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# Alter

## EXHIBITION

Reminiscent of a city in miniature, this collection of tactile ceramic pieces by Bruce Rowe invites the viewer to participate in the act – and the art – of composition.

*Words by Emily Wong*

*Photography by Tatjana Plitt*

In *Alter*, Bruce Rowe's collection of 280 ceramic works, scale has been toyed with: the elements and structures that make up the built environment of the city are presented in miniature. Unveiled in a solo exhibition at The Front Room gallery in Richmond, Melbourne, the pieces were surrounded and supported by the methods and materials of their making. Display shelves mimicking scaffolding lined one wall of the gallery, punctuated at regular intervals by neat stacks of cream-coloured bricks that gave the room a sense of rhythm. Delicate and precise, the works were laid out along a single horizontal plane, creating a vivid line of colour that gradually shifted in tone. A low brick wall beneath the window offered additional pieces for contemplation.

The sculptures' modulating hues shifted from a pale lemon to a rich burgundy to a dark, smoky cyan, evoking the changing of precincts or neighbourhoods over geography and time. They also hinted at the transition from daybreak through to twilight and then night. Like a catalogue of architectural and infrastructural parts, there was a sense of modularity to Rowe's works when displayed as a

collective. The recognisable curve of a column, zigzag of a stair and bulge of a silo or tank reappeared, subtly different yet always identifiable across the sculptures' varied formats and assemblages.

The familiarity of these elements and their simplicity invite touch and deeper rumination, encouraging the viewer – or, indeed, the artwork's owner – to function as city-maker and to imagine and create their own configuration. From within the gallery, a view through the window to the outlines of the suburban weatherboard houses of Richmond echoed many of the forms in Bruce's sculptures. For those taking a piece home, the context of their own neighbourhood might invite a changing composition. *Alter* gestures to the different meaning and memories that buildings and landscapes hold for each of us, while celebrating the crafting of the city as a collective act. ©

*Alter was exhibited at The Front Room gallery from 5–14 December 2024. [brucerowestudio.com](http://brucerowestudio.com)*

01 In each work, three to five hand-built ceramic pieces in varied tones can be rearranged on a ceramic plinth.

02 The precisely made clay forms can be read as a small-scale catalogue of built components.