

BIO



SOPHIA SMOLENSKI

Mountmaker
Independent contractor

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Sophia Smolenski is a certified welder who has been working as a mountmaker and museum technician in Aotearoa New Zealand for the past 12 years. She has worked within public institutions such as Puke Ariki, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa as well as private companies that specialise in museum design and production. Her expertise in mount making has gained opportunities to work at Te Kōngahu Museum of Waitangi as well as involvement with projects such as Motonui epa and Terracotta Warriors: Guardians of Immortality. Over this time Sophia has also maintained her own practice as an artist.

ABSTRACT

Offering It Up – A Project Exploring Object Making and Object Support in Aotearoa New Zealand

I am submitting to do an in person talk about a project I have been working on over the past three years here in Aotearoa New Zealand. For this project I have taken the framework of mount making from my working life as a museum technician/mountmaker and explored this framework within my own art practice. I then invited 22 other artists to collaborate with me to produce 22 new works. As a museum Mountmaker I have understood that through the intimate process of making a mount for an object I come away with new understandings about the object and the world it belongs to, as well as my place in relation to it. For this project I decided to explore would happen if I made mounts for objects that I already had a connection to in my personal life, as opposed to those I work with in museums. I also wanted to take the time to reflect on mounts I have made over the past 12 years. I then invited 22 artists to select one of my mounts and make an artwork in response to it. It was important to me that the artists involved in this project were from a broad range of disciplines and backgrounds. I went to meet these artists and often talked about how working in museum spaces has influenced my perspective of the world and how those spaces often require collaboration on many levels and that I see opportunities within that to build communities between makers. This part of the project resulted in 22 individual works across a range of mediums including Jewellery, sculpture, video and sound.

The second part of the project again involved me exploring my perspective as a Mountmaker within my art practice by developing an exhibition to present the work.

The mounts I made were TIG welded and made out of stainless steel, then painted and coated in an inert plastic.