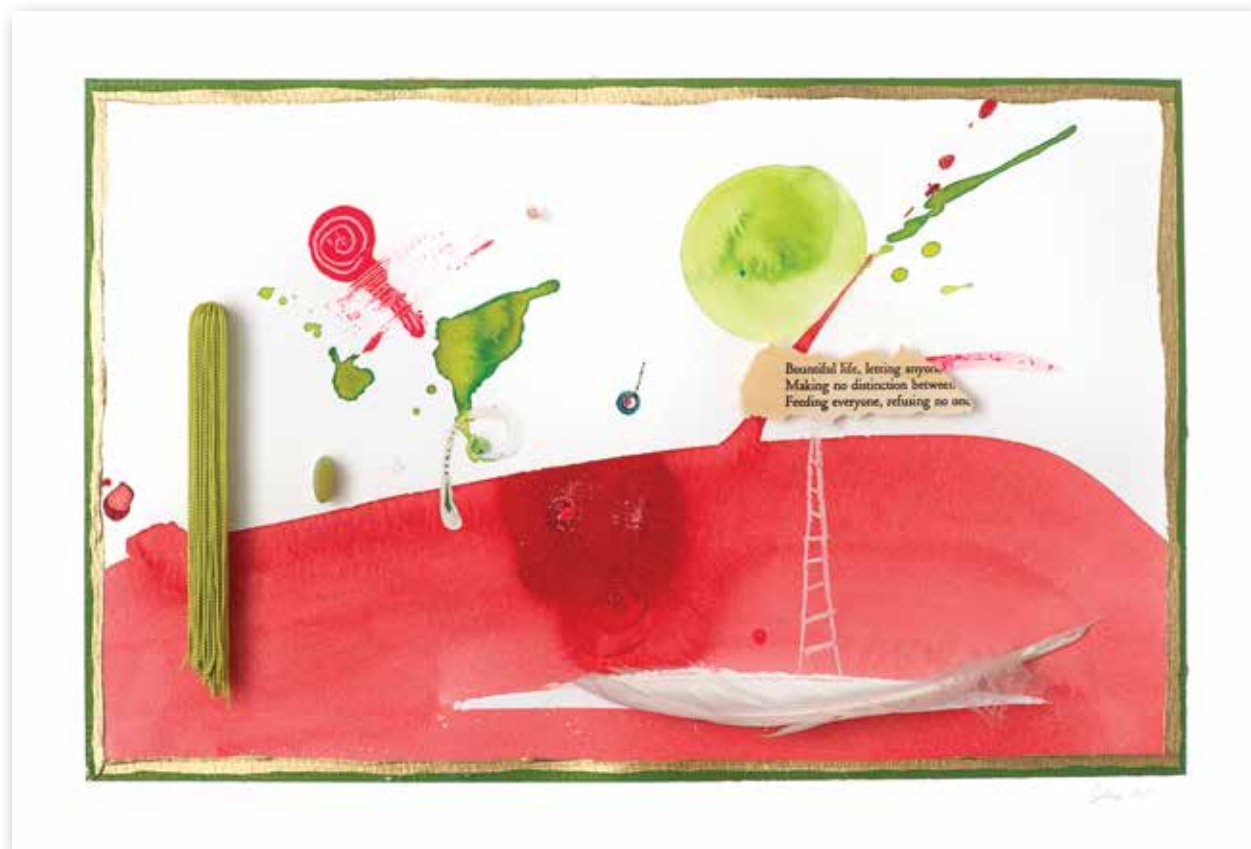
Transiting
mixed media 26 x 38 x 5cm



Raise the question



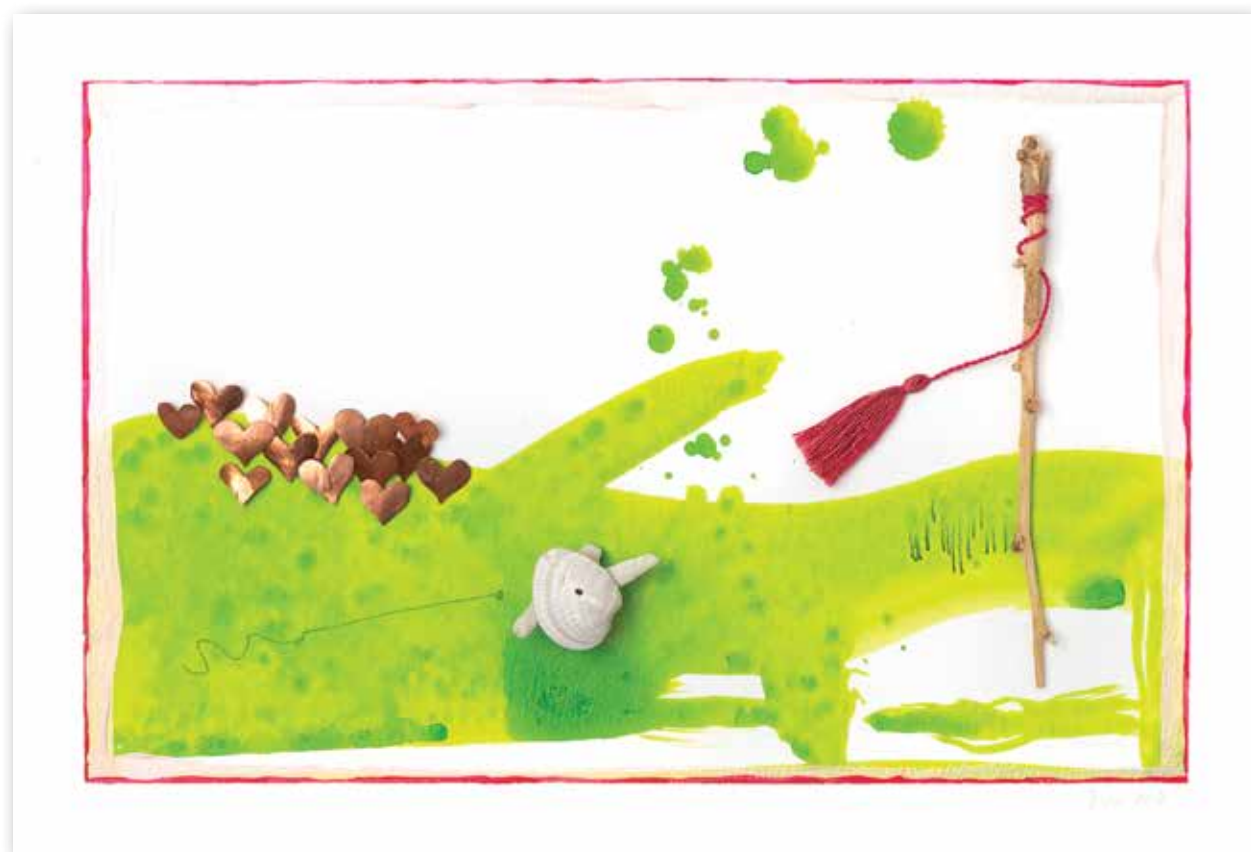
Celebration



Bountiful



Thirty-one states



Treasure



Troubadour (Canso)



Momentum



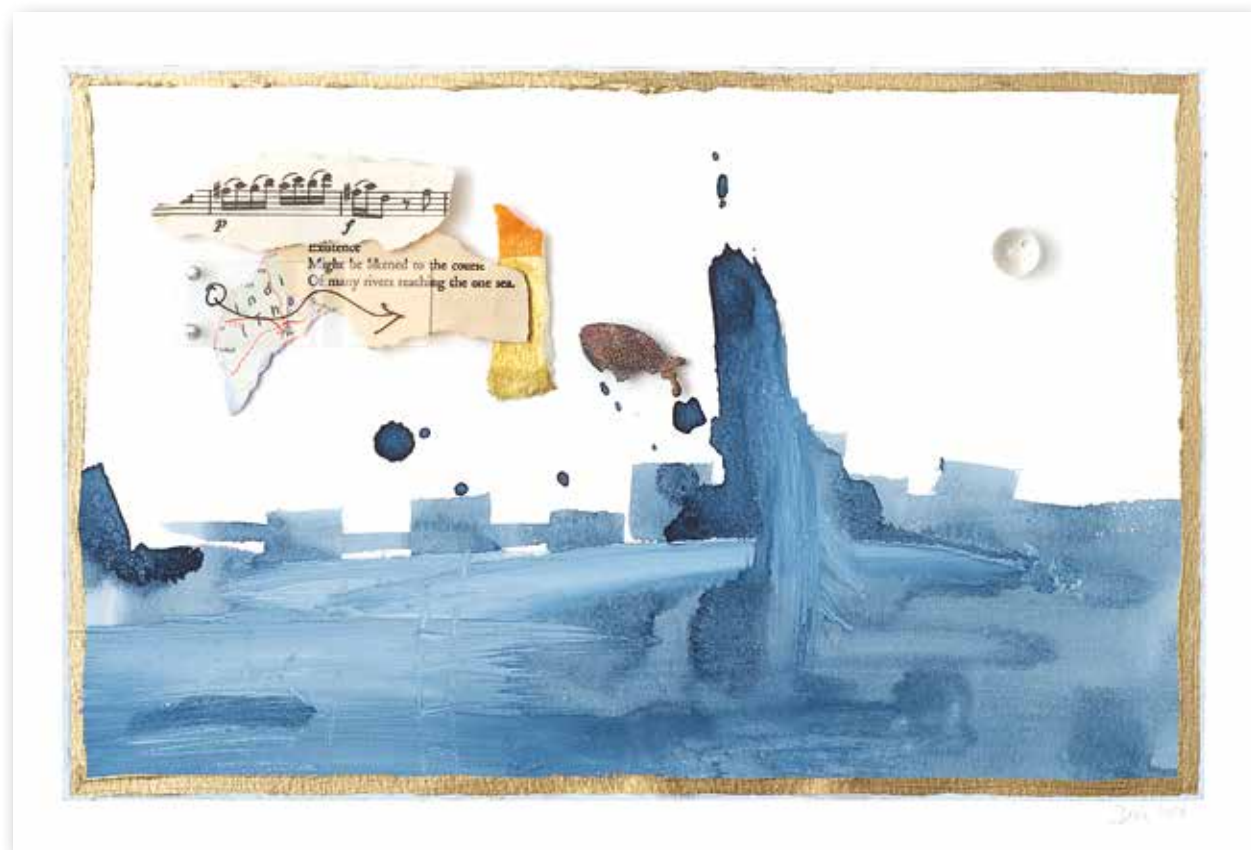
Communication



Desert Kingdom



Backwaters



Many rivers, one sea



Kingdom of Cappadocia

Large scale adventures on earth

A new series in a collection of existing large scale bricolage works on paper. Eleven others were included in Dina's *Mapping Infinity* exhibition. Catalogue available.



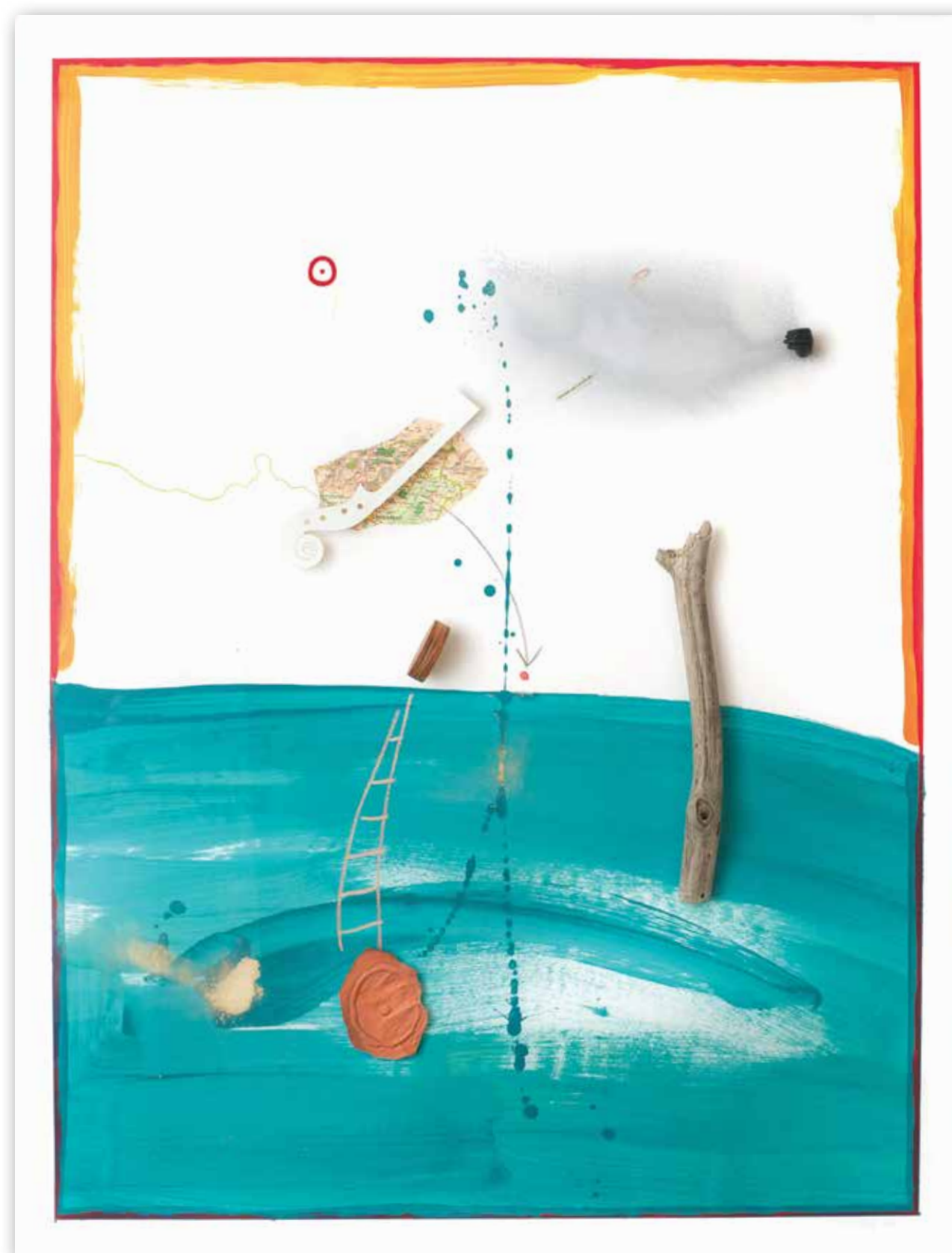
details



World ocean
mixed media, 125 x 100 x 10cm



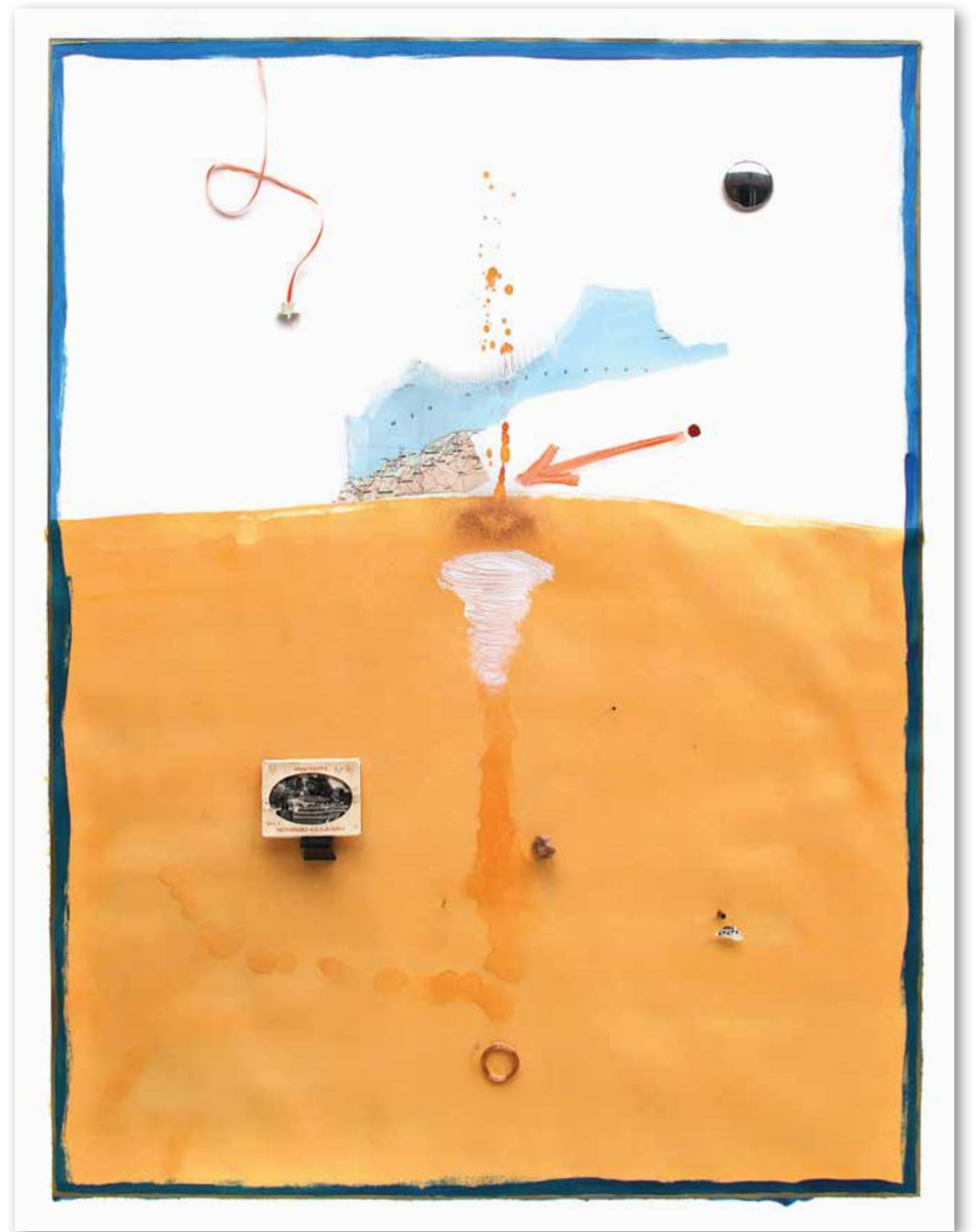
details



Make a wish
mixed media, 125 x 100 x 10cm



details



Snapshot
mixed media, 125 x 100 x 10cm



details



Legends
mixed media, 125 x 100 x 10cm

Animate Objects

Dina's collections of found natural objects are imbued with human emotion and expression. These assemblage works are alive with a sense of Nature's primacy over humankind. A rock is flourishing with love; a stick is thriving with purpose; a shell is buzzing with thought. She creates a sense of intimacy with nature for the viewer by suspending and floating found objects in space. The simplicity of this collection is made incoherent by the juxtaposition of precise elements. In each work, an expressive story is unveiled to expose a creative inner journey.



wisdom circa ∞
mixed media, 25 x 25 x 7.5cm



Love at first sight
mixed media, 25 x 25 x 7.5cm



Stand off
mixed media, 25 x 25 x 7.5cm



An audience
mixed media, 21" x 21" x 2.5"



Angel devil
mixed media, 53 x 53 x 7.5cm



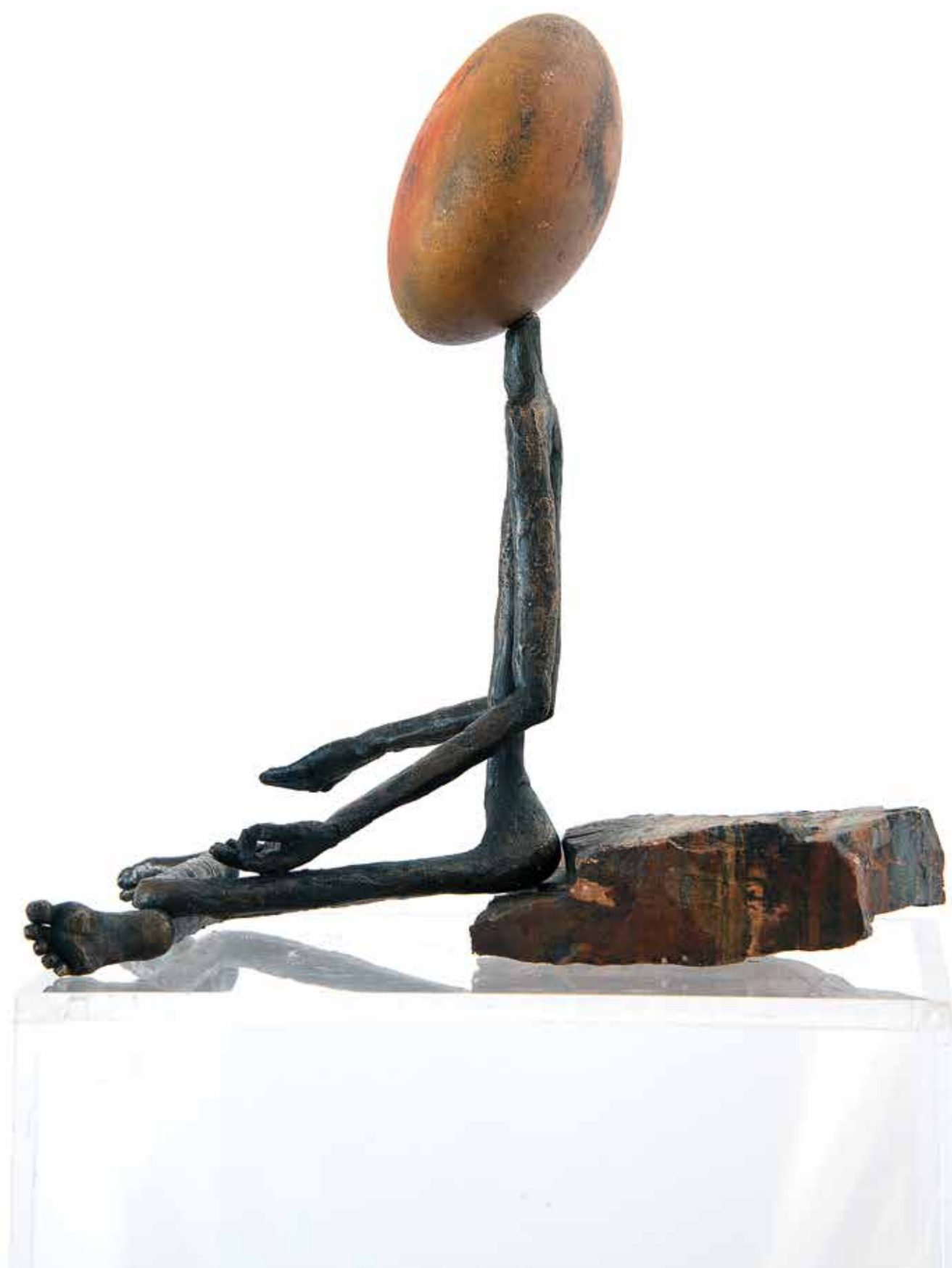
Collection I
mixed media, 53 x 53 x 7.5cm



Self portrait (Looking toward Carrara)
mixed media, 25 x 25 x 7.5cm



Waiting for the Sun
bronze, found rock, petrified wood,
23 x 19 x 20cm





Bacchus
bronze, found rock, glass,
hydrostone, tassel
27 x 13 x 13cm





Soulstice (day)
found rock, copper, paper, wood, hydrostone
30 x 25.5 x 5cm



Soulstice (night)
found rock, bronze plexi, wood, hydrostone
30 x 25.5 x 5cm



Universal Nations

“Universal Nations” is the collection providing Dina with the title for this solo show. In these works, she applies the soft emotional appeal of her animate objects to her practice of bricolage. Paint and stone situate real and imagined landscapes where space, Nation, and Nature are extrapolated. Look for Australia, Canada, England, Iceland, Ireland, and New Zealand as zones for exploring Torrans’ interior narrative about how home is constructed from the Natural world. The illusory nature of created borders is fixed from earth and rock in hues from the beginning of time. Each floating work evokes a roaring sense of the evolution of life and decay as cracks and lines found in each sculpture suggest rupturing shields of rock. Her use of nail and string, copper and other metal make these works seem fragile revealing her view of humankind’s relationship to the Earth.

This collection seems to have evolved, not just from the previous two, but into a series of parts—some which explore a surface geography, others a more internal voice, and yet more which carve out a moment in time so as to tell a story about Dina’s creative process. Each found object, each line, each dot and brush add to the evanescent relationship to our sense of home. Each work in this collection invites the viewer to locate her or himself within its geospacial zone, like a pin on a map declaring ownership or sovereignty. Step back and the viewer is given authority to see the Earth and Nature from a different point of view – one driven by the artist’s creative vision.



opposite page:
Universal Nations I
50 x 40 x 7.5cm
top right:
Universal nations II
29 x 24 x 5cm
bottom right:
Universal Nations III
50 x 40 x 7.5cm



opposite page:

top - Universal Nations IV 40 x 32 x 7.5cm

bottom - Universal nations V 40 x 32 x 5.5cm

this page: Universal Nations VI 32 x 40 x 5.5cm



Universal Nations VII
24 x 29 x 5cm



Universal nations VIII
24 x 29 x 5cm



Universal Nations IX
32 x 40 x 5.5cm



Universal nations X
40 x 50 x 7.5cm



Universal Nations XI
32 x 40 x 5.5cm



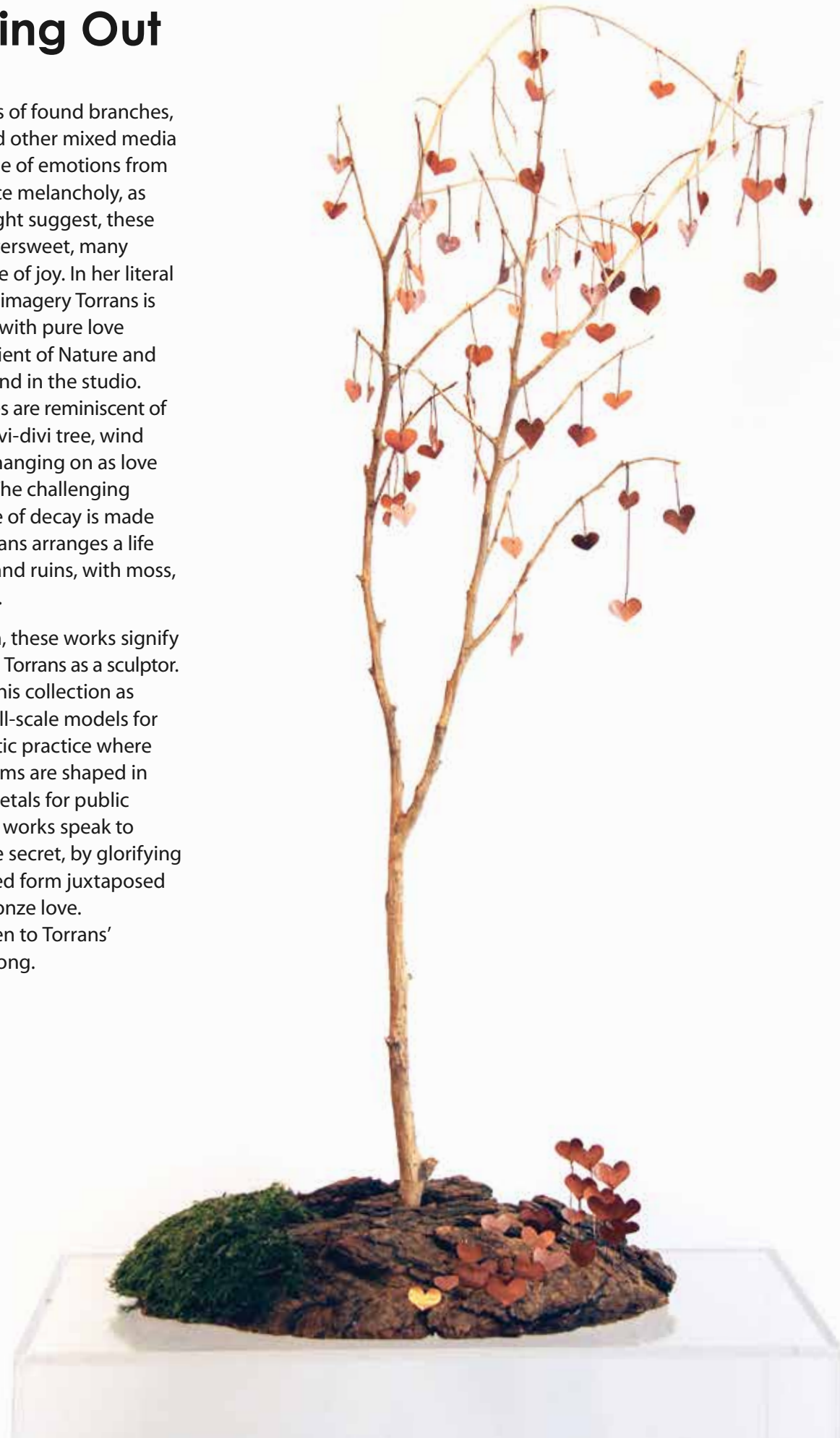
Universal nations XII
45 x 56 x 5.5cm

Branching Out

Torrans' sculptures of found branches, copper hearts, and other mixed media synthesizes a range of emotions from first glance. At once melancholy, as a dead branch might suggest, these works are also bittersweet, many reaching for a state of joy. In her literal use of illusion and imagery Torrans is obviously dealing with pure love energy – the quotient of Nature and humankind as found in the studio. The skeletal shapes are reminiscent of the leguminous divi-divi tree, wind battered and yet hanging on as love lives after death. The challenging notion to the state of decay is made explicit when Torrans arranges a life among the roots and ruins, with moss, copper, and shells.

Beautiful in its aim, these works signify a new direction for Torrans as a sculptor. See the works in this collection as maquettes or small-scale models for an emergent artistic practice where enormous tree forms are shaped in bronze or other metals for public installation. These works speak to the sacred and the secret, by glorifying Nature in a decayed form juxtaposed with images of bronze love. In meditation, listen to Torrans' bittersweet love song.

Under it all
copper, wood, moss
60 x 25 x 25cm



See what you believe
wood, copper, moss, shell
106 x 61 x 46cm
(wall mounted)



In the procession
wood, copper
60 x 56 x 24cm



Prevail
copper, wood
62 x 38 x 99cm (wall mounted)

left page:
Dreaming in colour
copper, wood, sand
140 x 90 x 70cm



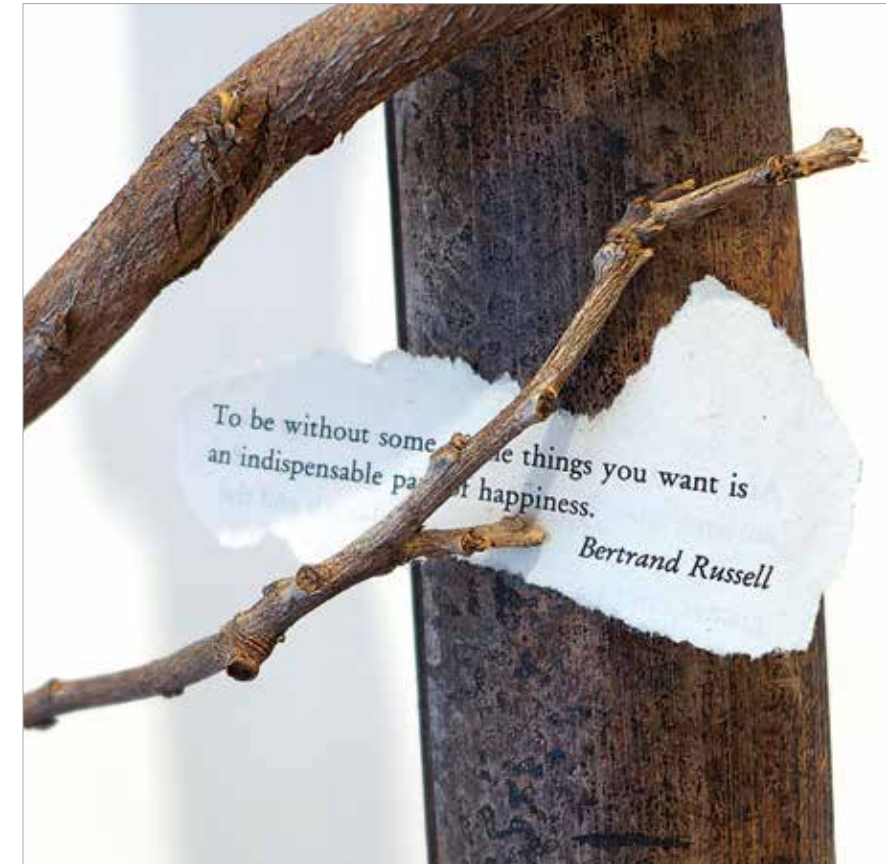
Heartlines
wood, copper, moss
86 x 40 x 30cm (wall mounted)



Earthheart
wood, copper
86 x 40 x 30cm



Ladder to prayer
wood, copper, moss, text
240 x 100 x 40cm





Flag for prayer
copper, needles
52 x 52 x 10cm





Mark Lipton is an Associate Professor in the College of Arts at the University of Guelph.

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