

Sand murmurs
Tongue pockets
Thumb secrets

by Sidney Mullis

November 10 - December 31, 2020

A scene is set for you in the dark and playful world of Sidney Mullis' latest exhibition, *sand murmurs, tongue pockets, thumb secrets*.

Crusty tree-like forms anchor wondering pathways in this inviting, yet ceremonial space. A lively cast of objects is hand-crafted with signature surfaces made of sand, papier-mâché, wax, marbles, confetti, air-dry clay, pleather and more. The artist's childhood collections of seashells and decommissioned German coins can be found half swallowed up in the exhibition's central work, as if lost in the bottom of a pocket. Intricate bits and bobs radiate at ground level and lay like fallen stars throughout the gallery.

Grounded in a fascination with tactility and transformation of materials, Mullis presents a sculptural terrain that echoes the storybook motif of *the forest* with all its mythic and natural wisdom, danger and great promise of adventure. This exhibition offers a landscape that through its objects asks—where do our past selves go as we age? Can they be found again? Can we resurrect that innocent wonder, sharp defiance, or self-assured clarity that used to be someone who looked through our eyes?

Visitors may channel this exhibition through a child-like lens or rather with the kind of openness that comes with not always knowing what things are. Regardless of where your mind's eye brings you, it is yours to find and hold. —Jessie Rommelt, Executive Director of Bunker Projects

Artist Statement

The forest in children's stories and fairy tales is the place where young characters go in defiance of their guardians and other authority figures. The forest lures those characters in with the rumor of its danger and promise of adventure. Once there, those boys and girls are confronted with sinister scenarios that leave them with new adult wisdom—a wisdom that really just reinforces the societies that they come from. Societies flagrant with their own wicked systems and deceptive morality. In my case, I returned to an American one.

Now as an adult—a role I never auditioned for—I think about those childhood selves that came before. Where did they go? How do we mourn them? And now, why do we speak about my inner child as if she is sometimes there?

This exhibition is a chance to go back to the forest. It is a ceremonial landscape to find where those childhood selves go in adulthood and if it is possible to bring them back. Using sand, handmade paper pulp, marbles, wax, beads, bells, olive pits, fabric, and shells & coins from my childhood collections, I examine, seize, and warp aging, time, memory, preservation, and resurrection. To understand growing up, a process that is different for each child, yet carries the same name, I build dark and playful sculptural spaces.

Artist Bio

Sidney Mullis is a sculptor who makes work about puberty, the intimacy of forgetting, the performance of gender, and the resurrection of childhood selves.

Her work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally including shows in Berlin, Tokyo, England, and Croatia. Solo shows include the Leslie-Lohman Museum (NYC), Wick Gallery, (NYC), Neon Heater Gallery (OH), Bucknell University (PA), Rowan University (NJ), Galleri Urbane (TX), University of Mary Washington (VA), and more. She has been an artist-in-residence at The Wassaic Project, Women's Studio Workshop, MASS MoCA, Ox-Bow, among others. Her work has been featured in publications such as Hyperallergic, Young Space, Maake Magazine, De:Formal, and Sculpture Magazine. Mullis currently teaches at Penn State University and is the program coordinator of Penn State's John M. Anderson Endowed Lecture Series.

Since May 2020, Mullis has been an artist-in-residence at Bunker Projects.