

RHONDA PRYOR

Three Shells

35 x 90 cm [3 x framed pieces as a triptych]

Archival print on Hahnemule photo rag, painted timber frames

I have a habit of collecting clothing: old, ornate, or special in some way. I've always had a fascination with fabric. As a young child Mum would cut up her old dresses to make mine, and I loved to see photographs of her wearing those old dresses. She used to tell me stories of her life in a small Queensland city during and after World War 2: the balls she used to attend, the gowns she'd wear. She kept some of those dresses in a large bag in the store room under our house and a couple of times she let me play with them, wallowing in the full skirts, admiring the prints and the sheer volume of all that fabric. The links between memory and clothing had become well and truly entrenched. Mum kept special pieces in an old, ornately carved, Chinese camphor wood chest. After her death I used a pinhole camera and black and white sheet film to make the Shell photographs. Three of these garments are shown here as a triptych – a Christening dress, a baby dress and a negligee from Mum's trousseau. They refer to enclosure, a protective skin or a membrane, and assume a new life as a visual narrative of family relationships.