

*OUTER*  
*SPACE*

MUCOSA

Kate Bohunnis & Kate Power

Soft / Power

Mucosa | Kate Bohunnis & Kate Power

Kate / Kate

Squishy / Strong

Sleek / Crumpled

Spontaneous / Planned

Hepworth / Brancusi

Contained / Leaking

Fixed / Fluid

Moist / Dry

Warm / Cold

Freud / Kristeva

Feminist / Queer

Halperstam / Cocker

*Poo on Sticks / Cloud Arch*

Mastery / Failure

Earnest / Play

Metal / Flesh

Heimlich / Unheimlich

Punctured / Cradled

Wounded / Healed

Brassington / Gober

*Hang Up / Die*

Barthes / Lippard

Form / Content

Making / Made

Now / Then

You / Me

Us / Them

Kate / Kate

Kate Bohunnis and Kate Power's material investigations drip with the delicate tensions of two art practices combined. To see them is to encounter a universe of antonyms and oxymorons, and to get lost in the liminal spaces where contrasts balance, overlap and coalesce.

The tubular steel of their shiny and shifting, snake-like forms is deeply familiar. In private and public spaces similar lengths stretch along stairwells, offering support and stability. In garages and offices, bicycles and Bauhausian chairs bend steel to the human form and welcome us into their utilitarian folds. Our bodies know these material histories. Our hands respond impulsively to this work, desiring to run along and around these sculptures. Before reaching out to do so, we already know the cold, sleek and firm sensation of steel against our skin.

These works are equally unfamiliar and strange, precarious and misshapen. In the white cube of the gallery, they assert their need for distance. As installations, they mark out curious shapes within the gallery's geometry. They require us to move with care, aware of the boundaries of our bodies. Their instability suggests that at any moment they might fall, collapse and fail.

The unfamiliar/body resurfaces in each work through the use of plaster, fabric and silicone. Via these materials, the body is cast as fleshy and folding, oozing and abject. Moulded plaster at the base of *I'm just about just about to* (2021) suggests the contortions of a stomach. *Mucosa* (2021) alludes to the pink flesh of our tongues. And *If you need I will be* (2021) cyborgian fusion of industrial and bodily plumbing shows our insides on the outside. Against the neat beauty of steel, the esophageal tube appears forlorn and inefficient.

*Mucosa* is less an investigation of opposites than meeting places and indeterminate boundaries. The exhibition draws its name from the moist membranes of soft tissue that line our cavities and canals. *Mucosa* belong to our eyes and mouth, anus and vagina, lungs and digestive tract. Despite their fleshiness, *mucosa* are tough. They are built for protection (from germs) and secretion (of mucus). Their existence in boundary zones brings to mind

Sadie Plant's evocative description of a coastline. On one side, infinite grains of sand swirl and shift. On the other, oceans heave and retract. Neither locale is permanent or stable, nor is the line in between.

*Mucosa*'s artworks are also complex border zones. It's impossible to separate the steel and crisp finishes of Bohunnis, or the plaster and messy craft of Power, from the decade of queer friendship that informs their working process. Shared commitments to improvisation, indeterminacy, trust, play, reciprocity, softness and vulnerability flow through every sculpture.

Modernism's artistic precedents equally imbue the work. The arched shape of *I'm just about just about to* suggests the sweeping arm of Jackson Pollock in his studio. It's human proportions evoke Tony Smith's vitruvian *Die* (1962), a steel cube of 6 x 6 x 6 feet. In turn, these sculptures conjure the artists' bodies in their studio: bending, twisting and talking. Thinking through materials, and using gravity as an artistic tool, follows in the footsteps of Robert Morris' yawning felt works. Meanwhile, the exhibition's most inescapable referent is Eva Hesse's *Hang Up* (1966), brought to mind by *How are you are you feeling* (2021). Both pair a rectangular frame with a protrusion. The abject horror of these escaping forms--which puncture the frame/surface to extend into the gallery--refute the flatness of Greenbergian formalism and the Industrial chic of Minimalism. Their correlations with wounds, parasitic growths and bodily ejections make my stomach churn. Gentler seeping forms alternatively point to Pat Brassington and Richard Gober while dimpled textures recall Louise Bourgeois. The tender curves and joins of *Mucosa* welcomes contemplation and soothes the frazzled viewer.

Bohunnis and Power join a fascinating history of collaborating women artists. Like sisters, friends and lovers before them, the two have lent into the intimacy and anxiety of working together. *Mucosa* records their efforts and celebrates the soft power that replaces the competition of the artworld with collaboration.

Louise R Mayhew



1

*If you need I will be*, 2021, steel, papier-mâché, plaster, silicon, pigment.  
Courtesy of the artists

2

*How are you are you feeling*, 2021, steel, timber, wax, plaster, papier-mâché,  
found objects, vinyl, chain. Courtesy of the artists

3

*Mucosa*, 2021, steel, silicon, pigment. Courtesy of the artists

4

*I'm just about just about to*, 2021, steel, plaster, silicon, pigment, papier-mâché,  
resin. Courtesy of the artists

Kate Bohunnis is represented by STATION, Australia



**Queensland**  
Government

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