

**Adam Stone**  
*Low Hanging Fruit*

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*Low Hanging Fruit*

‘The major sporting star is a stranger who is paradoxically part of daily life, a key myth, a symbol...reified by capitalist, sexual and cultural processes that fabricate personal qualities and social signs as resources for commerce, art and fantasy. Athletes are perfect celebrities.’<sup>1</sup>

Adam Stone

*Low Hanging Fruit*

24.02.16–12.03.16

Adam Stone’s practice takes on the subjects of sport, hubris, and lowbrow culture. In ‘Low Hanging Fruit’ these themes are indicated in the fallen sport star Lance Armstrong, represented in a sculpture and installation that interweaves cultural dialogue with an acerbic post pop sensibility.

Armstrong’s chronicle is symptomatic of a hypermodern era where previously distinct genres collude, intertwine and convulse: sport becomes entertainment, entertainment – in particular reality

TV – an updated gladiator sport. His early career was noted for the ‘triumph over adversity’ trope, having overcome testicular cancer; a struggle that he claimed aided his skill and tenacity for professional cycling. However, he was later charged with using performance-enhancing drugs and was stripped of his Tour de France titles. The subsequent controversy gained momentum with the involvement of tabloids and news channels.

The rising and falling celebrity narrative is evident in social and global life as well as sports and entertainment. An ongoing concern in Stone’s work, influenced by his time as a BMX rider, is the notion of ‘hubris’ seen in the young male that pushes too far in sport. Reckless behaviour is also the hallmark of contemporary slip-ups that have had lasting and devastating global consequences. The financial crisis and global warming are two disasters directly connected to human compulsion and excessive drive; they are Icarusian sagas that reinforce the danger of hubris. As such Armstrong is a contemporary archetype of human folly, symptomatic of everyday narratives and global actions.

In this exhibition Armstrong is depicted in a bronze casting of a half peeled banana in which a skull has been carved. Yellow and garish with a glossy slickness, it perches upon the gallery pedestal, the plinth; a surreal gesture. Banana Art is a lowbrow Internet subculture where practitioners work against the temporary nature of the material, and document their efforts online. Here, the bronze sculpture, weighted by art history as well as its sheer physicality, is in contrast to ephemeral banana carving. The work therefore acts as an absurd monument to Armstrong, a simulacra pastiche of art-historical milieu with a post-internet nod.



A Chinese counterfeited version of the ‘Livestrong’ bracelets, originally sold to raise funds for the Lance Armstrong Foundation and aid cancer survivors, are linked together and hang from the entrance, like a curtain. This aspect of his story was his ultimate betrayal – as a former fan and cancer survivor stated:

“He raised a lot of awareness and money for cancer... unfortunately, he undid everything, in many ways, by his sociopathic need to bully, win, play mind games, and he used cancer as a cloak to cover his sins.”<sup>2</sup>

These bracelets mark the convergence of celebrity and tokenistic charity. Their popularity as counterfeit indicates the bracelet’s function as a commodity that combines fashion and charitable status, while also being a badge of admiration for Armstrong. Therefore the objects perfectly reflect the armchair activism indicative of the Internet era, where social media ‘likes’ constitutes a politically active citizen.

Stone borrows visual language from disparate sources – the bronze sculpture, popular sport culture, and Internet subcultures – and embeds these narratives into sculptural objects and installation. His artwork is a keen observation on the celebrity sport star: alluding to the public’s fandom, and the hubris actions of the individual and collective. Through temporary and permanent elements, this exhibition represents and explores the paradox of hero worship, and human drive in a capitalist era.

Zara Sigglekow

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1. Miller, T. (2013) ‘Exposing Celebrity Sports’, in Lawrence A. Wenner, (ed.) *Fallen Sports Heroes, Media, and Celebrity Culture* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2013), 18

2. Quoted in Landau, E. (2013) ‘Cancer survivors: Mixed feelings on Armstrong’, CNN, January 18th, online at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/01/18/health/lance-armstrong-cancer-survivors/>. Accessed 13 February 2016

“That’s by Ed Ruscha,” he says. “He’s a friend.”

Adam is a Melbourne based artist who received his BFA (Hons) from the Victorian College of the Arts. Since graduating Adam has had numerous solo and group shows and undertaken residencies in Beijing and New York. He has been the recipient of numerous grants and prizes, including the Montalto Sculpture Prize, The Fiona Myer Award, The Orloff Family Charitable Trust Scholarship and travel grants from the Ian Potter Cultural Trust and the City of Boorandara. Recently, he has been a finalist in the McClelland Gallery Sininni Prize, the Blake Prize (DC), the Wyndham City Art Prize and the Qantas SOYA Prize.

Adam has exhibited in both group and solo shows at ARI’s, commercial and public galleries in Australia and Asia. Selected galleries include: McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park, Inside Out Art Museum (Beijing), Seventh, Blindsight ARI, Kings ARI, Sawtooth ARI, Fort Delta (upcoming), Margaret Lawrence Gallery and the CCP. In 2016 he was awarded a public sculpture commission in the City Of Moonee Valley.

His work is held in public and private collections in Australia and Asia.

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