

KATH FRIES

Entanglements

1 - 30 JUNE 2019



Peacock Gallery and
Auburn Arts Studio

PEACOCK GALLERY AND AUBURN ARTS STUDIO
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COVER & ALL INTERIOR IMAGES: Kath Fries, *Entanglements*, 2019. Sculpture installation (recycled textile felt, beeswax, glass terrariums with growing yellow and pink oyster mushrooms, air-dried phoenix, grey and king oyster mushrooms, ceramic shards and broken moulds, wire, threads, sisal, rope, twine), dimensions variable.

From the Peacock Gallery

Cumberland Council's Peacock Gallery is hosting artist Kath Fries' exhibition titled *Entanglements* throughout June 2019. We would like to acknowledge that this exhibition takes place on Darug land and to pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Gallery One has been taken over by Kath Fries' felt tendrils exploding from the walls; the forms grow mushrooms from their crevices and end in piles of broken ceramics and a strong odour of mushroom scents the air. *Entanglements* is a meditation on the cycle of life and nature, how it constantly changes and evolves just as we humans do.

We live in a world driven by consumerism without much thought to how and why we consume what we do; practices of meditation or mindfulness have started to become a part of everyday

life for some to combat this fast paced obsessiveness. In Fries' exhibition she asks us to take a moment, breathe, listen and pay attention to the growth at your feet in the terrariums or the curls of felt winding their way up the walls. Perhaps if we can have this moment of quiet in the gallery we can take time to appreciate it out in the world too.

Cumberland Council and the Peacock Gallery team would like to thank all the creatives and Council staff who have supported the development of *Entanglements*. In particular we would like to thank Kath Fries for creating such an engaging and wonderful installation that provides something new each day. We extend a warm invite to the Cumberland community to come into the Gallery and spend some time thinking of the way we interact with nature and the world around us.

KRISTINA TITO
Arts Coordinator
Cumberland Council



World in a Room

Pause a minute to inhale and exhale. Inhale again, this time apprehending that for all our specific and nuanced words for looking, there are far fewer equivalent words for smelling. Draw in the rich, animalic aroma of mushrooms, past your skin's bounds to deep within you. It's of you, and you are of it. It's all connected. It's all now.

Interconnectivity and co-creation between Kath Fries and living material has generated *Entanglements*. Recycled industrial felt, its past fibre life still distinctly evident, has been curved, twined, and rubbed between the artist's palms to form new branches, tendrils, and capillaries. Fungus-forming

mycelium reaches through the felt to spawn new lives, the mushrooms' colouration uncannily reflecting a thread here, a tuft there. Curious shards have been recuperated from an alternate junk-heap fate. With both rough and smooth surfaces, these fragments speak simultaneously of interiority and exteriority, of positive and negative spaces, form and void. These aren't binary states, but rather suggest a permeating wholeness: a galaxy of connection expanding across the gallery and down into the microcosmic worlds of the terraria that house the fungi. Death and life are intermingled; in Fries' vocabulary, the underworld that the ancient Greeks feared teems with

creation, mirroring the world of light above.

Late capitalism has deeded us the Anthropocene era in which the things we produce, consume, and discard cause universal damage. Fries' holistic comprehension of life counters this focus on individual gain achieved at all costs, including unchecked growth and oppression. An artwork doesn't need to be monumental to be deeply materialised, nor does it need to be tradable to be significant. *Entanglements* models an alternative mode of being to capitalism's products: a quiet, democratic attentiveness to the infinite and crucial interrelationships that

comprise us all. Step closer. Pick your way through the works on the floor. Notice where your feet fall. Feel the forms. This consideration of somatic experience proposes a coming to understanding through haptic values. In this way of thinking, spectatorship—remember all those words for seeing—is only one way to attend, reflect, and understand. In navigating both the greater world and works of art via multisensory perception, we gain the opportunity to recognise our interrelationships with all things.

At the core of Fries' work lies her Buddhist appreciation of impermanence. *Entanglements* reminds us that life is flux and the act of creativity is ongoing,





ever-changing, and relational. Walking meditations led by Fries in the Auburn Botanic Gardens cultivate attention to the present (at polar remove from the Gardens' annual cherry blossom Insta-frenzy). As Rebecca Solnit suggests, "Walking shares with making and working that crucial element of engagement of the body and the mind with the world, of knowing the world through the body and the body through the world."¹ We might further consider that walking (through a garden, through an artwork) invites consciousness of the self's integration with the world, and in this way points to some recognition that we are both more and less than ourselves.

It's a sad irony that as global extinctions accelerate, our understanding of its

other forms of intelligence is deepening: plants learn through experience and warn one another of hazards; animals use tools and work cooperatively. Like these collective intelligences, *Entanglements* is a symbiotic co-creation with other species, coming into being through the artist's careful tending. The words 'tend' and 'attend' derive from the same Latin root word. That which we bring our awareness to, we care for. Take care. Pay attention. Feel this. It's all of us, and more than us.

REBECCA SHANAHAN

¹ Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* New York: Viking, 2000, p 29.



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