

# Stephen Armitstead, WA

## Descendant and False Door

Working with experimental installation, video, photo-media, architecture, objects, interactive elements, and sound, Stephen Armitstead concentrates on playful interrogation of process and unconventional use of materials. Aesthetically post minimalist, Stephen's work is conceptually tied to a metaphysical resonance of object, space and action. In his practice, inspiration comes from lived experiences, observations of society, and recollections of domestic life.

Like much of his work, *Descendant* and *False Door* are curious interventions. They explore time, matter and changes of state. *Descendant* is broadly concerned with political posturing, musing on intentions and how these may change or are changed over time through circumstance or environment.

*Descendant is comprised of 3 floating white balloons that translate, via single track audio, first speeches by South Australian senators and members of the 45th Australian Parliament. Trapped by the ceiling these vessels, over the days of the exhibition, will gradually descend to (perhaps) find a resting place on the floor. The inflated speeches chatter and bob, get blown about by the entrances and exits of viewers, then - over the working week of 5 days -deflate and fall. The "speeches" look like anonymous mini heads which babble on and over each other. On day one they are higher than viewers and positioned as god-like. Yet they create a cacophony of words uttered without really any power to be heard. They are a tower of Babel; an indication of the disharmony which arises through inflated expression of mind and desire. A number of questions arise. Are all uttered words to be interpreted as mere noise? Where does the air go? The sounds go? What can one discern from the garble of syllables? Who is hearing? Does the open space holding the balloons aloft ever change? Dr Phillip McNamara*

*False Door* is a perpendicular reflection of an existing door in the FELTspace Back Gallery. The door is made of compressed flour, a medium used for its practicality and references to the 'white space'. It also holds layers of connection to our society and its basic connections to human life.

*Flour, whilst in its different guises is literally a basic food source for most of humanity, is also a symbol of spiritual food which comes down from higher planes and "giveth life" (John vi. 33). For Swedenborg "Fine flour is truth derived from good." Dr Phillip McNamara*

Over a number of years Stephen has used flour to make temporary white versions of bricks, walls and recently as a medium to hold indents of words. Flour is intriguing as a sculptural medium due to its impermanence. Initially the viewer may feel disbelieving that pure flour can appear to hold solid form. Yet over the course of the exhibition period the structure will begin to crumble and disintegrate. Supporting this flour 'bed' is a structure of wood stakes and ply surface. The gridded, over engineered sub-strata links back to the artist's interest in wordplay: the scaffolding around ideas and concepts becomes a physical metaphor.

## List of works

*Descendant (South Australia), 2017,*

Balloons, helium, exciter speakers, 3 track audio, string, paper tags  
Dimensions variable

*Descendant (Remnants) 1 - 12, 2017*

Balloons, string, paper tags, vacuum seal packaging, 21cm x 30 cm  
See more: <https://vimeo.com/206686324>  
Price \$60 each

*False Door, 2017*

Wood, compressed flour, 126cm x 80cm x 110cm

## Audio Components

Senator Stirling Griff,  
Senator for South Australia,  
First speech: 13 October 2016

Senator Skye Kakoschke-Moore,  
Senator for South Australia,  
First speech: 11 October 2016

Senator Lucy Gichuhi  
Senator for South Australia,  
First speech: 21 June 2017