



installation view:

Archie Moore, *Les eaux d'Amoore*

The Commercial, Sydney

Archie Moore

born 1970, Toowoomba, Queensland

Kamilaroi people, New South Wales

Les eaux d'Amoore, 2014

eleven custom made perfume compounds

in glass bottles, light boxes, shelves,

digital displays, assorted testing cards

dimensions variable

Courtesy Archie Moore

and The Commercial, Sydney

photo: Jessica Maurer

LES EAUX D'AMOORE

ARCHIE MOORE

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Perfume, aroma, smell, stink. As a child the most-felt racist insult for me was 'you stink'. They didn't have to say, 'because you're Aboriginal'. That was understood. It made me feel ugly and despised. There is no defence for such stigmatising remarks. In their own personal way, everybody smells; everybody stinks.

Aboriginal people have always been told, 'why can't you be like Africans, who are so exotic'. Africans are exotic; Aboriginals stink (apparently), or perhaps it's the stench of Aboriginal dead, the guilt of colonial crimes that still lingers in the air.

Smoking ceremonies are now a widespread pan-Aboriginal ritual for most public events. I've often found this almost impersonal and perfunctory. A just as important, but little-known ritual in the south is the rubbing of your sweat on the mouth, eyes, ears, face, limbs and body of another person to make your smell their smell. It is the smell of the land, and the smell of the people; the smell of the ancestors of that country so they will recognise you.

In a 2006 work by Archie Moore called *You have a ...*, large blurred black words behind frosted glass beckoned the viewer closer until your nose was flattened against the windowpane and then the words appeared – 'boong nose'. Perfumers are known as a 'nose'. Archie Moore worked hand-in-hand with the Brisbane-based perfumer Jonathon Midgley of Damask Perfumery to achieve an amazing and intensely personal exploration of mnemonic triggers in the 2014 series *Les eaux d'Amoore*.

I described in a review how the paintings of the late artist Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori were 'socialised' – she titled her seemingly abstract landscapes 'her father's country', 'her husband's country', 'her mother's country', 'her brother's country' and 'the river where I was born'. And so, here, with the aromatic portraits of Archie Moore: *Un certain t'y*, his probable biological father's clothes smelling of wood smoke, along with wet clay from the excavation sites where he worked; *Presage*, French for initiation, for his first day at school, where he smelt the cedar of wood pencils and paper; *Sapphistication*, the smell of rum and Brut 33 from his aunty's lesbian friends; *Investiture*, his first girlfriend, who wore rose oil and Elizabeth Arden's Red Door; *Amoore*, a self-portrait personified by chewing gum, chocolate and dried apricots; *Wulu*, Kamilaroi for 'wattle', representing his country; and *Bougres*, French for uncultured men found in a local country pub smelling of stale beer and cigarettes.

An Aboriginal elder once told me how the first missionaries came to convert his community and how his people, in turn, educated them and others who came after. As each generation of the Australian art world 'saw' a 'new' appearance of Indigenous art they strived to name it, to define and 'tame' it. It was, however, never 'conceptual', never 'cerebral', never 'relational', but always ultimately 'primitive'.

Another stereotype is that silence equals stupidity. How wonderful it is to have the silent artist Archie Moore in our time and his art practice with us. How powerful it is to have his smell enrich our lives.

DJON MUNDINE