

TAR

Tar and the Port

The Port has had a long association with tar. Up until the time that steel became the primary material for shipbuilding, tar was essential to the waterproofing and preservation of wooden hulls, sails and rigging. The smoky aroma of tar, made from the slow distillation of the sap of Swedish pine trees, would have permeated the Port. Barrels of Stockholm tar, as it was known the world over, would have been unloaded onto our wharves from the same ships that brought supplies of Baltic Pine flooring to South Australia. As late as 1949, the last of these commercial square riggers sailed between South Australia and Europe, just five years before the first nuclear submarine was launched.

In the early 1900s a pipe factory at the end of Dock One made wooden pipes by binding slats of wood into hexagonal tubes with hessian and tar. One day the caldrons of tar boiled over onto the fire and the tar was ignited – luckily the wind was blowing from the south west, a northerly would have destroyed much of the Port. In another incident in 1911, there was a report of fire in a steam ship anchored in the Inner Harbor. Someone had left a pot of tar on the stove in the kitchen and it caught alight, destroying the galley.

As well as wood tar there is the bituminous stuff that we use on our roads today. Up until a few years ago, a cast iron tar boiler on wheels that would have held some of the tar dressing used on local roads, could be found in a paddock at the back of the Port. At the start of the 20th century, many of the Port's roads were made from small hardwood blocks set on end and bound together with tar – you can still see some of these blocks near the roundabout in Divett Street. The woodblocks countered damage from heavy freight traffic on roads built using mud reclaimed from the bottom of the Port River.

This exhibition celebrates the dark, resinous, aromatic, binding, bituminous and symbolic nature of tar. *TAR* is the third in a series of mixed media exhibitions that explore elemental themes, the first two being *RUST* and *SALT*. A group of contemporary artists bring you *TAR* – be it tar of shipyard, rope and sails, of night, of roads and pitch, sealing or preserving, medicinal or harmful.

Come over to the dark side.

Tar (noun) a dark, thick flammable liquid distilled from wood or coal, consisting of a mixture of hydrocarbons, resins, alcohols, and other compounds. It is used in road-making and for coating and preserving timber.

Brenda L Croft
Bruce Nuske
Christine Cholewa
Danica Gacesa McLean
Deb Jones
Emily Taylor
Emma Johnson
Enoch Liew
Grant Hancock
Hailey Lane
Kate Cullity
Kirsten Coelho
Jaqueline Barmantloo
Nici Cumpston
Peter Johnson
Sandra Elms
Tom Moore
Tony Kearney
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