



Carolyn Shepherd

Artist Statement

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'Emotional Baggage'

Paper, paper ash

'Emotional Baggage' is that haunted box containing those precious documents that are too painful to be looked at. The box is kept closed, but its contents play out like an old movie in the mind's eye. It contains love, suffering and death. It's a burden, but it can't be destroyed - it's too heavy. It must be slowly cleansed and healed then gradually as the bags are unpacked the particles are dispersed. The elemental ritual of fire cleanses the pain, changes the form, alters the energy, frees the mind. The ash is released to disperse into the finer particles of infinity.

My work concerns recovery from trauma. Materials that have been subjected to damage become altered, and in their transformed state continue their lifecycle to become a new form. I am interested in this as an analogy of spiritual growth that can derive from traumatic life experiences, and the implication this has for mental health.

Documents that have been burnt for this piece include wartime mementoes, diaries, letters, photographs and fragments of handwriting. Once treasures, they carry a burden of pain which has now been transformed and let go. Although the burden of pain is gone, the ash remains. The ash may undergo more changes in its lifecycle, becoming increasingly cleansed and dispersed until finally it can no longer be humanly perceived.

