

# Sundari Carmody Primal Site

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Growing up in Indonesia had an indelible influence on Carmody. Every aspect of life performed as ritual as much as lived. Passing ancient spirits cavorting in the streets, behind masks, dancing and singing; Disney and Vogue when she got home. On the edge of a volcano, masks around a fire, beneath the stars. A Eurasian Paleolithic tale unfolding deep, thousands of years old memories of ritual. It has all been filtered through the histories of art, music, literature, performance and couture culture. Precise, delicately detailed and nothing is explained.

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*To discuss what one is doing rather than the artwork which results, to attempt to unravel the loops of creative activity, is, in many ways, a behavioural problem.... It leads to a consideration of our total relationship to a work of art, in which physical moves may lead to conceptual moves, in which Behaviour relates to Ideas....<sup>1</sup>*

Ascott, R. *The Construction of Change*, Cambridge Opinion 41, 1964

The artistic process can sometimes defy analytical summation; instead, offering freely developed ideas and creative forms that are occasionally void of description. As the audience we are welcomed to trace new conceptual territories, to look at the works totality and attempt to 'unravel' the relationships at play.

Sundari Carmody's practice is a completely imagined one. Stemming from a personal interest in literature, folklore, science and design Carmody allows imagination and technique to guide her towards a fictional or factual narrative. Although process and concept are key determinations in formalising a piece, Carmody prefers an almost 'non-narrative' approach allowing a sort of mystical presence to delay formal representation. Echoing Ascott's theory regarding a focus on the 'doing' as opposed to the finality of a work Carmody proposes we reread subjectivity and our relationship to object and art.

For Bus Projects Carmody has redeveloped a series of established works that reinterpret previously proposed ideas and theories relating to her personal interests and relationship to urban mysticism. Her practice is intuitive with the evolution of the work depending on the outcome of learning new skills within a specific craft or process of which she has not attempted before. For this exhibition she is challenging the existing narratives within the work through a reconfiguration of installations and construction of sculptural elements.

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1. Ascott, R 1964, *The Construction of Change*, Modern Art in Britain, Cambridge Opinion 41, UK.

An unkempt volcanic shaped form rests on the floor of the gallery overlooked by a series of crafted masks. The 'pre-mountainous' form lies ominously, outstretched and deflated; yet, its presence commands the space. Here, Carmody explores her memories and relationship to her Indonesian dwelling as a youngster in an expat community immersed in a foreign culture. The fear of eruption, whether that is volcanic or otherwise, is something Carmody expresses in a number of her works. Influenced by the memory of her home and the folklore of the community Carmody explores foreboding shadows of ritual and possible disaster. However, to bring the artist's activity more into focus than the narrative of the work; the flattened form rests dormant taking on a new reading as an enigmatic object.

Ritualism, magic and cosmological forces are compelling elements at work within this exhibition. Filtered (as the artist states) through her interests in literature, art history and couture fashion Carmody aligns a number of influential components (eastern and western tradition as well as popular culture, for example) into her practice. *The Southern Skies* is a continually developing piece of work where Carmody combines her own learning of the stars and cosmos with the homely craft of embroidery. This process of understanding the artist's environment within the work is, in a sense, transcendental. Theorist, Jan Verwoert, espouses this recognition of art and magic working in tandem as a profound example of art as a system of relations rather than representations; it's about qualities and states rather than status<sup>2</sup>.

Carmody's approach is sensory, tactile and creates a presence, or even a spirit that is without language. By positioning herself, whether that is through process and/or performance, within the composition of the work she activates the piece in an infinite chain of interpretation and possibility. Any sense of 'completeness' is transient; Carmody chooses to rework this state through the action of re-reading, re-teaching and re-aligning. For her, our existence is always in a state of flux. Nothing is ever truly complete.

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2. Verwoert, j 2013, *Cookie!*, Piet Zwart Institute, Sternberg Press, Germany.



Sundari Carmody (born 1988) is an artist based in Adelaide. In 2011 she graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) from the South Australian School of Art. She has exhibited in group and solo exhibitions in public, commercial and artist-run spaces including FELTspace, SA; Constance ARI, Tas; Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia; Greenaway Art Gallery, SA; FORM, WA; SASA Gallery, SA; Spectrum Project Space, WA. In 2014 she was a recipient of an Australia Council of the Arts Artstart grant.

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