

Asleep with the Fishes

Teresa Busuttill

Asleep with the Fishes takes its name from a Sicilian quote made popular by the film *The Godfather* (1972). To “sleep with the fishes” is to have one's corpse disposed of in a body of water.

The work examines the legacy of Teresa's late father, who was born on the Mediterranean archipelago nation, Malta, and migrated to South Australia by boat. Throughout his adult life, her father lived and worked as a diver, fisherman and professional criminal.

Malta, a country of staunch Catholic faith and a long history of adaptation, assimilation and cross fertilization of beliefs, is also notorious for political corruption.

Teresa's interest lies in exploring the blurred lines of morality and the subjective nature of judgments.

Contemplating her own personal use of legal medicinal cannabis and her father's choice to illegally sell drugs to support her family, Teresa explores this duality, referencing the drug's conflicting relationship with prohibition and public acceptance.

Questioning government propaganda and symbolism, this exhibition considers authority, corruption and how social class affects moral judgement and ways of living.

Asleep with the Fishes weaves together Teresa's memories, personal beliefs, and family history with elements of fantasy. Using repurposed materials, including a salvaged boat, she employs assemblage and sculptural techniques, drawing connections with religious iconography and deities, while exploring her own place in the Maltese diaspora.

The work is a personal exploration of being multiple contradictory things at one time; both foreign and local, moral and criminal, honest and deceitful, combining fishing elements with symbols relating to religion and drugs to consider what really makes a person 'good'.

The shells in this work have been responsibly sourced and many are by-product of other industries. They have been collected from restaurants, auction houses and a variety of sustainable suppliers.

Gallery 1
in all its forms
Western Sydney creatives

Gallery 2
in all its forms
Western Sydney creatives

Gallery 4
Firstdraft Screening Program
Lilah Benetti, Amy Prcevich, Jacqui Shelton, Samuel Mountford

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gadigal land
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we acknowledge and pay respect to the gadigal people of the eora nation, the traditional owners of the land on which firstdraft is built and operates.

firstdraft is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW; and assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.



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Teresa Busuttill is an emerging artist who graduated with a Bachelor of Contemporary Art from the University of South Australia. Busuttill's practice investigates personal and familial history, diaspora and the fallibility and flexibility of truth and memory through moving image work, sculpture and installation. Drawing on her Maltese heritage and the ocean, Busuttill utilises materials and stories close to her. Teresa is a current Studio Resident at Adelaide Contemporary Experimental (ACE, Adelaide)

The artist acknowledges the Kurna people as the custodians of the lands and waters of the Adelaide region where she lives and works. She acknowledges and respects the Kurna people's cultural, spiritual, physical, and emotional connection with their land, waters, and community. The artist would like to thank Aarushi Zarthoshtimanesh, Kaspar Schmidt Mumm, Emmaline Zanelli, Chantel Cornelius, Jen Matthews, Eleanor Amor, Henry Jock Walker, Brad Darkson, Thomas McCammon, Sam Gold, Anna Zagala, Rayleen Forester and the teams at ACE and Firstdraft.

Artworks (clockwise from left, and top to bottom)

mary, 2023

plastic bottle, playing cards, holy water, bong water
dimensions variable

to confuse the devil, 2023

stained glass, spray paint, clock fittings, LED lights
dimensions variable

sinner's grotto, 2023

fibreglass boat, sea shells, grout, LED lights, concrete, foam, acrylic paint, sandstone, candles
dimensions variable

wash your mouth out, 2023

soap bong, concrete bird bath, sandstone, LED lights and mist
dimensions variable

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Gallery 4

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Shelton, Samuel Mountford