

**ALEX SETON**

***Cargo***

**28 September—20 October 2018**

**Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney**

**Opening Friday 28 September 6–8pm**

Sullivan+Strumpf is delighted to present Alex Seton's, *Cargo*, an exhibition of new marble sculptures depicting highly compressed bales of clothing, of the kind found in the second-hand clothes industry. Each garment packed into these volumes has its own history and story to tell. Together, they evoke a tangled mass of humanity; the mesh of needs and concerns, environments and economies that connect us all.

Spanning both floors of Sullivan+Strumpf's Sydney gallery, *Cargo* includes six hand-carved bales of clothing. Over the last four years, Seton's work has responded to the asylum seeker debate and Australia's offshore immigration policies. In *Cargo*, the free and profit-driven movement of thousands of bales of our discarded clothes stands in potent counterpoint to the perilous and stymied journey of the asylum seeker. The exhibition takes a step back to reflect on the larger economic and environmental systems that perpetuate our privilege.

In spending innumerable slow hours carving these flocked effigies, Seton pauses to consider the environmental, cultural and economic impact of these systems on those that bear the burden of our dispensation. The complexities of the bales' surfaces are also a nod to the tropes of classical statuary; the shrouds, drapes and folds of cloth of European marble tradition. Here, individual garments are rendered almost unrecognisable, compressed into bales designed for circulation in transnational markets.

*Cargo* is at once political, personal and biographic. Mirroring the human body's seven-year replacement cycle, the bales presented in the exhibition are based on Seton's own clothes accumulated in his studio over the last seven years. The stone from which the bales are carved each refer to places and periods from the artist's life: his youth spent in the area near the Wombeyan Caves in New South Wales; years of study in traditional statuary of Bianca Carrara; exploration of the palate range of Statuary and Badiglio, and finding of a sense of place and appreciation of local textures and colour in Katoomba Green. In this way Seton places himself within these transnational stories.

*Cargo* offers us an encounter with our own complicity; not only in the production of landfill sites that will outlive us several times over and the destruction of local textiles industries; it also asks us to reflect on our role in the perpetuation of systems that fuel profit while turning a blind eye to the human and environmental costs of our way of life.

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Throughout his practice, Seton has often used clothing and fabric to speak to the body and how it participates in the systems that structure our world; economic, geographic and social. From the ubiquitous hoodie politicised by the shooting of Trayvon Martin, to the makeshift tarp shelter of the refugee and the empty life jackets washed ashore the Cocos Islands, cloth serves as a humble reminder of the deep and messy entanglement of the personal and political.

Alex Seton has exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally. Solo exhibitions include *Monument*, Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney (2017); *Alex Seton: The Island*, Newcastle Art Gallery (2017); *Someone Else's Problem*, Sydney Contemporary, Carriageworks (2015); *As of Today*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra (2014-15), *Last Resort*, touring McClelland Sculpture Park + Gallery, Langwarrin, Linden Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne & Rockhampton Art Gallery, Rockhampton (2014-15), *Refoulement*, Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney (2014); and *Roughing Out*, Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre, Sydney (2013). Recent group exhibitions include *Young & Free | An Australian Discourse*, Bega Valley Regional Gallery (2017); Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India (2016); *Contour 556*, Canberra Public Art Festival (2016); *Sealed Section*, Artbank, Sydney (2014-15); *Gifted Artists: Donations by Patrick Corrigan AM*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (2014); *Conflict: Contemporary Responses to War*, University of Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane (2014); and *Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Dark Heart*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (2014).