

**Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences
Research Seminar Program 2022**

Tuesday 6th December (12-1pm)

**To be held in person
Melb Room 460.3.01,
and via Teams Meeting**

Associate Professor Catherine Bell

Associate Professor Catherine Bell is a multi-disciplinary artist, curator and visual art lecturer in the National School of Arts and Humanities, Australia Catholic University. Her art practice explores the role of the artist in the archive and health care setting, neurodiverse/neurotypical collaborative partnerships, socially-engaged and relational approaches to art making, and challenging taboos surrounding death and body disposal. Since, 2009 Catherine Bell and Arts Project Australia neurodiverse artist Cathy Staughton have collaborated on numerous creative projects that including two shared artist residencies. Bell has also undertaken two, yearlong artist residencies in the oncology ward at St Vincent's Hospital and Caritas Christi Hospice in Melbourne. They involved implementing communal creativity with patients and staff to promote healthy discussion and meaningful reflection on death. She has curated the 2020-21 National touring exhibition, *Fem-affinity*, that explores inclusive practice as a feminist mode of production. She was awarded a 2020-23 Gertrude Contemporary studio and is represented by Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

<https://suttongallery.com.au/artists/catherine-bell/>

Maker Unknown: feminist interventions in the archive, a methodology for creative collaboration, and commemorating the achievement of pioneering women.

My presentation will explore a sustained interest in archival research and how specific archives have inspired the production of original creative work that have benefitted from concentrated access to these collections. This presentation will also discuss the outcome of a 2022 City of Melbourne grant-funded project, "Maker Unknown". This creative-led research reimagines the City of Melbourne's memorial fountains, plotted within the municipal boundary, as feminist monuments. I am drawn to the water fountains, because like the florist oasis foam that I use as a sculptural medium, they are designed to hold water. I use floral oasis foam, associated with floristry, because traditionally it is a female pastime, this fragile medium is also the antithesis of traditional materials used to make public monuments ie marble, bronze, and stone. The dedication of these memorial fountains to male councillors of the day and their "Maker Unknown" status, is a provocation to "Make Known" the creative contribution of forgotten woman artists to the cultural and civic life of Victoria. This project has been supported by a 2022 City of Melbourne Grant and has been greatly assisted by Caroline Phillips at the Women's Art Register (WAR)-Australia's living archive of woman's art practice.



Catherine Bell, *Margaret Baskerville Monument*, (2022)
Dimensions: 150cm (H) X 45cm (W) X 22cm (D)
Material: Florist Oasis Foam
Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne