

WHAT NOW?

How and why did you begin working with glass?

I always say that glass found me, I didn't choose it. I have this odd shaped little vase [or] bowl that I picked up in an op shop probably five years before I even started my degree. I still have it and I wouldn't say it's one of my prized possessions but I think it's important in terms of where I even began thinking about glass.

I was really interested in bush foods and organic-looking objects initially, as one way to explore my Aboriginality in my work. I realised I wanted to make these objects appear lifelike and that's how knowing how to blow glass became a really serendipitous thing.

A lot of people who work with blown glass tend to try and control the medium and make the object perfect and symmetrical but I'm quite the opposite – the objects can be off centre, they can be blown out here or there for example, so for me I really find that process interesting where I'm letting the glass speak for itself.

The sculptural forms of the bush fruits and vegetables you make are highly symbolic but also highly sculptural.

Yes, I'm finding that when I'm talking about my work with people they often say that the bush bananas and the hairy yams (which I haven't made in a long time now) look like an internal organ, like a kidney or a heart. So I think the foods themselves are representative of Aboriginal people and of bodies. It's interesting how they have literally taken on a life of their own.

Following on from the 2013 sister works *Blood on the wattle*, shown at 55th Venice Biennale, and *Blood on the Wattle (Elliston, South Australia 1849)*, shown in *Melbourne Now* at the National Gallery of Victoria, what can you tell us about the new work you are making for the Biennale of Sydney?

I have my own room [in the Biennale of Sydney] which I'm excited about. We talked a lot about the fact that I wanted a discrete space where people can have quiet time to experience the artwork. Part of this is for people who might get emotional and I think that is an important aspect of where the work should be.

YHONNIE SCARCE

In this new work I'm revisiting research I've done into eugenics and the scientific experimentation on the Aboriginal people. It's quite a large installation. My process for this is slightly different since I've used medical equipment to pinch and manipulate the glass.

My research primarily revolves around the topics of Aboriginality and the effects of colonialism but right now I'm thinking a lot about eugenics; of course there is a clear relationship between these things. I've looked a lot at **Norman Tindale's** research from the 1930s. I feel like this is still so relevant especially since I was told that there are hair and saliva samples taken from Aboriginal people in one of the museums in Australia, and maybe it's not just one museum.

I've also looked at incidences of grave robbing of deceased Aboriginal people, where workers were employed to remove heads and hands, for example for scientific research and a person suddenly becomes an experiment. This new work is really looking at that. There is a lot of death around my work or the idea of death.

I'm drawing from both written and oral history and that's important because I like the idea of bringing the past forward in order for us to be able to move on.

Amita Kirpilani

Yhonnie Scarce's work is featured in *You imagine what you desire*, the 19th Biennale of Sydney, until 9 June 2014. Her work will also be exhibited at Dianne Tanzer Gallery + Projects in Melbourne from 31 May to 21 June 2014.

Yhonnie Scarce, *Weak in Colour But Strong in Blood*, 2014, detail, blown glass, beakers and tubing, medical scissors, smashed blown glass, metal, wood, dimensions variable.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND DIANNE TANZER GALLERY + PROJECTS

WHAT NEXT?

...the artist's role in the contemporary art world is becoming increasingly complex and challenging. As the art market continues to grow, artists are being asked to not only create compelling works, but also to act as entrepreneurs, managing their own careers and finances. This shift in the artist's role has led to a re-evaluation of the traditional boundaries between art and commerce, and has opened up new opportunities for artists to engage with their audiences in innovative ways.

