



Thanks to

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My family, friends and artist community for their ongoing support



The Old Museum Building site is on First Nation's
land known as "Barrambin" meaning "windy place"



Object memory poem

Genevieve Memory

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Sculptors Qld Artist in Residence

Artist in residence

Genevieve Memory is a visual artist, curator, arts writer, composer and egalitarian living and working in Brisbane/Meanjin. Genevieve holds a Bachelor of Fine Art with Distinction and a Bachelor of Music (Music Education). She has exhibited in Brisbane, Pine Rivers, Gladstone, Lismore, Melbourne and Bendigo and is represented by the Australian Music Centre.

Introduction to the residency

I have used my residency at Sculptors Qld as an opportunity to sift through my memories and decode my lived experience in order to more fully understand my own visual language and why I make what I make. The lens I applied for this examination was that of objects, focusing on their formal qualities and their abilities to act as memory-keepers. This approach required new research into the area of the semiotics of objects, a side-step from my previous research into the semiotics of clothing.

At the conclusion of my residency, I have produced two studio outcomes and an artist talk, *Objects as memory-keepers and relics of material culture: How objects inform our identities*. The primary studio outcome is the installation *Object memory poem* which is an object-based deconstructed self-portrait that the viewer is invited to walk through and experience more fully via touch. The secondary studio outcome is the COVID work *Hope is a form of planning and a survival tactic*, a series of six denim panels which are for viewing only.

Object memory poem

This residency project more deeply informed my understanding of my own artistic practice and required me to step outside my comfort zone and take risks. The project went through several conceptual changes before it began to come together in its final form, *Object memory poem*.

Essentially, I have put my memories into glass jars to produce a curated self-portrait, the jars being metaphors for the way people retain and store memories. The jars are also a reference to museum collection methods in respect to the Old Museum Building's former role as Brisbane's city museum, a place I visited as a child. The jars signify objecthood – the material properties of objects, such as shape, colour and texture – which is an integral consideration of my visual art practice, whether I am working in two or three dimensions. The jars rest on Sculptors Qld's vintage timber plinths – relics of art world material culture. In these ways, *Object memory poem* can be read as both site-specific and very personal.

Object memory poem is my first large-scale installation work using objects. It represents the development of an idea I used in earlier shows in 2018 and 2019 where I incorporated domestic objects with figurative paintings, text works, and painted and unpainted dresses. I enjoy blurring the boundaries between art and life in this way, between object and artwork, the practice allowing for multiple readings and resonances for the viewer. In such an affective field, the concept of absence and presence is amplified by the incorporation of common household objects that contain complex systems of signs and act as signifiers for the viewer, triggering memories. The interplay between object, artwork and site, in this case historic, can lead to a sense of the uncanny as the viewer experiences a work that is both familiar and unfamiliar.

While foraging for materials for *Object memory poem*, I passed by my grandmother's former home on Brisbane's outskirts. Grandma was in her early 80s when she sold it before moving into a nursing home. Someone was home and I knocked on the door. The owner was happy for me to have a look around, commenting that she didn't know much about the history of the house and eager for me to tell her what I remembered.

I hadn't been inside the house since 1991. I walked up the front path, across the patio and into the house and experienced a weird sensation, like time collapsing. I was 3 and 5 and 12 and 21 and 50 all at the same time, in this one place that was the strongest link I could have to my grandmother. The house – different but the same – was one giant memory-keeper and I was inside it.