

## ***Augmentor* – extended statement** Colin Langridge

*Augmentor* names the exhibition and also acts to describe an artistic strategy - adding in order to increase the potential for complexity of meaning.

In this case the adding comes about through bringing together several old cans and drums discarded from a local garage with constructed wooden inclusions. The historical link between *Outward* and a 1920's motor garage is what originally influenced my decision to work with these rusty drums.

Wooden casks being the functional precursor to metal containers, established the relationship. The marriage of wood with metal heightened their earthy connection – both will one day return to dust.

Wood and metal reveal the procession of time as they oxidise. Focusing upon the rusty holes in the cans drew me into an ontological relationship with them that disclosed something essential about containers – holes in the wrong place ruin them and they lose their status as containers. This shift in status suggests a fundamental change in being, one that usually relegates them to the scrap pile. Now these 'once were containers' have again shifted status and re-appear into the world of art where political, social and cultural meanings are accentuated and relationships between things can be read as carefully as words on a page. Where the transition between the smooth painted surface and the jagged rusty edge can show us what steel is.

When they were functional containers we focused our concern upon the contents. Our understanding of these things as containers, their labelling and the materials they are made from come to the fore when they become artworks. The holes in the cans and the wooden inserts open up our potential to understand what a container is, not just that it is hollow and holds but that it

has an opening, one that can be closed and through which the contents are poured. The transition from outside to inside and back out again is essential to the container. Besides storing the contents this passage into and out of the opening makes the container useful to us.

The labels on the drums add a further element of complexity - the connection between trees and fossil fuels is both physical and political. However, as attractive as the signs are it is the container aspect of these drums that interests me, and the subtle shift between categories of being that has occurred with them.