

OATO



Ossature | *Sophie Clague*

Eloise Cato Gallery 19 August – 30 August

Across the gallery, twisted, bent, and torqued steel forms suggest the raw scaffolding of a body or melted architecture laid bare. In *Ossature*, Sophie Clague frames steel as a medium of negotiation. The artist renders the material in cursive. Here, delicate, looping freestanding figures resist the usual logic of industrial engineering.

Since they worked out how to extract iron from vast open pits and add carbon to create steel, the material has become fundamental to contemporary life. It is found in bridges, buildings, railways, vehicles, and appliances. It forms the infrastructure that holds us up and shelters us. In the city, we brush against steel's cold, shiny surface every day.

Historically, carbon-rich bones were added to steel forges. Now, modern surgical practices incorporate steel into the body. In spinal fusion surgery performed to treat severe scoliosis, steel rods and screws straighten and fuse curved vertebrae into a single solid structure. Steel, in this context, becomes the most internal, intimate kind of scaffolding.

Clague's relationship to steel is shaped by her own experience of scoliosis, rotated vertebrae, imbalance, and the internal labour of staying upright. Over time, a spine that doesn't sit straight changes the way a body moves, the resulting gait becoming a signature of the person who moves it. In *Ossature*, steel is a stand-in for bone. The kink or curvature of seven figural works appears both vulnerable and defiant. They are sinewy, arcing upwards while leaning forwards, contorted yet erect in posture and animated by distinct twists and turns.

The artist's playfulness is evident in both the idiosyncratic adornments and the whimsical titles. Names like *Gospel Grivette*, *Pale Heir*, and *Short King* humanise each bodily form. Each character functions as part of a larger family or court, all vying for influence and a sense of belonging. Beads run along a "spine," cotton threads hang from steel limbs, ground marble, pearls and semi-precious stones embellish metal skin. This material complexity creates a push and pull that energises the work.

An improvised palette heightens this energy. The figures are marked with pigments of vivid red, blotted with lilacs, oranges and browns, or disrupted by shadows of green. Varied textures also keep us curious. Surfaces bear the traces of welding and grinding, reflecting an artist with

a deep reverence for steel and its methods of manipulation. With a practice grounded in industrial process, technical acuity creates space for free association and intuitive gesture.

Clague, preoccupied with the body as a vessel of movement and the responsive material we use to build around it, explores the tension between internal and external support systems: vertebrae and architecture, framework and ornament. *Ossature* asks what holds us together and what bends or breaks under pressure. At once geometric and biomorphic, tempered and lumpy, resolute and strange, these sculptures are suspended in the balance of remaining upright and giving way to collapse.

- Emma O'Neill



Twitching Ternix, 2025

Mild steel, resin, pigment,
marble dust & chips, coal,
mica, freshwater pearls

92 x 60 x 40 cm



Gospel Grivette, 2025

Mild steel, resin, pigment,
marble dust & chips, coal,

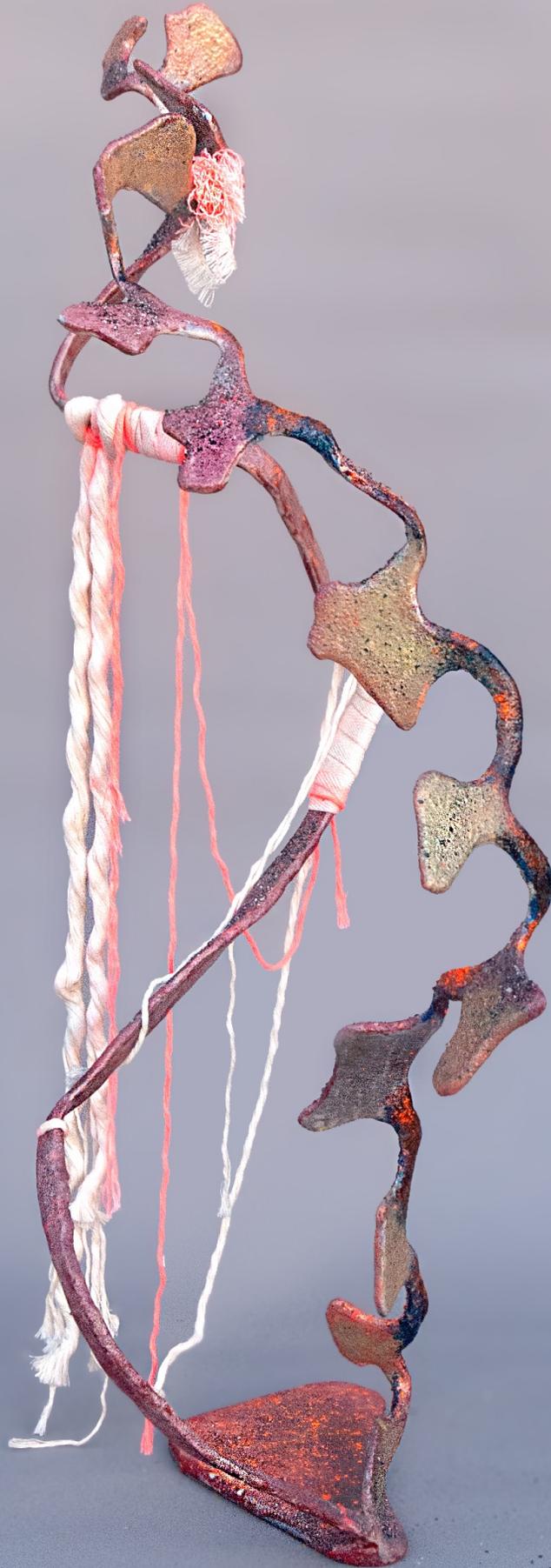
mica, agate

105 x 44 x 40 cm



False Friend, 2025

Mild steel, resin, pigment,
marble dust, coal, mica, sand,
cotton, ceramic beads
52 x 20 x 22 cm



Salt Duchess, 2025
Mild steel, resin, pigment,
marble dust, sand, coal,
mica, sand, cotton
73 x 43 x 18 cm



Pale Heir, 2025

Mild steel, resin,
marble dust, coal, mica
75 x 27 x 22 cm



Short King, 2025

Mild steel, resin, pigment,
marble dust, coal, mica, sand,
freshwater pearls
58 x 25 x 17 cm



Bentley Stillman, 2025

Mild steel, resin, pigment,
marble dust & chips, coal,
mica, sand
82 x 20 x 22 cm

CV- Sophie Clague

Born, 1988

Education

Masters of Fine Art, University of Sydney, 2015-2019

Honours in Fine Art, University of New South Wales, 2012

Bachelor of Fine Art, University of New South Wales, 2009 – 2011

Solo Exhibitions

2025 – *Ossature*, Eloise Cato Gallery, Sydney

2018 – MFA Show, SCA Galleries, Sydney

2017 – *Deep Sheet Sweaty Dream*, Alaska Projects, Sydney

2016 – *Pointing Devices*, SCA Galleries Sydney

2015 – *Distillates*, Airspace Projects, Sydney

2014 – *A Place To Stay*, Archive Space, Sydney

2013 – *Of Remnants*, Firstdraft Gallery, Sydney

2012 – *The Unexpected Ground*, The College of Fine Arts, Sydney; Site, Kudos Gallery, Sydney

Group Exhibitions

2020 – Tom Bass Prize for Figurative Sculpture, Paddington, Sydney

2019 – *Fabstraction*, Flinders Street Gallery, Sydney

2018 – Nanda Hobbs Group Show, Nanda Hobbs Contemporary, Sydney

2018 – Tom Bass Prize for Figurative Sculpture, Paddington, Sydney

2017 – *Darklands*, Alaska Projects, Sydney

2017 – Palmer Art Projects Group Show, Sydney

2016 – *Sculpture By the Sea*, Bondi, Sydney

2016 – *Eden Unearthed*, Eden Gardens, Sydney

2016 – *Transmute*, 107 Projects, Sydney

2014 – *Sculpture in the Vinyards*, Wollombi

2013 – *Material Rites*, MOP Projects, Sydney

2013 – The Churchie, Griffith University Gallery, Brisbane

2013 – *Inside the Silos*, Delmar Gallery, Sydney

2013 – *Launch Sequence*, Kudos Gallery, Sydney

Awards & Scholarships

- 2018 – Winner, Tom Bass Prize for Figurative Sculpture
- 2017 – Dyason Bequest, Art Gallery of New South Wales
- 2016 – Clitheroe Emerging Artist Mentorship Award, Sculpture by the Sea
- 2015 – 2017 – Australian Postgraduate Award
- 2014 – ARTSTART Recipient, Australia Council of the Arts & Arts NSW
- 2014 – NAVA NSW Artist Grant
- 2013 – The Churchill National Emerging Artist Prize Finalist
- 2012 – Dean’s List, College of Fine Arts
- 2012 – COFA New Taylor Square Clinic Award for Studio Excellence
- 2012 – UNSW Honours Year Scholarship Recipient

Residencies

- Franz Masereel Centrum, Belgium, 2017