

Roger Scholes:

Dawn over the seaside village of Dunalley. It sits on the isthmus that joins the Tasman Peninsula, to the rest of Tasmania. Let's imagine we are here 10 years ago, in 2012. Among the fisher folk and farmers that live here, is an unusual figure. Out on the point, the wind-blown boughs of melaleuca and sheoak, hide a small cottage. Artist, teacher, dancer, and pianist Gay Hawkes built this home for herself, keding bits from here and there. Her kitchen opens up onto a sunny patch of garden.

Over 28 years, she's filled her home with her sculptures, her own handmade furniture, and beloved items. It's a quiet, cozy spot. No one seems at home. But then we hear the sound of sawing. Gay's at work on a piece of furniture. She's making a chair for her daughter's room. Her veggie garden grows enough to tide her by. It's mid-winter now with a nice crop of broad beans coming up. Her chooks get the run of the place with Billy the Kid, her Balinese dancer, keeping her wary eye out for the chooks. A pair of swallows nest every year too.

Each day, Gay heads off to her studio, just over the canal. People think she's a bit unusual. But what about the locals? They put boats up in trees. Just past here is her boat shed studio. It's crowded with furniture and sculptures she's made over decades. Gay's piano takes pride of place in the center of the boat shed. She plays the piano every day. She gathers her materials from the surrounding beaches and countryside, treasuring the bleached timber and bone, shells, and rocks.

Gay's worked around the world, making sculpture and furniture, interpreting place, and recording impressions. Recently, she spent time with an artist living in the bush.

Gay Hawkes:

Far out.

Roger Scholes:

Making him a collection of furniture for a new house.

Gay Hawkes:

It's all fantastic.

Roger Scholes:

In this village of Driftwood, she found his piano.

Speaker 6:

You want to sit there while we travel?

Gay Hawkes:

Not really. God.

Speaker 6:

Can you see me here when I'm 90?

Speaker 4:

Yes.

Gay Hawkes:

Yes.

Speaker 6:

Sit here with a-

Speaker 4:

With a pipe.

Speaker 6:

My little dog there and fire going in that corner there.

Speaker 4:

Belly dancers out there.

Speaker 6:

Belly dancers?

Speaker 4:

Yeah.

Speaker 6:

Ooh.

Roger Scholes:

She's also a passionate teacher of children.

Gay Hawkes:

This is Billy Mars.

Roger Scholes:

With a very particular style. She's taught children and adults around the world.

Gay Hawkes:

She's wrapped.

Roger Scholes:

The basic skills of handmade woodworking, painting, and sculpture.

Gay Hawkes:

White, right around.

Roger Scholes:

She's taught kids on a remote Bass Strait Island, where together they spent a year making sets, learning songs, and putting on a Christmas play for the village.

Gay Hawkes:

Another halo. You know what they do sometimes when they're in the desert? They ride off into the desert on their camel, like Billy Mars going to do.

Children:

(singing).

Speaker 5:

He's three.

Child:

And then me.

Gay Hawkes:

Yeah, okay. This is Errol Flynn. When you come in and stand up proud.

Child:

If I don't?

Gay Hawkes:

Just remember that you're going to look really beautiful.

Children:

It was really good. Especially since we got [inaudible 00:06:49].

Child:

It was very good.

It was magnificent.

Roger Scholes:

"Kids like dress-ups and parties," says Gay. "So do I." That's because we always have. From earliest times, people have gathered together to celebrate the seasons and life's

changes, connecting with the deep accounts of life. And she played a part in a film of our Bronze Age people in France burying their loved ones. It's the sort of thing that she would do because of her interest in the old ways.

These days, all of her teaching happens out of school hours, but takes place in her little boat shed overlooking Storm Bay. Every morning, she begins her day playing her treasured piano.

Gay Hawkes:

Oh, come in.

Oh, God. I'm going to burn it. They're Indian.

Roger Scholes:

At 3:00 in the afternoon.

Gay Hawkes:

They're like potato cakes.

Roger Scholes:

Half a dozen or so kids head off to Gay's place from the local primary school yard to what they call real school with Gay. "I hope I can get these kids to go a step further" says gay, "and find their hearts in what we do. The children come to learn all these skills and passions."

Gay Hawkes:

So, don't worry about that. These used to be beautiful nails from Melbourne that I got from a special place about 20 years ago. They've gone rusty but what we do, you sand the top and you see it'll be...

Roger Scholes:

Some call it the chair factory, because all of them start to make chair.

"Chairs are a good place to start with kids" says Gay "it's their own chair. And it will go with them through life."

Child:

So, just like this, Gay?

Gay Hawkes:

Yeah. That's right. Cause that'll get it straight, then it should come out where the other end is, which we'll check at you. We're going to put glue on all those surfaces. Right, right. We have to get it straight. Push it on. There you go. Yeah. Can you see which line it is? Can you remember that one and that one?

Ah, girls, we're going to do girls tools, because a lot of the tools are too heavy, even for me, like the electric tools they're really big and heavy. So, yeah. Wouldn't you.

And one about there and then you'd want two others pencil and see if they're roughly equidistant. So get your pencil and on your line, make four marks. I

Yeah. And you do it. Can you see which one as it is? It's looks great because there's a gap there, but that's the same as that. So, that looks nice. The glue's going to go all over. Can you get a bit?

Child:

So, where do I have to put glue?

Gay Hawkes:

I put it all over. I've got it all set up and ready.

Child:

What are we going to carve?

Gay Hawkes:

Well, you could carve your stools, you see, if you wanted to, you could even elaborate on this a bit. Show and we have a display at the show with our banner. Yeah. Banner up there. And we, and we just have a beautiful display of the things. That's terrible. My grandmother used to say [inaudible 00:13:04]

These kids broke into there and made a cubby upstairs in the roof where they used to drink and smoke and stuff. They took my Christs that one and several others, put them up there along with all the other stuff I'd stored in there, which was babies, blankets, and all sorts of things. They put fluorescent paint on his head, see, and they hung it on the wall. And then when the police, I didn't know where they were. So, I went to the police and said, these things had been stolen.

So, this cop comes down and he went up into the roof and found these things where they had a chair and bottles and bongs and everything. And there's a little thing where they used to obviously lower industrial stuff from out of the roof, a little hole, you know how they do.

This cop who was completely without humor, was lowering crucifixes on ropes down to me with luminous paint on them and they're coming down through this air, it was bizarre. And he's going "you all right. Can you catch it?" And this Christ coming down, I'm thinking this is the weirdest thing I've ever engaged in. And he didn't see anything funny or strange about it at all. And that's one of them, I've still got it. Isn't he gorgeous?

Roger Scholes:

When bash is about in the trees above, out in the bay swells of Willie spouts, dance over the white tipped waves.

End.