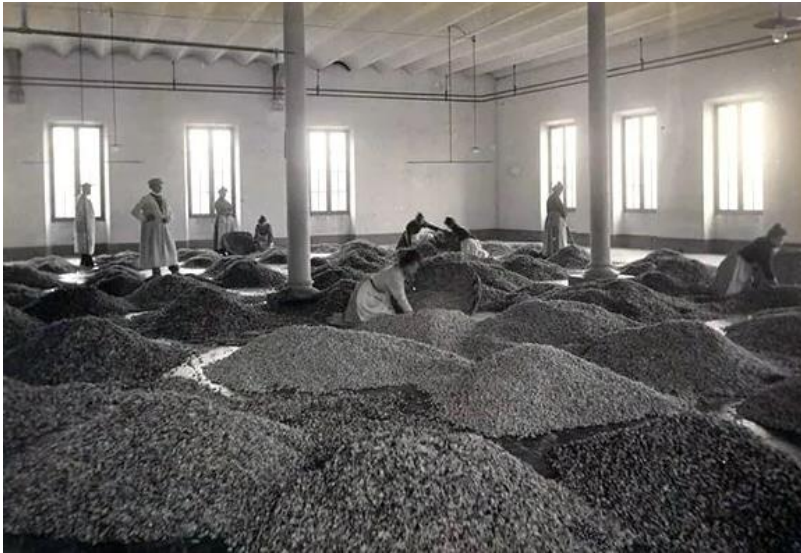


23 April 2024  
Media Release

# Dane Mitchell

## *An Unbroken Surface*



### **Exhibition Dates:**

**17 May – 8 June 2024**

Gertrude Glasshouse

44 Glasshouse Road, Collingwood, 3066

Wurundjeri Country

**Opening Event: Thursday 16 May, 6 – 8pm**

*An Unbroken Surface* is a new exhibition by Dane Mitchell accompanied by an original text by Hsuan L. Hsu.

Mitchell has been exploring the possibilities of aroma and its molecules to summon up experiences and reveal unseen worlds for over fifteen years and his new exhibition extends this line of enquiry to produce a heady, pungent, all-encompassing sculptural structure that permeates the viewers body and infiltrates the volume of the gallery.

*An Unbroken Surface* makes deliberate use of two consumer fragrance materials to reveal a bleak certainty: the distance between the synthetic and the natural is collapsing. This new exhibition explores the different atmospheres we inhabit and how they not only colour our relation to the world but are determined by it. Through a single, focused work in the gallery space, Mitchell uses a synthetic aroma perhaps more recognisable in its synthetic form than the natural fragrance it replicates and repudiates. The overpowering aromascape encountered in the space might be considered an attempt at rewilding the gallery through synthetic means, or an expression of a desire for an experience of wilderness.

Most museums and galleries smell of nothing, but the volatile compounds of *An Unbroken Surface* surround and subsume the viewer and space and operate like a contagion. They produce an overwhelming sensorial pollution within that permeates beyond Gertrude Glasshouse.

Mitchell's ongoing interest in scent and smell is bound up in its ability to dwell on multiple thresholds— vision, physicality, affect, time, dimensionality — and its primal status among the senses. Smell is resistant to sense-making, conjures the unseen, is temporal and disruptive. It throws up an array of “dizzying epistemological conundrums” (Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 1993) that build complicated, fusalional relationships between the world and our bodies.

On the final weekend of the exhibition, a crime scene cleaning specialist company will deodorise the gallery utilising an ozone generator over a twenty-four hour period. The gallery cannot be entered during this time, but the action can be viewed through the windows as a punctuating, final event.

#### **Copy (short/descriptive):**

On approaching Gertrude Glasshouse, the first of two artworks that comprise *An Unbroken Surface* can be viewed in the covered entryway. An atomiser sitting atop a tripod used specifically by HVAC installers vapourises a black, sooty liquid. An ancient distillate called pine tar, this peculiar material is both a preservative for wooden materials and a medicinal treatment, used as a topical antiseptic for human skin. The hydrocarbons in this distilled pine — extracted via extreme heat and pressure — produce a resinous odour akin to a burning fire. These intense, opaque inhalations hit the olfactory sensory neurons of the viewer to produce an unsettling (environmental) effect.

Inside the gallery sits a single work that shatters and scatters the air-conditioned world we inhabit. Like the flower-strewn floors of enflourage fragrance factories, this work invites us into an installation made up of over 4000 'Royal Pine' Little Trees, that hang from millions of rear-view mirrors. Like a ramble through the woods—or through a miniature fallen forest of Little Trees— *An Unbroken Surface* is immersive, diffuse, and filled with shifting perspectives.

#### **Key messages:**

Like the flower-strewn floors of enflourage fragrance factories, this work invites us into an installation made up of over 4000 'Royal Pine' Little Trees. Like a ramble through the woods—or through a miniature fallen forest of Little Trees — *An Unbroken Surface* is immersive, diffuse and sensorial.

*An Unbroken Surface* makes deliberate use of two consumer fragrance materials to reveal a bleak certainty: the distance between the synthetic and the natural is collapsing.

Mitchell was Aotearoa New Zealand's representative at the NZ National Pavilion at the 58<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale in 2019. Mitchell is one of New Zealand's most internationally active contemporary artists who moved to Naarm Melbourne 12 months ago for a studio at Gertrude Contemporary and an academic position at VCA University Melbourne where he is the Coordinator of the Honours Programme in Fine Art.

#### Credits:

Gertrude Glasshouse is generously supported by Michael Schwarz and David Clouston.

The 2024 Gertrude Glasshouse Program is supported by the City of Yarra.

This exhibition has been generously supported by Creative New Zealand.

#### Biographies:

##### Hsuan L. Hsu

Hsuan L. Hsu is Professor of English at the University of California, Davis, USA. He is the author of three books, including *The Smell of Risk* (NYU Press) which considers olfactory aesthetics as a mode of engaging with environmental injustice in literature, art, memoir, and law, and *Air Conditioning* (Bloomsbury) which explores questions about the history and uneven distribution of climate controlling technologies.

##### Dane Mitchell

Dane Mitchell was Aotearoa New Zealand's representative at the 58th Venice Biennale. He has presented solo exhibitions at Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan; daadgalerie, Berlin, Germany; Institut D'Art Contemporain, Lyon, France; Te Papa, Wellington, New Zealand; Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand; Govett-Brewster, New Plymouth, New Zealand; Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, Australia; SAM Sound Art Museum, Beijing, China; Adam Art Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand; RaebervonStenglin, Zurich, Switzerland; Christopher Grimes Gallery, Los Angeles, United States; Artspace, Auckland, New Zealand; A Gentil Carioca, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Galerie West, Den Haag, The Netherlands amongst many others.

He has participated in several biennales, including Venice Biennale (2019); Biennale of Sydney (2016); Liverpool Biennial (2012); Bangkok Biennale (2020); Gwangju Biennale (2012); Singapore Biennale (2011); Thailand Biennale (2018); Ljubljana Biennale (2011), Sao Paulo Biennale (2004); Busan Biennale (2010), Klontal Triennale (2014), Rio Biennial (2015) and Tarra Warra Biennial (2008).

Recent curated exhibitions include those at Institut D'Art Contemporain (2024); Ludwig Museum (2022); Tai Kwun Contemporary (2022); University of Queensland Museum of Art (2023); Skulpturen Köln, Köln, Germany (ongoing); Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (2024).


Dane Mitchell is Coordinator BFA Honours at VCA, University of Melbourne and is represented by The Renshaws (AUS).

#### About Gertrude

Gertrude is a not-for-profit contemporary art organisation and studio complex that has been supporting contemporary artists for almost 40 years. Gertrude is valued nationally and respected internationally as a dynamic centre for the production and presentation of contemporary art.

Gertrude enables creative and professional development in its strong community of arts practitioners through the studio program and the exhibition program, run across two venues. Artists are connected to Gertrude's diverse audience through the exhibition program, education workshops and public programs. This nexus between art practitioners and audience is essential to all of Gertrude's activities.

Gertrude Contemporary is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria; Creative Australia, the Federal Government's arts funding and advisory body; and through the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments.



[Download media image here.](#)

**Image Credits:**

Image | Arrival of 3000 kilograms of violets, from 'Industrie des Parfums a Grasse', c.1900. © Alinari Archives, Florence

For further media information please contact:

Sharon Flynn  
Gallery & Education Manager  
sharon@gertrude.org.au  
0439 404 992

