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Sarah Scout Presents  
47 Easey Street  
Collingwood 3066 Australia

NUTS AND BERRIES - FIONA ABICARE

Project credits  
Catalogue design Matt Hinkley  
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Printing by Printgraphics, Melbourne

Collaborative partners  
Dessert design Tom Levick  
Producer/carpentry Christian Cole  
Glass Made by Marcus

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Armature and model fitting Scott Ebdon  
Cuff modelling and printing Ben Storch  
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Dress maker Yulia Pestova  
Foundries APECS and Perrin Sculpture Foundry

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Torie Nimmervoll, Dan Truscott and Dan Bowran



NUTS AND BERRIES

*Serpentine (column)* 2025  
Acrylic gypsum cement, Zinc White mineral pigment  
American White Ash base (neutral), varnish;  
Acrylic gypsum cement, Titanium White mineral pigment, American White Ash base (black), varnish  
22 diameter x 108.5 cm; base diameter 45 cm

*Serpentine Twist (table)* 2025  
Producer/carpentry: Christian Cole  
American White Ash, steel plate, neutral/ black, varnish;  
Acrylic gypsum cement, Titanium White mineral pigment  
280 x 95 x 65 cm

*Morning (bowl)* 2025  
Acrylic gypsum cement, Titanium White mineral pigment; Blackwood's Crystal Licorice Glass  
19.5 diameter x 7 cm

*Evening (bowl)* 2025  
Acrylic gypsum cement, Titanium White mineral pigment; Blackwood's Crystal Licorice Glass  
19 diameter x 7 cm

*Midday (boat dish)* 2025  
Acrylic gypsum cement, Titanium White mineral pigment; Blackwood's Crystal Licorice Glass  
25.5 x 18.8 x 5 cm

*Serpentine (flatware)* 2025  
Brass, Silver, Zinc White mineral pigment; Brass  
45 x 7 x 6 cm each

*Late night, early morning (robe)* 2025  
Japanese cotton  
White, Black  
All gender, one size

*Centrepiece* 2025  
M'hanncha with rose, pomegranate and pistachio design by Tom Levick  
Acrylic gypsum cement, Zinc White mineral pigment; Brass  
3 parts: 5.2 x 4.7 x 2.3 cm each

*Rings (cuff & napkin)* 2025  
M'hanncha with rose, pomegranate and pistachio design by Tom Levick  
Silver; Brass  
SML, MED, L, XL

*Supper (share plate)* 2025  
Acrylic gypsum cement, Titanium White mineral pigment; Blackwood's Crystal Licorice Glass  
32.6 diameter x 3 cm

NUTS AND BERRIES, ROSES AND SERPENTS  
FRANCIS E. PARKER

The artworks – the furniture, tableware, garments and jewellery – that comprise Fiona Abicare's exhibition *Nuts and Berries* assemble many and diverse reference points into a singularly deep investigation of materials. Abicare embraces both laborious and technically innovative methods, using modelling and casting, as well as 3D scanning. She has also worked with several specialist artisans to further multiply the scope of this body of work. Material exploration underlies her practice and, while some might eventually inhabit forms usually given to others, it is important to Abicare that her materials speak the truth of what they are.

It was the architectural photographer John Gollings who pointed out the connection between her fidelity to materials and the approach taken by the loose group of post-war architects, otherwise known as the Sydney School, whose more colloquial name she came to borrow for this exhibition. Favouring unadorned timber, brick and stone structures that nestle into the landscape, earned them the faintly mocking label Nuts and Berries. The lineage of their thinking draws back to Frank Lloyd Wright and to the Arts and Crafts movement, and a tension between function and decoration that arose out of a perceived decline in aesthetic standards associated with the industrial revolution. The proponents of Arts and Crafts in turn looked to the past, not without a degree of nostalgia, for inspiration in the trades and skills, and understanding of materials, of generations of makers before.

The past appears variously in the constellation of reference that Abicare draws into her exhibition but the association made with Nuts and Berries collides with her own childhood memories of the Sea House in Mornington designed by Peter McIntyre. Lined with tongue-and-groove boards, shuttered with timber louvres and embedded in the coastal scrub, it typifies the style and makes a personal connection for Abicare between a design ethos and bodily experience. In her own artistic practice she pursues the question of how people connect with sculpture. In *Nuts and Berries*, she is interested in how people might connect with each other through sculpture and in finding a physical role for her objects in creating new memories. These are artworks made for lovers: two robes that feature discreet slits to invite a tender caress through their Japanese cotton and tables on which dishes are set, designed for two people to partake in the various meals of the day.

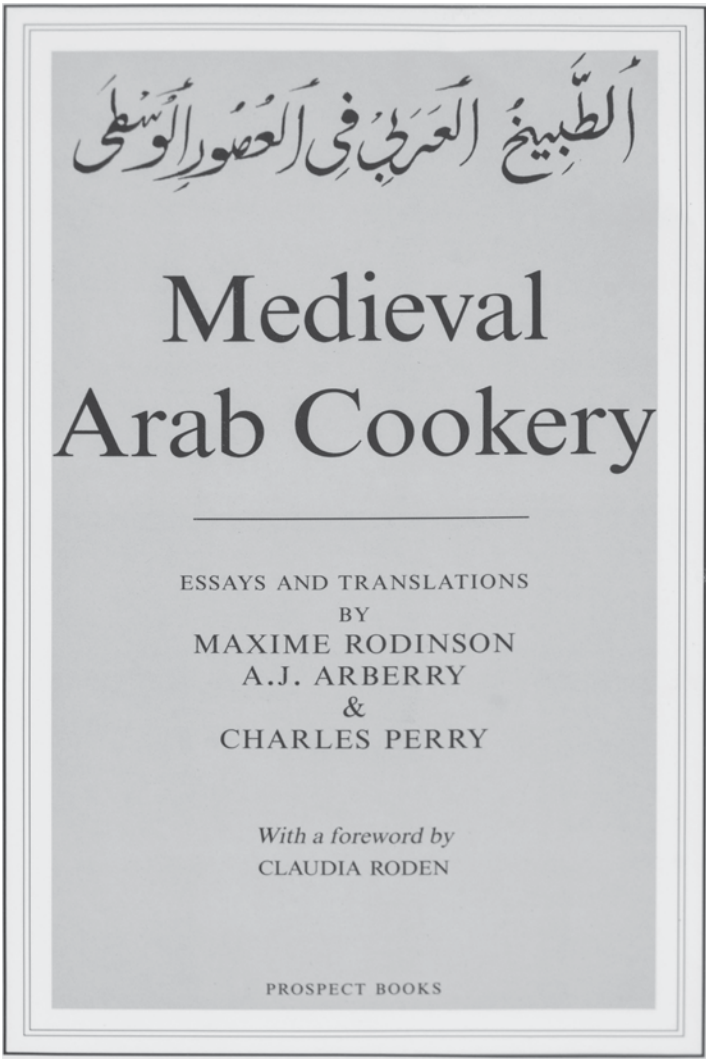
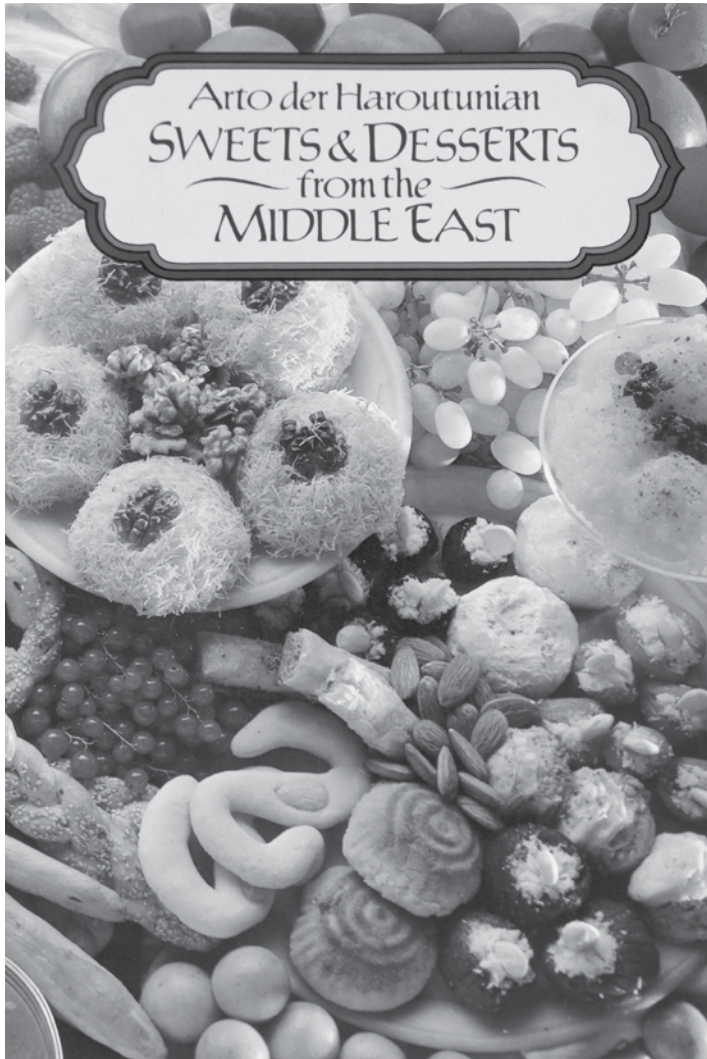
The references that Abicare regularly draws upon come from interior design, fashion and, in this instance, also architecture, all of which aspire to hold the eye while also serving a purpose. At the heart of her work is a tension between function and, not decoration, but the aesthetic role of sculpture. She tests the question, what can sculpture do? By way of an answer, she makes the same vessel in both licorice-coloured glass and white-pigmented acrylic gypsum cement so that one might safely hold nourishment while the other must be preserved from use. She simultaneously follows and eludes William Morris's edict, 'Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.'

As with Arts and Crafts, there is a glance in this exhibition to a former time, one in which artists worked across disciplines without shame to design elaborate entertainments, encompassing costumes, temporary pavilions, stage sets, table centrepieces and so on – a complete artistic environment. Sculpture and tableware also crossed over in notable examples such as Benvenuto Cellini's gold salt cellar made for the French King Francis I.

Courtly tables were routinely adorned with sugar edifices, of which the wedding cake is a lingering vestige. Abicare has also drawn confectionary into her practice, having worked previously with pastry chef Tom Levick to model sculptures on his creations for her contribution to the National Gallery of Victoria's *Melbourne Now* in 2023. For *Nuts and Berries*, she invited him to develop his own version of M'hanncha, a Moroccan pastry coiled like a snake, to which he has added rounds of Turkish delight, a pomegranate leather cylinder filled with spiced milk pudding or Sahlab, and a quenelle of rose and pistachio Chantilly cream, all of which Abicare has moulded and cast in brass and acrylic gypsum cement as her own *Centre piece*, which she then scanned and miniaturised as the wearable *Rings (cuff and napkin)*.

The M'hanncha, with its rose oil flavouring and coiled form, combines the two main motifs of the tableware, the rose and the serpent. *Morning (bowl)* is modelled after voluminous rose petals. Roses are associated with love to the point of cliché but there is no denying the sense of intoxication induced by the most fragrant varieties. That is surely how they came to be bound to the swooning sensation of love – accordingly, Levick's recipe calls for the stronger rose oil rather than rose water. On the other hand, *Supper (share plate)* is embellished with cast cobra skin and *Serpentine (flatware)* takes inspiration from snake-handled salad servers designed by Roberto Cavalli. Serpents, for their part, have a certain narrative notoriety, whether that be with Cleopatra, Eurydice or Eve.

*Nuts and Berries* is composed of such oppositions; the pairing of hard and soft in its title, the sharing dishes nevertheless partitioned to demarcate what is for one diner and what is for the other, and, of course, in the palette of black and white. The push and pull between these binaries reflects Abicare's questioning of how sculpture works, or how sculpture might be put to work, and her recourse to the fields of design to find her answers. The Western convention allows that design objects may be lived with and used, while art objects are preserved from any risk to their physical integrity. At best, a sculpture might be experienced in the round, though still only with the eyes. Fiona Abicare's artworks in *Nuts and Berries* slip back and forth between categories in search of the truth of what sculpture can do.



Left to right: Comme Des Garçons vintage 1980's black asymmetric wrap kimono robe dress, designer: Rei Kawakubo  
*Sweets & Desserts from the Middle East*, Arto der Haroutunian, 1984, Century, London  
*Medieval Arab Cookery*, essays and translations by Maxime Rodinson, A.J. Arberry, Charles Perry, 2006, Prospect Books, Sheffield  
Roberto Cavalli Python Gold Plated Serving Spoon and Fork

Cover: Peter McIntyre Sea House, Mornington, 1982, Photograph: John Gollings

Booklet back cover: *Serpentine (flatware)* prototype 2025  
Acrylic Gypsum cement, Carbon black mineral pigment, brass

