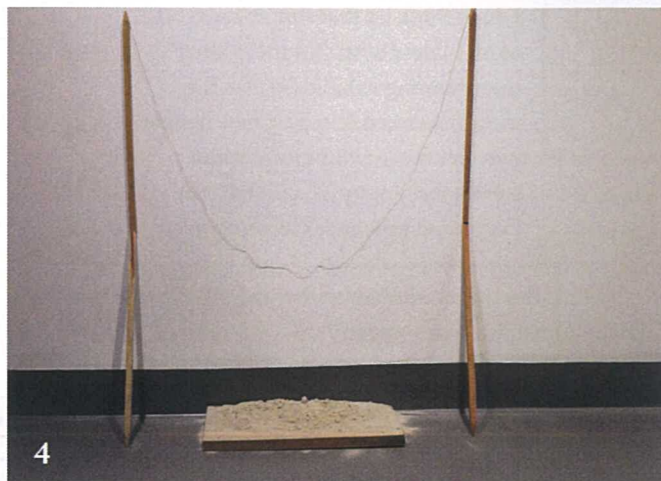


Words by
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m o t e



>> Mote, a word that is not used in everyday language. You will be forgiven for not knowing the meaning; I certainly didn't. In everyday conversation, it translates to a fragment, smidgen or particle. Think of a speck stuck in your eye, often too small to see yet demanding your immediate attention.

Artists Ally McKay, Tess Mehonoshen and Naomi O'Reilly present these fragments that cause them to take notice. Through art practices focused on material and process, they draw attention to the body, unspoken emotions and the search for belonging.

Each artist presents understated yet strong works in an uncluttered and well considered installation space. Ally and Tess use materials such as sand, wood, concrete and clay, while Naomi creates objects and video works. Naomi's large bathroom tiles are coated with a light flesh coloured paint and embedded with human hair. *[Shed] 1. a slight or rude structure built for shelter, 2. A large, strongly built structure, often open at the sides or end (2015 & 2017)*, echoes her video installation at the opposite end of the room. The video, *[bubble] anything that lacks firmness, substance, or permanence an illusion or delusion (2017)* is vertically displayed on two monitors standing side by side. In the video, the wrinkles of the lips, ridges of the fingernail and slippery saliva blurs in and out of focus. The ephemerality of video is evocative of the body's constant state of flux, something Naomi wants to draw attention to. By filming with a macro lens, the audience is privy to an intimate view of the artist's body. She uses the body as a malleable sculptural material. The macro view is uncomfortable, yet intriguing to watch. The moving image of the body is posed against a constructed image seen in the painted tiles. The artificial skin tone of the objects heightens the authenticity of the body in the video.

In the middle of the gallery, Tess's small parcel-like sculptures stand in a deliberately haphazard arrangement. Driven by a process of submerging material in concrete and clay, Tess connects with a sense of place and belonging. In *Untitled (2017)* the objects are made from folded fabric and bound by delicate string. They sit on the gallery floor like capsules or parcels. Every dent made by the folding process is visible, and a trace of dust surrounds the object as the material deteriorates. Tess digs up clay from her parents' property in New South Wales to make her sculptures. This act of digging, submerging, folding and transferring material from her previous home to her current home suggests that places leave a residue on all of us. Tess states that she feels compelled to make these objects. The thin string binding the objects at the stage of creation eventually loses its purpose once the sculpture is dry. The soft objects cure and become a sturdy sculpture capable of standing without support. Then, the string becomes obsolete. Evocative of our own attempts to grasp and capture fragments of time and memory, to feel whole again.

Ally's sculptures embody a similar vulnerability. She creates objects with an underlying awareness of experiences often too complex to articulate. Her sculptures possess an unobtrusive strength. In *Head above water (2017)*, four wooden stakes lean against the wall, two by two balanced on top of each other. The stakes rest against the wall yet seem like they may fall over at any time. A string attached to the top of each stake hangs limp towards the floor, not quite reaching a rectangular box overflowing with sand. In *Tying Tentative Anchors (2017)*, small nails are attached to string and hang from a wooden stake. *Untitled (2017)* sees only the tips of nails fixed into a block of sand. The intended function of nails as security is challenged when the artist strings them helplessly to a wooden stake or hammers only the tips into a sand covered block. The work suggests the loss of control while coping with loss. Ally says she equates water and dealing with grief. Emotions, like water, are ever-changing. You can feel strong one moment, and drown in sorrow in the next. Water is absent from the sculptures. The sand stands in, revealing raw emotion.

In this exhibition, Naomi, Tess and Ally recognise fractions present within every person. Through illuminating what is often overlooked, they reveal intimate moments through a poetic interpretation. The exhibition doesn't assault the viewer with overstated gestures, but rather lures the audience in with vulnerability and strength. Mote is a collaboration of definitive moments as seen by three accomplished artists.

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1. Naomi O'Reilly / *[bubble] anything that lacks firmness, substance, or permanence' an illusion or delusion 2017*
2. Naomi O'Reilly / *[Shed] 1. a slight or rude structure built for shelter, 2. A large, strongly built structure, often open at the sides or end 2015 & 2017 / human hair, pva, acrylic paint on bathroom tiles / detail view*
3. Tess Mehonoshen / *Untitled 2017 / cement, clay, fabric*
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Mote / WEBB Gallery, Queensland College of Art / Wednesday, 11 January – Saturday, 28 January 2017