



Catherine Bell

Odor Patris Tu

OPENING

Saturday 14th October 4-6pm

EXHIBITION DATES

14th October - 11th November, 2017

Catherine Bell's exhibition, *Odor Patris Tu*, Latin for "My Father's Smell", consists of a series of sculptural works made from ephemeral materials, and photographs that document and magnify the intricately carved and cast forms. The artworks extend on Bell's investigation of mortality and impermanence and further develop her interest in how smell can be used as a potent artistic material. The sculptures are impregnated with the signature scent of a deceased loved one, and represent personal talismans, that speak to the power of smell to evoke memories and arouse individual and shared histories. As a highly nuanced sense, with an enormous capacity to trigger human emotions, it is surprising that smell features so rarely in contemporary art.

The characteristics of scent, its intimacy, its inability to be contained, is a device Bell has harnessed in her recent site responsive installations, "We Die As We Live" (2017), forthcoming at St Vincent's Private Hospital East Melbourne, utilizes squid ink's pungent smell as a catalyst for promoting healthier discussions about death and dying; "Splashback" (2015) in *Treatment: Six Public Art Works* at Werribee Western Treatment Plant, was an olfactory immersion, combining archival footage of children using the abandoned swimming pool in the historic settlement of Cocoroc, projected into the adjoining derelict and urine-infested change room. "Talc Fall" (2015) in *Finitude*, Plimsoll Gallery at the University of Tasmania, incorporated live 'talc' performances and talcum powder sculptures that stood in for the absent body and explored the relationship between smell and memory.

Privileging the sense of smell, the biographical carvings and precariously moulded talc forms, in *Odor Patris Tu*, build an intimate portrait of the subject behind the aroma and provoke a corporeal reaction. The pain-staking process of working with fragile, unpredictable and impermanent substances amplifies rituals of mourning and the melancholia associated with their delicate construction and eventual destruction.

For 25 years Bell has exhibited extensively in solo and group exhibitions across Australia including: Australian Centre of Contemporary Art, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of South Australia, Queensland Art Gallery, Centre of Contemporary Photography and Australian Experimental Art Foundation. Internationally, Bell has exhibited at NGBK (Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst) & Georg-Kolbe Museum, (Berlin); Whitechapel Gallery, Plymouth City Museum & Sheffield Institute of Arts (UK); Aram Art Gallery, (Korea); National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts; and Chulalongkorn University Art Space, (Bangkok). Bell has been awarded various fellowships, grants and residencies including Australia Council for the Arts Studio New York (2010), City of Melbourne Creation & Presentation Grant (2005 & 2017) and the St Vincent's Hospital Residency (2012-13 & 2016-17).

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gallery

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