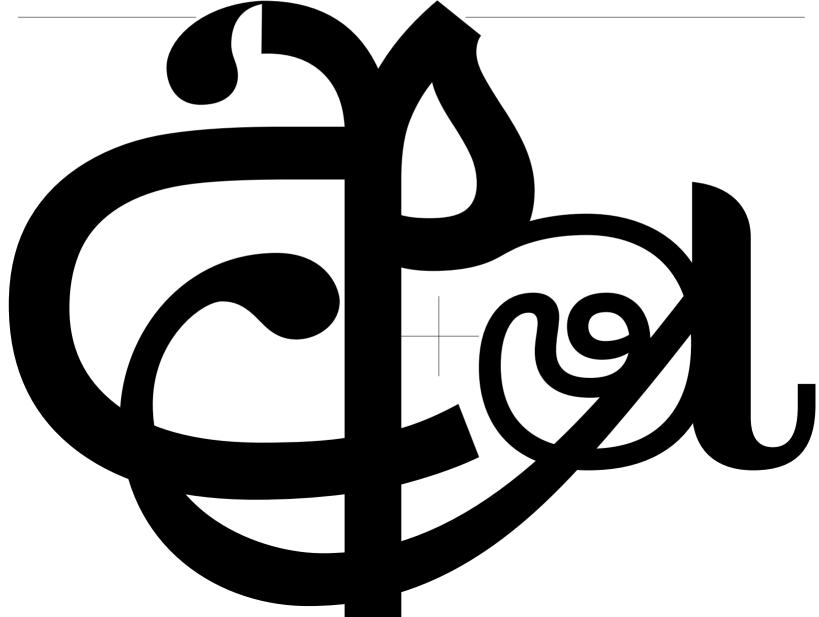
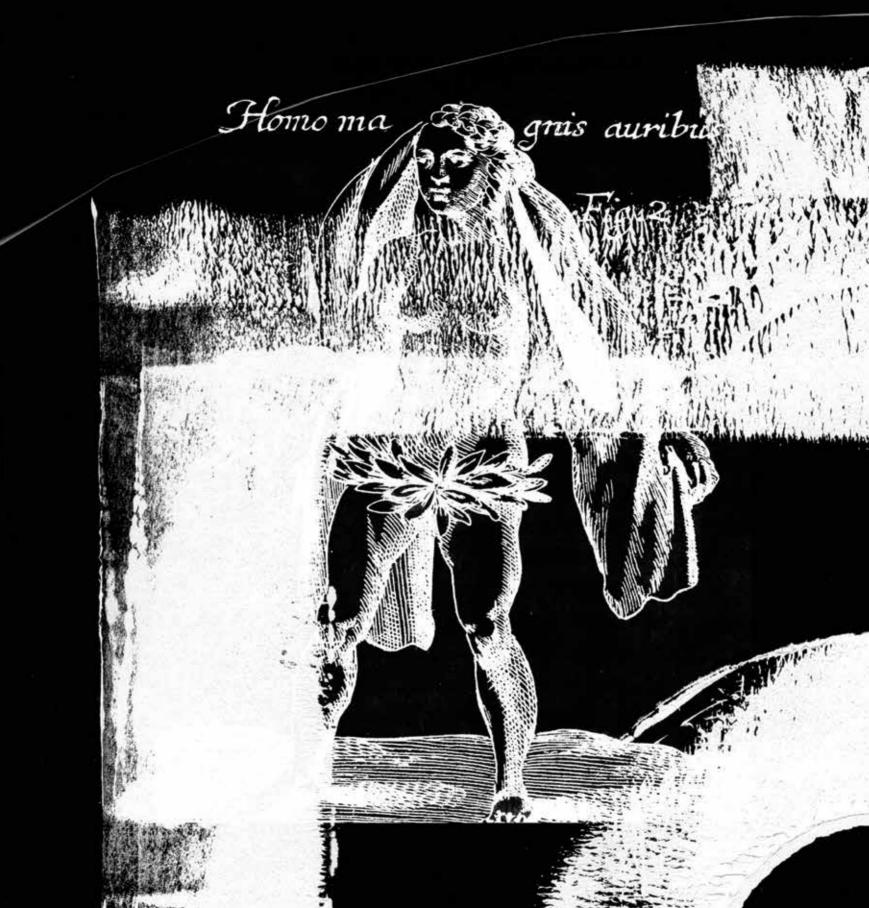
Art + Australia. 2018. Issue Three (54.2): Unnaturalism

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Faculty of Fine Art and Music University of Melbourne 234 St Kilda Road Southbank Victoria 3006 **AUSTRALIA** T: +613 9035 9463 E: art-australia@unimelb.edu.au W: artandaustralia.com

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Associates:

Geoffrey Batchen, Wellington Max Delany, Melbourne David Elliott, Guangzhou Julie Ewington, Sydney Chantal Faust, London Jeff Gibson, New York

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Daniel Palmer, Melbourne Gwynneth Porter, Christchurch Julia Robinson, New York

Ted Snell AM, Perth Zara Stanhope, Brisbane Dr Susan Ballard is a writer from Aotearoa New Zealand who teaches contemporary art and media at the University of Wollongong where she is also the co-director of the Centre for Critical Creative Practice (C3P). She is currently co-authoring 100 Atmospheres, a book about art, media and writing in the Anthropocene.

Archie Barry is an artist and writer currently based in Narrm (Melbourne). They work primarily with performance and video.

Desmond Bellamy is currently researching a PhD in the School of Culture and Communications at the University of Melbourne, titled 'If You're Gonna Dine with the Cannibals: Becoming-Meat, Becoming Animal'. Desmond was born in the UK and lives in Australia. He has always been involved in animal rights causes and is a member and staffer for PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals).

Sue Dodd is an artist and academic based in Melbourne. She works at Victoria University and is represented by Anna Pappas Gallery.

Chris Fite-Wassilak is a writer and critic based in London. He is a regular contributor to *Apollo*, *Art Monthly*, *Art Papers* and *Frieze*, and a contributing editor of *ArtReview*. His short book of essays *Ha-Ha Crystal* (2016) is published by Copy Press.

Donald Fortescue is a Professor at the California College of the Arts (CCA) in San Francisco. He was born in Sydney and moved to the US in 1997. Prof. Fortescue is currently a PhD candidate at the Australian National University, where his research explores congruencies between the methodologies, aspirations and limits of 'science' and 'art'. He was awarded a US National Science Foundation Artists and Writers Fellowship and undertook work at the South Pole in the austral summer of 2016–17 in collaboration with the IceCube Neutrino Observatory (icecube.wisc.edu).

Irene Hanenbergh is an artist based in Melbourne. Her work reflects on geographies—real, symbolic and imagined—and draws from longstanding influences such as the baroque, romanticism, the fantasy genre and the sublime. Hanenbergh is also one half of Zilverster, an ongoing collaborative practice with artist Sharon Goodwin.

Dr Sean Lowry is a Melbourne-based artist and writer. He holds a PhD in Visual Arts from the University of Sydney and is currently the Head of Critical and Theoretical Studies in Art at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. Lowry has exhibited extensively, both nationally and internationally, and his published writing appears in numerous journals. His conceptually driven practice employs strategies of concealment, sub liminal quotation, erasure, remediation and intermedial expansion to explore the outermost limits of the world of a work of art. He is also Founder and Executive Director of Project Anywhere (projectanywhere.net), and one

half (with Ilmar Taimre) of *The Ghosts of Nothing* (ghostsofnothing.com) (seanlowry.com).

Helen McDonald is an Honorary Fellow in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. She is author of *Erotic Ambiguities: The Female Nude in Art*, Routledge, London 2011; and *Patricia Piccinini: Nearly Beloved*, Piper Press, Sydney 2012.

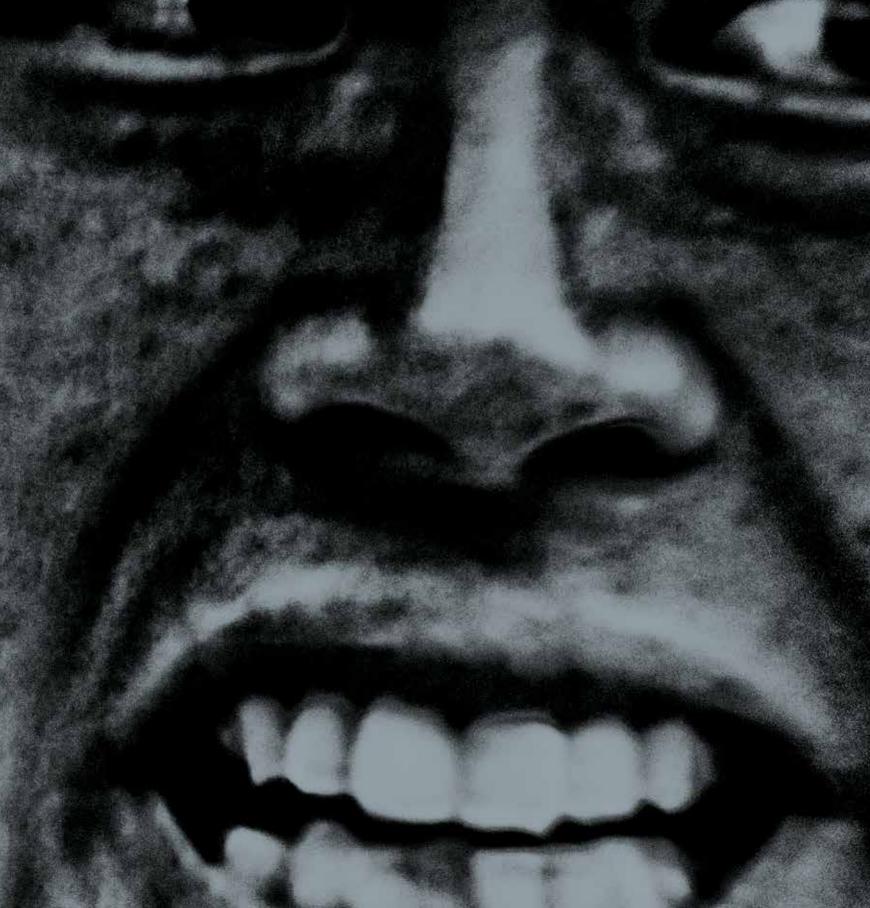
Nick Modrzewski is an artist and lawyer working in Melbourne. He has recently shown work at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Singapore, the Australian High Commission, Singapore, Spring 1883, Sydney, Fort Delta, Melbourne, TCB Art Inc, Melbourne and MILS Gallery, Sydney. His writing has been published in *Un magazine*, *The Lifted Brow, Fireflies, Canary Press, Voiceworks* and *The Research Handbook for Art and Law* (forthcoming).

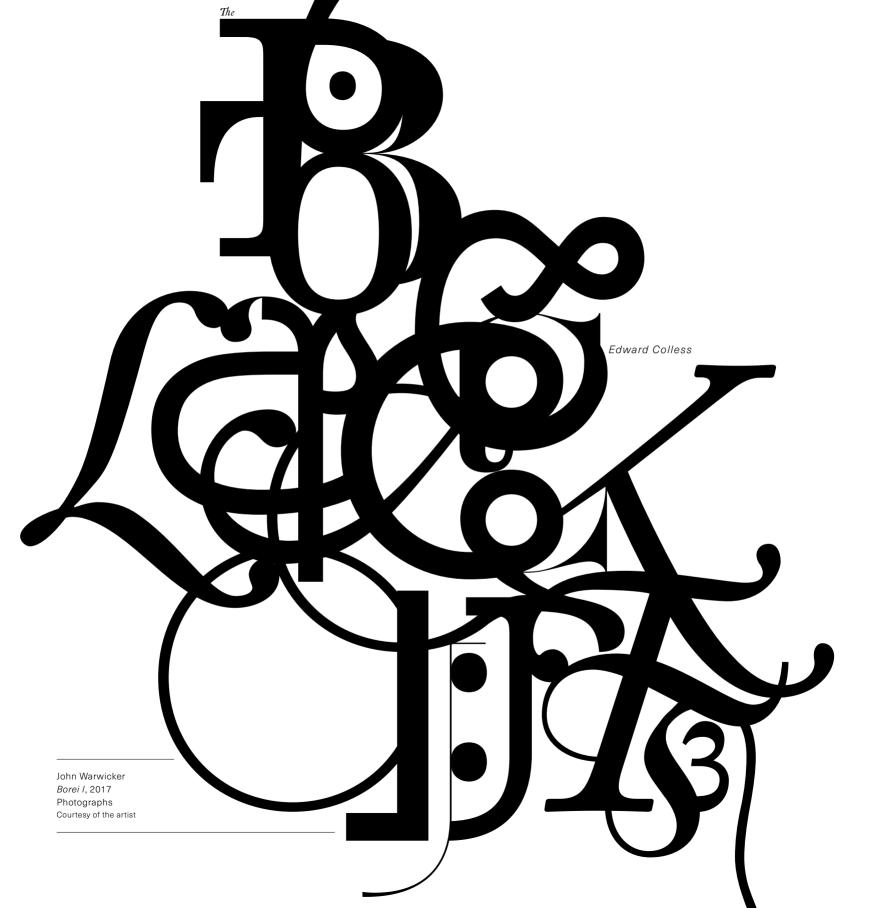
Diego Ramirez is an artist and writer. His research-based practice deals with the legacies of colonialism in visual culture. His writing has been featured in *Art + Australia*, *Runway Journal*, *Critical Contemporary Culture Journal*, *The Article*, *Fragmented Magazine*, *dumb brun(ette) and in publications for various exhibitions. He is represented by MARS Gallery.

Ned Reilly is a London-based Western Australian artist and writer who has shown in group exhibitions at Success, Fremantle, and Gallery Central, Northbridge. He has an Advanced Diploma of Visual Art and Craft from Central Institute of Technology and recently completed a Bachelor of Design (Fine Art and History of Art) at the University of Western Australia.

Erica Seccombe is a visual artist based in Canberra and lectures at the ANU School of Art & Design and The Centre for Art History and Art Theory. Her practice ranges from traditional and photographic print media to experimental digital platforms using frontier scientific visualisation software. Erica's practice-led PhD research, 'GROW: Experiencing Nature in the Fifth Dimension', investigated time-resolved (4D) micro-X-ray Computed Tomography through immersive stereoscopic digital projection installations and 3D printing. Her interdisciplinary research is facilitated by the ANU Department of Applied Mathematics, Research School of Physics and Engineering (RSPE), and VizLab, National Computational Infrastructure (NCI).

Jan Zika completed a PhD in Mathematics and Climate Science at CSIRO's Marine and Atmospheric Laboratories and the University of New South Wales in 2010. Since then he has worked as a research scientist in France and the UK, helping to understand water's role in the climate system. In 2016 Jan returned to UNSW as a lecturer in the School of Mathematics and Statistics. He was recently named the 2018 European Geoscience Union Ocean Science Division Outstanding Early Career Scientist.





God would never need to ask

And if hell is a state of forever falling but getting nowhere, then that unrequited reflection might be the zero-gravity torment of the damned. We catch a glimpse of this, but also of redemption from it, on waking up or coming to. It's the first thing we ask upon gaining consciousness after a blackout. In our case, it's not a metaphysical question nor really a rhetorical one (even if muttered to oneself) but a practical one, like downloading GPS coordinates; and yet it's also universal in implication. It is our human rendition of the divine awakening: 'let there be light'. What we are when we wake—well. that is already close by as the unquestionable personal pronoun, '1', at the end of the sentence. It flips the unconditional, performative declaration of divine being ('I am') into a mundane request for news about one's situation, and thus for defining one's finitude. Yet our redeeming orientation toward that end which is what we require of consciousness to barricade against darkness—ironically delivers a death sentence. It sentences us to be at home in the world; being in the world and not lurking outside it like a hungry ghost or 'stranger thing'. (${
m Although,}$ that exterior is not the realm of immortality but of inhumanity and madness, a nonplace for the unincorporated outsider who will not accept their death sentence.) It's in our nature—human nature'—to belong in, and to, the world by the weave of

the world's tightly knit, natural relations.

That expression of human nature ought to be a shameful piece of toilet graffiti in our evolution. but, instead, it is a polite turn of phrase that cultivates decorum, along with bipedality and the

training of the alimentary and reproductive canals.

Dirthmark, but also passport to our supposed commonwealth and

The Blackout Edward Colless

genealogical bounty

No matter how prodigal our expenditure of it, no matter what misadventures degrade this benefaction, human

nature ultimately returns its escapees or cunning exiles repentant to the doorstep. Obese or emaciated, ragged or decadent, we arrive as deportees, whimpering from exposure to the outside. All-too-human nature is our integral, undeniable identity and confinement.

It is an inalienable property, but like a bottle imp. It insists, as if due to some fabulous extradition order, on any errant explorer's or vagrant's forced repatriation to the species and to the family of man. Call it sanity, this exophobic and coercive respect for the innate and the habitat within habituation. A contract according to which we will arrive at our proper

place in a homecoming, an overcoming of diaspora, and a redemptive

restoration of birthright. The fanfare masks the difficult duties of rehab and the therapeutic recovery of what is natural to us but might have been guiltily disowned or

neglected: of what is customary, unexceptional, the normalisation of indigeneity or *ethnos* whether we want it or not. In an even more abrasive remedy, this is served as an antidote to miscegenation, xenogamy or a bloodline jeopardised by the extravagant caprices of cosmopol-

itan itinerancy. Surely we can somehow elude this patronising, God-awful forgiveness for our disobedience. Be done with the judgement of God. If we killed God why cannot

we dispatch his posterity and be done with the pieties of the 'natural'?

Call it 'Nexit'-–an exit from Nature.

It won't be easy, and it should not be confused with despoliation. The latter is like bed-wetting, or shitting in the nest. Both are forgivable. The nature that will not give up its custody of humans, that will force them back to their origin no matter how much they oppose it or dispose of it. a nature that expresses unconditional love. Don't take this **in any sentimental way.** Rather it is a will that is nothing other than the open possibility of substance, an affirmation that occurs with the enunciation of the world in an impersonal utterance of creation—fiat lux: 'let there be light'—but which is an unbearable gift to its creatures. Nature: God-given manure and primal pool of volcanic sludge, providential in scope from 'quantum foam'

And so escape velocity from Creation is almost incalculable.

to the Horseshoe Nebula.

In Middle Eastern myth, the name of Eden (from Sumerian and Semitic usage) denotes just such an inflationary affirmation of will, outpacing any diversion or seepage from it: the will of God as a qualitative state of superabundance or luxuriance that is ineluctable, englobing and gravitationally as well as governmentally stifling. To imagine something outside this horizon is a heresy against nature, a mad paradox because it will be 'un-willed' (pandemonium, and doom: a death without clerical preparation or legacy). The unnatural is an index of this mis-management, an enigmatic stain on a protective caul left over from coming to, and traumatic scarring closing against the chaotic stimulation of a storm beyond the skin.

> It's this outburst that God, in creating the world, turns his attention away from, disposing it as an ungodly residue, depravation

and toxic unnaturalness (manifest in the substance of Adam's apocryphal first partner, the exiled demonic Lilith, an anomalous so-called mistake of creation). The unnatural is residue discounted from that consecrated nature which God provides for his truly beloved creatures.

'Un-nature' is not a categorial opposition to nature (the simple antonym suggesting a treatable impurity or an unqualified otherness); it is not a logical operator but a slur and a condemnation. It designates an untreatable contamination. The skin around the gardenaround a providential nature—provides its creatures with their place: organs, egos, species within the matrix in which they properly belong, and in which an organ, an ego, a creature lives at home with itself in its natural function, even if that place is located at an intersection or as transit. The burning orifice of this skin shuts out redemption like the gateway of the Law in Kafka's parable. An unspoken but assumed prohibition earths the energy of creation, condensing it into organic form, turning aesthetics into a labour under the Law: nature is made by the laws of nature. This could well have been the rule written in fire over

the gates of Eden, as totalitarian and ominous as

Arbeit Macht Frei. What is not lawful nature is
anathema, an unnatural falseness. Everything true comes
from the Law, true art included, and the Law closes the door
until it redeems you, at the very end of everything.

Paradoxically, we are thrown out of Eden only to be herded through its annexation of outside as agricultural enclosure, zoo, field and farm. When expelled from the garden, Adam and Eve are not 'exposed', not locked outside the garden, but condemned inside its law wherever they go; they will only stand in the open, truly exposed and naked to the storm, as outlaws—lawless and stateless—at the very end of time, when they give up and give in to the Law, when the work of life finally makes them free, forgives them, when the Law appears to take them back like lost sheep, even if it has always secretly been herding them to their death.

We seem to be closing in on that

fate. The romantic sensibility might have teetered in awe at the brink of nature's abyssal or cosmic forces, while also being able to comfortably command it as pictureseque scenery. Modern science measured its vast geological, astronomical and evolutionary scale (way beyond the span of single human lifetimes), converting that immensity and intricacy into facetted abstractions and visual mathematics, and prising open vertiginous psychological, genetic, nano and quantum dimensions. Postmodernists could fantasise supplanting it with simulacra, cybernetic replicants and avatars. Now we have observed gravity waves and heard neutron stars colliding from an almost unimaginable past and titanic distance, but as we reach a spike in our current geological age dubbed the Anthropocene we also gaze at what's left of nature at hand, around us on the planet, at its skeletal, museumised antiquities; we gaze at it like the grand tourists of the 18th century poised on a hill above the ruins of ancient Rome. **We intone our respect in**

elegiac reverence, yet jealously haggle over souvenir relics: charred, encrusted fossils littering a cooked biosphere.

In the thrall of darker tourism we become anxiously curious. fascinated or horrified by nature returning strange: seeping from beneath radioactive tombs or spilling from brutalist bunkers housing black-site genetics research labs: nature resurrected and crawling in mutant steps from the sewer or the charnel ground of the earth like a zombie. It's so hot in here ... what are they trying to hatch?

Philosphers have hitherto sought to interpret

the world, announced
Marx in his *Theses on Feuerbach*; but with a
famous rhetorical flourish
that ignited an epoch of
rebelliously industrious
activism, he added, 'the
point is to change it'.

What better tribute by which

to celebrate and diagnose the irremediable accomplishments of the Anthropocene?

Indeed, over the past decades, dazzlingly irradiated and artfully toxic accelerants have been injected into this program for transfiguration of the world. **Picture an**

audacious Promethean gymnastic economy incandescing with pyretic performance enhancement drugs.

In this hothouse of exotic becoming, global corporate speculation in eugenically creative evolution, AI singularity and climatic terraforming

are being exercised alongside a localised, garrulous regimen and artistic posturing of identity politics that bloom in convolutions of human nature through ramified sexual, gender, neurological, genealogical and even epidemiological itineraries. Despite the variations in scale of assets and capital outlay across this cyclonic gym, are these actors not actually all in step, if competitively, to the same workout? Try to keep pace with the ubiquitous elaboration, as well as triumphalist celebration, of unbounded, voluntaristic, fluid identities and bio- or neuro- or xeno-diverse options that surge liberally across social media platforms, in cultural studies curricula and in the window displays of fitness clubs and wellness clinics. Does not this relentless upgrading of human nature suspiciously suggest ratification of a radically renovated, universal (although by no means egalitarian) and fantastic activism of consumer choice? Ironically, the spectre of consumerism haunts the polemical inflation of post-humanist identity politics. It's the phantom of liberty: a promotional campaign in synchrony, and perhaps even in harmony, with the neoliberal phantasm of a 'free' market.

Who will be able to adapt to and survive the imminent global warming surge? Not that 'human flow' (adopting Ai Weiwei's callously apolitical and unintelligent metaphor) of

climate refugees migrating from escalating desertification and from the hot zones; an exodus that will inevitably be stalled and coralled in *barrios*, mass holding pens and concentration camps on the outskirts of fortress states which are themselves doomed to wither under siege.

(Picture the island of Tasmania, having seceded from the failing Australian federation, sending the boats back across Bass Strait to an atrophied Victorian coastline.) No. those who outlive the catastrophe will be those who can afford a regime of non-human 'becoming', and so escape the regulation of human 'being': the global billionaires occupying the top one per cent of the world's economy, who can finance and enjoy the gene therapy, the plastic and cyborgian surgery, organ harvesting and vivisection that will allow them, in repurposed and refitted bodies, to relax in the playgrounds of the vitrified beaches on new continental shorelines. The best option for any remaining humans, inheriting natural physiology with its increasing retinal impairment and oncogenic skin blistering under ozonedepleted atmosphere, will be to retreat deep underground—perhaps like H.G. Wells's barbarous Morlocks—there to dig beneath the encapsulated, air-conditioned enclaves and swarm out of drainpipes at night (or in whatever equivalent period of reduced toxicity there might be), hunting for post-human prey, or at least for their scraps.

There are no longer any convincing or authentic fables about human survival that play out a contrite, prudent or stoic, let alone rapturous, return to nature: whether to a

tenacious vestige of Walden Pond, or to the revolutionary idyll of a beach beneath the paving stones, or to the libidinal mirage of a neo-pagan grove. (This, despite arcadian sci-fi planets populated with kitschy, langorous green or blue eco-warrior forest nymphs, air-dropped from fashion runways and caricaturing earthly 'first nation' inhabitants

7

the world: the point is to destroy it. Returning to a nature that cannot tolerate humans is, like a naturist shedding clothes to worship the sun, a fatal but alluring strategy: the nudist motto 'as nature intended' now connotes

extinction. Blackout.

For a species, extinction occurs when its final living individual member dies. Extinctions are not rare, but they are each a once-only event. And, due to the obscurity of this last unrepeatable instance of death, the moment of extinction is procedurally determined in retrospect only when—no matter how predictable this event may have been—a particular mode of life is beyond any possible salvation.

This certainty of an extinction event is measured in a fossilised or memorialised afterlife, in which—no matter how recent its extinction—a species is consigned to archaic extremity. However, while there will be no exceptions to the rule of extinction, the finality of its

exceptions to the rule of extinction, the finality of its annihilating moment is unquestionably exceptional: exclusive, inimitable, and hence secretive. Horrific or

banal, the event of extinction is utter in its uniqueness. Extinction is Mallarmé's shipwreck upon which a captain or master, about to be engulfed by the whirlpool and drowned, will throw the dice held in his fist for an outcome that must be like no other.

From the dazzling storm of extinction's secret uniqueness comes a siren's song of doom.

John Warwicker Borei IV, 2017 Photographs Courtesy of the artist

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'This one the mummy Ngayurnangalku (cannibal), big mummy, and all those little babies [are] his. All the man, women's, little kids, they all stopping there. That's his [their] Country, Kumpupirntily (Lake Disappointment). You can see the big hole there [points to central circular forms], this one the Ngayurnangalku camp, they all there. They got plenty jara (shields), yirrkili (boomerangs), they property for the Ngayurnangalku, they maparn (holding power for sorcery).

They hit you and kill you. He got to feed.

Ngayurnangalku still there [in Kumpupirntily]. No people gotta go come to this place. If they go there it's one way! There's a cannibal there. Don't come to this place—you might get killed!

They gonna eat you for lunch! Don't go, keep away!'

Yunkurra Billy Atkins

Yunkurra Billy Atkins

Kumpupirntily (Lake Disappointment), 2017

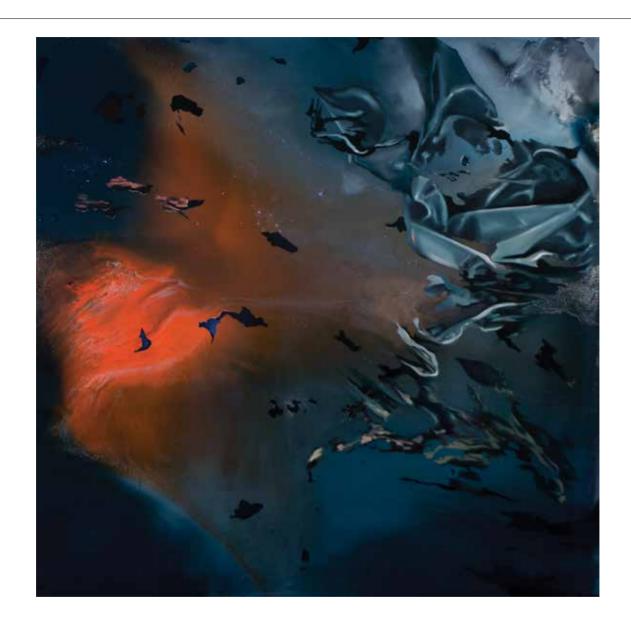
Gouache on Arches paper

120 x 156 cm

Image and story courtesy of Yunkurra Billy Atkins and Martumili Artists.

This artwork was a finalist in the 2017 Telstra NATSIAA awards.

This painting depicts Yunkurra's Country: Kumpupirntily (Lake Disappointment) in the Canning Stock Route area. This large warla (salt lake) is one of the most sacred and dangerous sites in the far Western Desert. This is where the Ngayurnangalku (cannibal beings) live beneath the lake, surfacing only to feed on human flesh.



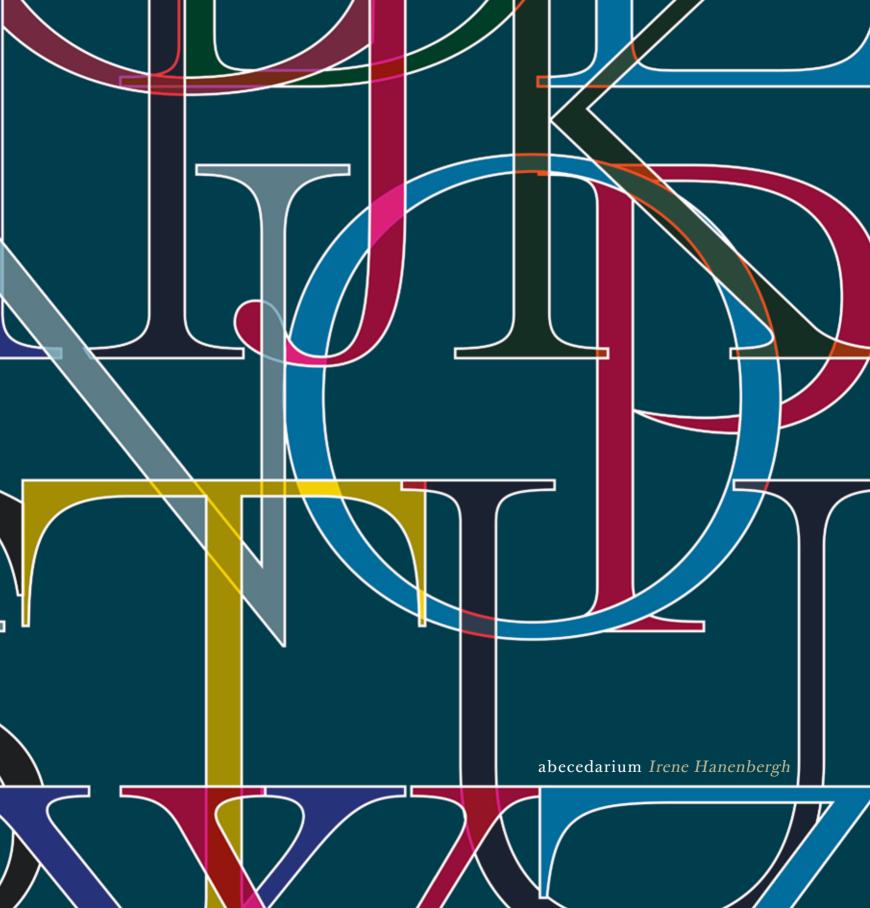
Megan Walch
Eschatalogue II, 2016
Oil and enamel on composite panel
150 x 150 cm
Courtesy of the artist and the Artemisia Collection
Photograph: Megan Walch

abecedrama

In a tradition going back to its late Latin source, an abecedarium is an educational book used to introduce the alphabet to children. Each word becomes a wittily embroidered embellishment of the isolated, incandescent single letter that heralds it. There is no natural necessity to putting 'a before b', yet there is an inflexible stipulation to do so. The abecedarium teaches precisely the unnaturalrequirement for that rule, initiating the child into the obedient inscription of language, and into the class of scribes and clerks and prophets and secretaries and police and inquisitors who notate the utterances of everyone from a god to a confused mortal in hospital triage, from a king or pharaoh to a peasant or serf, from an angel to a condemned criminal about to be hanged. The discipline of the abecedarium is the very fabric of knowledge,

of revelation and exegesis, and so it is threaded into the fabric of power. An alphabetical sequence permits systematic cataloguing and processing of information for specific tasks. Learning from its examples provides entry into the logic circuits and the command of economy and law. But, ironically, the abecedarium also diverts attention from a disciplined, and rote, purchase on the alphabetical system. Each initial letter becomes an intensive moment for fascination: singular, despite its instructive reiteration; and fantastic, as a graphic expression, despite its regulation. Caution is advised when handling an abecedarium, for it seduces with the prospect of a secret knowledge and secret power. Lurking, jumbled, within its didactic narrative is the sorcerer's mantra for releasing hidden magic: abracadabra.





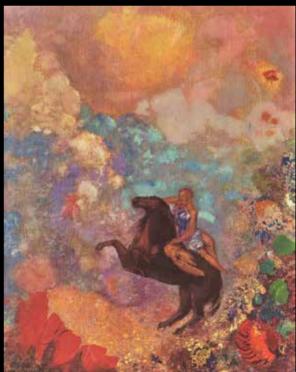


Ante Chamber









- Adrienne Gaha, *Study of Cupid and Psyche (after Bouguereau)*, 2013, oil on linen, 153 x 117 cm Courtesy of the artist and Dominik Mersch Gallery, Sydney
- Ewoud van Rijn, Rag A, 2012, litho on paper, 32.5 x 25 cm. Courtesy of the artist
- 3 Kate Rhode, *The Big Chill*, 2003, mixed media, approx. 240 x 300 x 300 cm Courtesy of the artist
- Odilon Redon, *Muse on Pegasus*, 1900, oil on canvas, 73 × 54 cm

B

Barbados







Alex Pittendrigh, *Gold's Dozen*, 2017, oyster shells, porcelain, silicone, gesso, synthetic polymer paint, linen, ceramic kiln cone and ceramic tile, 21 x 20 x 20 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne. Photograph: Ruben Bull-Milne Janet Beckhouse, *Two Brothers*, 2011, stoneware and glaze, 59 x 40 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Odilon Redon, *Le Cyclope*, c. 1914, oil on cardboard mounted on panel. Courtesy of the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands



haines + hinterdind's

dealody



What happens when the earth is no longer trustworthy? when the very ground we stand on transforms into a living being? In Canterbury, New Zealand, in September 2010, the earth gave one of its necessary shudders. Solid became liquid, known environments mutated and a syntax of rupture emerged. The quake caused wide-spread damage and set off a sequence of more than 20,000 aftershocks, including one in February 2011 that resulted in the deaths of 185 people.¹ Amid the early sequence of aftershocks, Australian artists David Haines and Joyce Hinterding visited the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū and collected electromagnetic field recordings from inside the gallery. As the earth settled into patterns of movement, Haines & Hinterding tracked bodies and energies in space.

Earthquakes are natural circuits of energy release, understood through 'body energies', where residual energy becomes an affective way of knowing a place.² The experience of an earthquake is often recollected through its sound. In describing the Calabria earthquake of 1638, Athanasius Kircher recalled: 'a certain subterranean lowing, if you will, which we were reckoning to be the cracking of the earth and which seemed to conspire with the odor of sulfur ... But soon enough came a subterranean racket and din, similar to chariots driven at top speed.'³ The earth 'leapt up from below with so forceful a motion that I, no longer able to stand on my feet, was laid low, suddenly dashed down with face flat on the ground'.⁴ Movement—flattening—comes after sound, and the planet resets.

In the interactive installation *Geology* (2015), the artists use the gathered field recordings to offer sublime immersion in a dynamic earth, formed by relations between humans, our living systems and the planet. *Geology* helps us think about the strange dynamics that for Kircher demonstrated 'the whole Earth is not solid but everywhere gaping, and hollowed with empty rooms and spaces and hidden burrows'. Geology is at once a destabilising experience and a meditative flight through the earthworks of geological time. It operates in layers, strata of experience that both mimic and undermine the way we know the earth. It is never clear if we are travelling through a geological future past or a past future about to come.

Underground

In his 1968 essay 'A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects', Robert Smithson describes the 'abstract geologies' that make up the constant movements and erosion of both the human mind and the earth: 'Brain waves undermine cliffs of thought, ideas decompose into stones of unknowing, and conceptual crystallizations break apart into deposits of gritty reason'. Smithson, too, is interested in engaging new ways of knowing the earth. He locates, amid various states of erosion, a series of earth projects that focus on an aesthetics of underground:

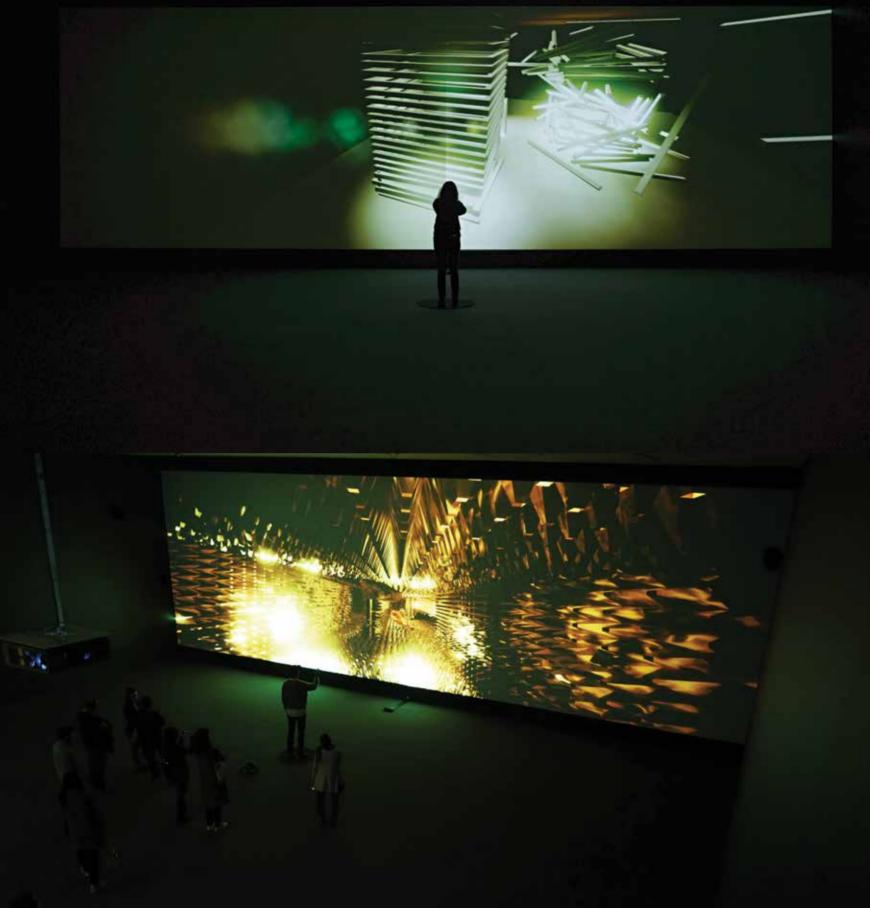
[T]his slow flowage makes one conscious of the turbidity of thinking. Slump, debris slides, avalanches all take place within the cracking limits of the brain. The entire body is pulled into the cerebral sediment, where particles and fragments make themselves known as solid consciousness. A bleached and fractured world surrounds the artist. To organize this mess of corrosion into patterns, grids, and subdivisions is an esthetic process that has scarcely been touched.⁷

David Haines and Joyce Hinterding

Geology, 2015

Real-time 3D environment, 2 x HD projections, game engine, motion sensor, spatial 3D audio Commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia, supported by Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Courtesy of the artists



Smithson does not distinguish between organic and inorganic; instead his geo-aesthetic practice understands the machines of earth and geology as matter to think with. In Smithson's world, the materiality of both technology and the earth are the tools of the artist's studio: 'the tools of technology become a part of the Earth's geology as they sink back into their original state'. Counter to nature, earth projects mark a site of excavation, a source of minerals and a duration with limits. Smithson returns the artist to geology that is understood as organic relationships of sedimentation and disruption.

First laver (earth)

In a Microsoft Kinect space, delineated by geometry and motion, our body hits the screen and we are in. This is a one-to-one spherical world of information: a machine world built in an Unreal engine, with the user-as-interface. 'You are the controller.'9 The natural user interface of Kinect isolates the human body by breaking it down to a limited number of flexible joints and watching it continuously at 30 frames per second. We become known through angle and movement. Standing in front of Kinect is not a body, but 20 3D data points. This is an encounter with code that extends our bodily action. Or, as Donna Haraway asks: 'Why should our bodies end at the skin?' We fly, we get trapped against the sky and we drift down to the surface of screen-earth, but we never touch it.

Earthquakes present a confusion of strata. Things that are meant to be underground suddenly thrust up and become visible. In the interactive world of *Geology*, dimensionality and duration are added to sedimentation and disruption. We find new ways to conduct ourselves in this strange world, which is the earth as it always has been: an earth project that does not distinguish matter from media.

Earth project I

It wasn't until 1659 that Danish scholar Nicolas Steno questioned the received scientific wisdom that fossils grew in the ground." Once fossils were classified organic—relics of animals not rocks—it was soon realised they signalled that large animals, bigger than could ever be imagined, had roamed this same planet, perhaps made love in these same fields. Steno's thought led to rocks being classified separately to animals—and the invention of the children's game Animal, Mineral, Vegetable. His was a different kind of earth project: in observing a sacred theory of the earth he laid the foundation for a new discipline called 'geology'. With this, the structure and history of the earth begin to be understood as a sequence of layers and transformations. In Steno's earth project, rock strata could tell stories of great floods and the history of the planet.

And yet, farther south in Rome, Gian Lorenzo Bernini had just finished turning marble into living and ecstatic flesh. His earth project extracted marble from its geographical site and transformed it into bodies. Bernini's *Fountain of the Four Rivers* (1651), in Rome's Piazza Navona, probably riffs on Kircher's *Mundus Subterraneus* (1665), which mapped the interior structure of the earth. (One of Kircher's notoriously faulty translations of the hieroglyphs is on the obelisk at the centre of Bernini's statue.) Kircher described the earth's underground rivers as a hydraulic system that drained through tunnels and returned water to the tops of mountains. Bernini's fountain moves when the earth moves. In both, geology is organic nature.

In the work *Geology*, previously unseen and unheard relations of movement and time are established through provisional containment that leaks energy and space. In earlier collaborative works, Haines & Hinterding challenged magnitude through scale and matter. The responsive video installation *Purple Rain* (2004), for example, witnessed a mountain range disturbed by electromagnetic frequencies, and *Earth Star* (2008) made the sun knowable through live VLF (very low frequency) sonification and the creation of ozone fragrances. In these works, the absent boundaries of matter force viewers to enter into new relations of scale: the sun can be held up close, nearly grasped; a pile of liquefaction is a volcano; and a piece of coal crackles like Mount Fuji (that's another story). *Geology* continues these observations, challenging at its core any fixed understanding of materiality and reminding us that all planetary matter, all geology, requires activation.

Earth project II

Repetition: What happens when the earth is no longer trustworthy? when the very ground we stand on transforms into a living being? What happens when humans are a geological force? For Haines & Hinterding living amid the media geologies of the Anthropocene is just the beginning. In this space, delineated by virtual geographies, there is no scale to the earth. The cliff faces echo something volcanic, but it is hard to get close enough to sample. This world-building is perfectly natural. As if we are inhabiting the drawings that map the underground worlds explored by Kircher, we sense the humming energy of the rocks. Smithson says, 'In order to read the rocks we must become conscious of geologic time, and of the layers of prehistoric material that is entombed in the Earth's crust.' *Geology* entices us to use our bodies to navigate this world of ecomedia made both familiar and abstract.

In Christchurch, five years after the quake and thinking about Geology, I wrote:

Standing in the cavernous gallery, our body hits the screen and we are in. Flying. Charting our direction with superman arms. Hovering over brown mountains, neither Mars nor Tiritiri-o-te-moana. The land does not fracture, and despite repeated attempts we never touch down. Someone gets stuck at the top, spinning against the edge of the sun, the attendant advises they stroke their way down. On the surface of the land small spaces of light and water glisten. And in the sky a flock of small cubes begin to migrate, clustering in valleys.

Now I am not sure if the words are mine. This multiplication of the viewer and the uncertainty of who is flying and who is watching is the shock of *Geology*. If the Anthropocene is best defined as 'a new stage of geology in which humans are included',¹⁴ then this is it. We are here. We have already become more than a species; we have become a geological record. And even more: our environments are media and our media are environments. Like the fish who have transformed their metabolism to consume plastic, we have become part of the environment and it has become part of us. Thinking within *Geology* is not just about geology; it is about how we perceive through layers of bodies.

Second layer (satellite)

And then suddenly I am sucked through the surface of a cube. It is bigger on the inside than the outside. A survey ship? In its cargo hold geological specimens float, their scale overwhelming the logic of their suspension. Carefully preserved rocks sit in a hive of individual compartments. It may also be a laboratory or an alien boat—aliens being people whose boats have never been allowed to touch earth. I push my body hard against the rocks and feel the scratch of their surface against my skin. I search for fissures, small breaks in their surface that might let me take hold.

Kircher offered descriptions of a 'lapidifying juice (*succus lapidescens*) diffused through the geocosm and [that] enabled stony matter to grow in a multitude of forms'. On this life raft, worlds are being built from stony matter. Smithson whispers in my ear:

[N]o materials are solid, they all contain caverns and fissures ... By 'refusing technological miracles' the artist begins to know the corroded moments, the carboniferous states of thought, the shrinkage of mental mud, in the geological chaos.¹⁶

What kind of imaginary is this? Alongside these fragments of earth geology, I am floating in a virtual space. And again, I sense the humming energy of the rocks.

Third layer (humanity)

There is a third layer to the work: a third world hovering above its antipodes. It seems to be an unstable world of timber, shaken and fractured. I suddenly inhabit the perspective of the rock. No longer a human-sized body, I watch as I slam myself against the edges. I rain down on the timber; the geometries resist and shatter. I am inside and back out again. The energy folds and creases across the land, and we float amid a beautiful collapse. All geology, all matter, requires witnessing of some kind.

Describing a future found on the Orkney Islands, Laura Watts imagines a data future built from the telecommunications industry of a Neolithic village. She steps carefully between the relics of 5000 years of technology littering the grass and watches as huge cables snake across the ocean floor.¹⁷ I remember reading her essay with a sense of joy: 'it is possible'—another relation between humans, media technologies and geology has already been imagined. The recordings captured by Haines & Hinterding come from a time in which we cannot live: the birth of a supernova and the peppering of the universe with new matter. Unbelievable to many, but possible for us to imagine.

Project earth

Body energies flow across and through the screen. When he finally reached the lip of Vesuvius, Kircher looked down into the crater. 'I thought I beheld the habitation of Hell', he wrote, 'wherein nothing seemed to be much wanting besides the horrid fantasms and apparitions of Devils'. He heard 'horrible bellowings and roarings' and there was 'an unexpressible [sic] stink'. The smoke and fire and stench 'continually belch'd forth out of Eleven several places; and made me in like manner, ever and anon, belch, and as it were, vomit back again, at it.'18 It took more than 100 years for Georges Cuvier to confirm the work of Steno and to confine Kircher's fantastical bodily understandings of the earth to the work of a man ruled by passions rather than facts. Cuvier wrote: 'All of these facts, consistent among themselves, and not opposed by any report, seem to me to prove the existence of a world previous to ours, destroyed by some kind of catastrophe'.'9 Haines & Hinterding's *Geology* returns us to Kircher's world of belching apparitions via an earth project in which a moving body, formed in relation to an all-seeing machine and wracked by nausea, meets the final catastrophe of the world. In this place, humans *are* a geological force.

David Haines and Joyce Hinterding

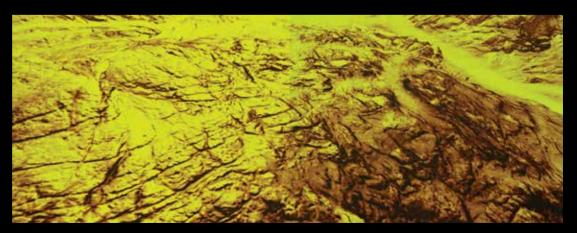
Geology, 2015

Real-time 3D environment, 2 x HD projections, game engine, motion sensor, spatial 3D audio

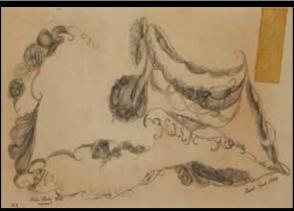
Commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia, supported by Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Courtesy of the artists

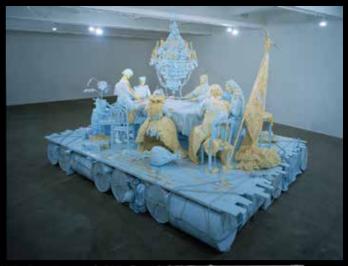
- For a full real-time record of the earthquake and the subsequent aftershocks see christchurchquakemap.co.nz, maintained by Paul Nicholls, which uses a Google Maps API to plot earthquake data from GeoNet, geonet.org.nz; accessed 15 February 2018 (20,074 quakes).
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- Athanasius Kircher, cited in John Glassie, 'Athanasius, Underground', *The Public Domain Review*, November 2012, publicdomainreview.org/2012/11/01/athanasius-underground; accessed 5 February 2018. See also John Glassie, *A Man of Misconceptions: The Life of an Eccentric in an Age of Change*, Riverhead Books, Penguin, London and New York, 2012. A contemporaneous English version of selections from Kircher's text is available at *The Vulcano's or, Burning and Fire-vomiting Mountains Famous in the World with Their Remarkables. Collected for the Most Part out of Kircher's Subterraneous World; and Expos'd to More General View in English, Upon the Relation of the Late Wonderful and Prodigious Eruptions of Ætna*, John Allen, London, 1669; digitised and available via the Internet Archive from the collection of Ghent University at archive.org/details/vulcanosorburni00unkngoog; accessed 5 February 2018.
- 4 Kircher cited in Glassie, 'Athanasius, Underground'.
- 5 Kircher cited in Glassie, 'Athanasius, Underground'.
- Robert Smithson, 'A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects', first published in Artforum, September 1968, reprinted in Nancy Holt (ed.), The Writings of Robert Smithson, New York, 1979, p. 82.
- 7 Smithson, p. 82.
- 8 Smithson, p. 85.
- 9 Microsoft, Kinect advertising campaign, 2010. See news.microsoft.com/2010/10/21/kinect-ads-you-are-the-controller; accessed 5 February 2018
- Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature. Routledge, New York and London, 1991, p. 178.
- See Jane Davidson, 'Fish Tales: Attributing the First Illustration of a Fossil Shark's Tooth to Richard Verstegan (1605) and Nicolas Steno (1667)', Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, vol. 150, no. 14, April 2000, pp. 329–44.
- 12 Smithson, p. 89.
- This section draws on a co-authored discussion of this work in Susan Ballard, Tracey Benson, Robert Carter, Tim Corballis, Zita Joyce, Helen Moore, Julian Priest and Vicki Smith, A Transitional Imaginary: Space, Network, and Memory in Christchurch, Harvest Press, Christchurch, 2015.
- McKenzie Wark, 'From OOO to P(OO)', Public Seminar, December 2015, publicseminar.org/2015/12/from-ooo-to-poo; accessed 5 February 2018.
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- 16 Smithson, p. 87.
- Laura Watts, 'Sand14: Reconstructing the Future of the Mobile Telecoms Industry', The Fibreculture Journal, no. 20, 2012, twenty.fibreculturejournal.org/2012/06/19/fcj-139-sand14-reconstructing-the-future-of-the-mobile-telecoms-industry; accessed 5 February 2018.
- ¹⁸ Kircher, in Allen, p. 35.
- Martin J.S. Rudwick, Georges Cuvier, Fossil Bones, and Geological Catastrophes: New Translations and Interpretations of the Primary Texts, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2008, p. 24, translated from 'Espèces des elephants', 1796.

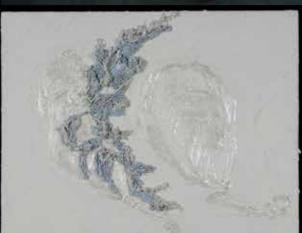


Calypso









- Helen Butler Wells, *Spirit Drawing #91*, 1927, pencil on paper, 21 x 30.5 cm Courtesy of the artist and Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, and Jurate Veceraite
- Folkert de Jong, *Medusa's First Move: The Council*, 2005, styrofoam, polyurethane foam, liquid plastic, pigment, 488 x 366 x 350 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Chadha Art Collection, Amsterdam
- Alex Pittendrigh, *La Peste 1*, 2008, Blu Tac, White Tac, gesso, synthetic polymer paint, pumice gel on wood panel, 30 x 22 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne. Photograph: John Brash
- 4 Alex Pittendrigh, *La Peste 8*, 2008, Blu Tac, White Tac, gesso, synthetic polymer paint, pumice gel on wood panel, 30 x 22 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne. Photograph: John Brash

Ι :

Duchess
Dandelion)







Folkert de Jong, *North meets East*, 2016, bronze, gold leaf, 80 x 30 x 30 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Fons Welters, Amsterdam. Photograph: Gert Jan van Rooij

Folkert de Jong, *La Belle Hollandaise*, 2011, pigmented polyurethane, styrofoam, wood, 80 x 90 x 170 cm. Courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Aatjan Renders

Henry Fuseli, *The Shepherd's Dream, from 'Paradise Lost'*, 1793, oil on canvas, 154.3 x 215.3 cm © Tate, London. Courtesy of Tate, London





What is nature? At first pass, most of us would say 'the living world'—and by living we mean the organic world. But we now understand that even the seemingly inorganic aspects of our planet are deeply intertwined with organic processes (the red chert rock outcrops near my home in San Francisco are the fossilised remains of billions of dead radiolaria once deposited on the ocean floor). James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis proposed that the entire planet is a self-regulating, organic whole. From this perspective, nature extends to the edge of the vacuum of space. There lies the current known limit of living processes. But the scientific consensus is that it doesn't end there. Following the Copernican Principle, if life has arisen on earth it must be widely distributed throughout the universe. Life is increasingly seen to be an inherent and emergent property of the complexity of the universe's fundamental structure.

If life is an aspect of the emergent complexity of the universe, then our definition of nature must include the moon, sun, galaxy and universe, all the way up from the quantum fields that are at the core of matter and energy. More than a century of sci-fi speculation, compounded by images from the Hubble Space Telescope and the awesome CGI effects of movies such as *Interstellar*, *Gravity* and *The Martian*, has generated a new 'cosmic sublime'. We can imagine ourselves occupying the hostile but magnificent expanded field of the cosmos. As well, astrophysics has brought us an extraordinary vision of the fabric and history of the universe. So, does nature now extend to the edge of the observable universe? If nature is everything that exists, can there be such a thing as the 'unnatural'?

The commonplace assumption is that nature is the world beyond human culture. The natural is 'that stuff out there' that takes its course without human intervention. Or, more precisely, our intervention is what defines the unnatural. I argue, however, for the opposite viewpoint. Nature ought to be defined as that part of the universe that we engage with and work to comprehend. Anything beyond that is incomprehensible: beyond nature and thus unnatural. Following this definition, it is through our unending curiosity and direct engagement with the universe that we extend the scope of what, for us, is nature.

Historically, our unending curiosity has manifested as insatiable human exploration and discovery. The last continent on earth to experience our drive to understand was Antarctica and it's still a huge challenge to engage with the place. Antarctica is the driest, coldest and least-habitable continent on the planet. It's the terrestrial environment most inimical to life. The physical environment is a near equivalent to that of other planets, and it has been used as a stand-in for the frozen, dry surface of Mars. Humans have only occupied it on an ongoing basis in the last 60 years, and only at great energy and material cost. It consistently rebuffs our efforts to engage with and comprehend it, and so lies at the 'unnatural' end of our experiential spectrum. But strangely enough, the Antarctic is currently at the epicentre of our understanding of the life of our planet and the origins and structure of the universe around us.

Both the Arctic and the Antarctic have been compared to blank pages. Author Jack London described the Arctic as a 'large sheet of foolscap';' and Stephen J. Pyne, in his poetic analysis of Antarctica, postulated:

Antarctica is the earth's great sink, not only for water and heat but for information ... The extraordinary isolation of Antarctica is not merely geophysical but metaphysical. Cultural understanding and assimilation demand more than the power to overcome the energy gradient that surrounds The Ice: they demand the capacity and desire to overcome the information gradient.²

Here, Pyne describes two separate gradients that run in parallel. As the pole is approached the physical landscape becomes increasingly isotropic and featureless (the information gradient approaches zero), so the scope increases for the human imagination to write its own meanings into the landscape. The lack of physical reference for gaining our bearings unmoors us from the real world, and we float into the worlds of metaphor and imagination. It is an attractive place for artists!

The tendency for energy and information to approach zero at the South Pole is also what attracts scientists to it. The primary science conducted there concerns atmospheric analysis, glaciology and astrophysics. All rely on the pristine conditions, the clean air and the relative absence of humans and their technology. In the case of astrophysics, the 3000-metre altitude, the dryness of the air, the six-month-long night-time, access to the southern skies, and the lack of polluting light, heat and other electromagnetic interference are unmatched on earth.

Contemporary artists are drawn to the isolation, inhospitality and otherworldliness of the Antarctic to better comprehend our planet, cosmos and our inner worlds. Australian artist Stephen Eastaugh has visited Antarctica nine times, and in 2009 he became one of only a handful of artists to have wintered over in Antarctica, as an Australian Antarctic Arts Fellow. He balanced the 'obvious thrill of collecting and translating visual data into art' with the internal challenge of negotiating the 'tricky terrain of coping with isolation'. Eastaugh says:

I call myself a landscape painter, and this is true because I am busy feeding off various terrains, but sometimes my gaze is directed inwards to the mindscape where I indulge in the exhausting business of being human.⁴

He describes his time at Australia's Mawson Station as 'an outlandish, space station-like existence where blizzards howl as the sun spits solar magnetic plasma flares at our upper atmosphere, forming dazzling, dancing aurora australis lightshows.' In his paintings, Eastaugh uses stitching to connote the vibrant energetic particles shimmering in the aurora and as a contemplative gesture to humanise the hostile landscape.

Lita Albuquerque, the pioneering American land artist, created the first large-scale ephemeral installation on the polar continent in 2006. *Stellar Axis* consisted of 99 fabricated fibreglass spheres coloured in her signature cobalt blue, anchored into the McMurdo Ice Shelf on the edge of the continent. The spheres were arrayed and sized to correspond with the arrangement of the 99 brightest stars in the southern sky as they would be seen without the perpetual sunshine of the Antarctic summer. Albuquerque drew the celestial sphere down to the terrestrial one. By transcribing the heavens onto the blank page of the ice shelf, Albuquerque drew attention to the physical location of the South Polar region on the earth's axis of rotation and emphasised Antarctica's direct connection with outer space—both the otherworldly, hostile environment of Antarctica and the predominance of astrophysical science conducted there. *Stellar Axis* operates as a model or an instrument to actualise our location in the cosmos. For Albuquerque, this was as close as a land artist could get to working on alien soil.

My research took me to Antarctica in the austral summer of 2016–17, on a US National Science Foundation Artists and Writers Fellowship. I was hosted by the IceCube Neutrino Observatory, located at the South Pole, which is working at the bleeding edge of our ability to perceive subtle energies. IceCube looks for neutrinos. Created in the sun and in distant high energy cosmic events, neutrinos are the most common subatomic particle in the universe. However, they are incredibly difficult to detect as they hardly interact with other matter—they must physically collide with another subatomic particle to have any effect on it. They have been called



Stephen Eastaugh

Outlandish—Aurora over Sea Ice (Mawson Station Antarctica), 2009

40 x 40 cm

Acrylic, cotton thread, Belgian linen

Courtesy of the artist

'ghost particles' because of their elusive nature. The only way they can be identified is with an immense detector, so large that these exceedingly rare interactions will happen often enough for us to be able to record them. This is where the South Polar ice cap comes in.

The IceCube Neutrino array occupies a cubic kilometre of ice and is buried 1.5 km deep under the South Pole. This huge volume of ice (1 million cubic metres) captures several hundred neutrino interactions every day. The array consists of over 5000 basketball-sized, photo-sensitive Digital Optical Modules (DOMs) arrayed on 86 vertical 'strings' that have been drilled into the ice. Each DOM can detect a single photon of light. A neutrino hitting a hydrogen or oxygen nucleus generates a tiny blue flash of Cherenkov radiation, which is then picked up by the DOMs. The genius of IceCube is that its DOMs actually face down, not up, relying on the fact that, if any particle manages to get through the earth it must be a neutrino—anything else would have been absorbed along the way. The observatory is a gigantic neutrino telescope that uses a cubic kilometre of ice as its lens and the entire planet as a filter to detect something that is almost imperceptible.

My goal was to deploy my own series of sculptural instruments and to work directly with the IceCube scientists to develop a deeper understanding of the flux of energies flowing through the South Pole and to get a clearer view of the varying approaches of science and art in comprehending and defining nature.

My Instrument (90°S) was positioned on the ice surface, above the heart of IceCube lying far underground. It is a hybrid object: a polar marker, an artefact of my expedition, an instrument (both musical and scientific) and, ultimately, a sculptural work. It was specifically designed and constructed for the challenging conditions of the South Pole. It can be tuned, and it responds in different ways to differing levels of input. The instrument transduces the flow between air-pressure differentials (wind) through harmonic vibration into sound,7 which can be experienced directly and recorded as data for future research. Using my instrument on the ice's surface inspired me to use sound to experience the neutrino interactions deep within the ice. In creating the video work Axis Mundi, I converted the electronic data from photons, created by neutrino and muon interactions deep in the ice, into sound. IceCube scientists create colourful 2D visual simulations from their data to get an overview of the passage of neutrinos and muons through the ice. In Axis Mundi this same data set was analysed and rendered as a work for piano: each detector string was mapped onto a piano string and audible glissandos indicate particle movements through the ice. These two works capture the transient motions of our atmosphere and the passage of subatomic particles through our planet, and provide a means for us to physically engage with these subtle energies.

Artists and scientists working in Antarctica have scaled Pyne's 'information gradient' in their search for the limits of the natural. By approaching the energetic and informational sink of the Pole, scientists can discern the subtlest of cosmic signals and artists can look both inwards and outwards to connect human experience to the larger cosmos. Both are working to engage the 'cosmic sublime' and extend the scope of the natural.

- Jack London, 'An Odyssey of the North', Atlantic Monthly, January 1900, p. 87.
- Stephen J. Pyne, The Ice: A Journey to Antarctica, Arlington Books, London, 1987, p. 6.
- Stephen Eastaugh, 'A.I.R on Ice', Art Monthly Australia, no. 220, June 2009, p. 49.
- 4 Lucinda Schmidt, 'Everysomewherever: Nomadic Artist Stephen Eastaugh's Unstill Life Is the Inspiration for His Paintings', Mercedes Magazine, Autumn 2008, p. 17, stepheneastaugh.com.au/baggage-2008-Everysomewherever.pdf; accessed 2 January 2017.
- ⁵ Eastaugh, p. 50.
- 6 Albuquerque intended to replicate this at the North Pole.
- 7 Gwenhaël de Wasseige and Martin Rongen, two IceCube scientists with me at the Pole, have generously collaborated on this project.

I 2

6

Entre







Glenn Brown, *Let's Make Love and Listen to Death from Above*, 2017, oil on panel, 237.2 x 198.3 x 6 cm. © Glenn Brown. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian Photograph: Mike Bruce

Ewoud van Rijn, Rag Euro, 2012, ink on paper, 175 x 120 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Andreas Dobler, *Under Fire*, 2010, ink on paper, 170 x 130 cm. Courtesy of the artist





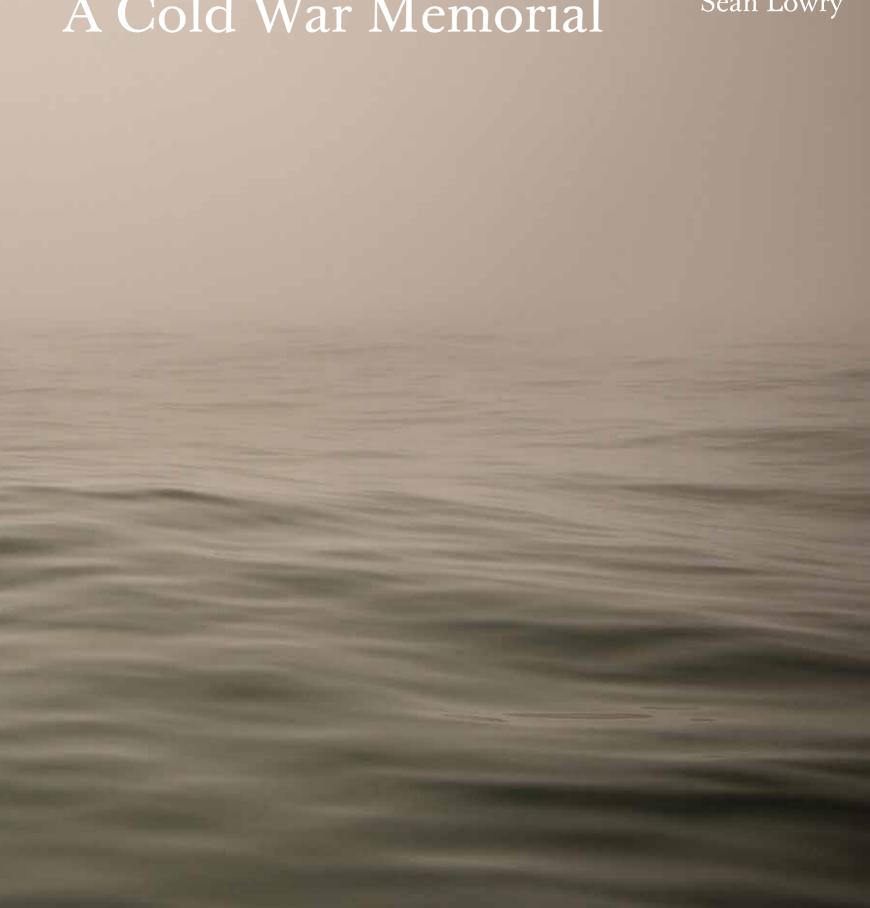




- Femmy Otten, *The Discomfort of Reason*, 2016, oil on Australian burl wood, 13.5 x 17 x 3.5 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Fons Welters, Amsterdam. Photograph: Gert Jan van Rooij
- 2 Karen Kilimnik, the castle great staircase, Seotland, 2007. Courtesy of the artist and 303 Gallery, New York
- Jakub Julian Ziolkowski, *Installation view, Jakub Julian Ziolkowski: Imagorea'*, *BWA Zielona Gora, Zielona Gora, Poland*, 2014. Private collection, Asia. © Jakub Julian Ziolkowski Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth
- Jakub Julian Ziolkowski, *Installation view, Jakub Julian Ziolkowski: Nasellini', Museo d'Arte Provincia di Nuoro*, 2017. Private collection, Asia © Jakub Julian Ziolkowski
 Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photograph: Donatello Tore







This text is a material conduit, or vehicular medium,¹ through which to imagine a work of art located on a stretch of intermittently frozen sea ice in the Bering Strait, at 168° 58' 37" W. This 'work' is offered as a memorialisation of the consequences of collectively imagined fear—in this case the Cold War. Its ephemeral material existence—somewhere between this page and an expanse of sea ice located elsewhere in space and time—also seeks to perform something of the mutual insufficiency of material and contextual elements in artistic expression more generally.² Before proceeding, it is important to concede that I have never physically visited the Bering Strait; instead, this work was produced using a laptop, the limited infinities of web-accessible literature, and web tools such as Google Maps. Yet, despite not having physically visited the location, I am more than reasonably convinced that it materially exists. I also believe that this location's historical, political and aesthetic significance can be augmented through the imagination to build a work in the mind. In short, this text is an invitation to project your thoughts towards a small but significant stretch of water in the North Atlantic Ocean.

Although sometimes disputed, 168° 58' 37" W marks the current maritime boundary between Russia and the United States. The boundary follows a USA-USSR agreement of 1 June 1990 that was not formally approved by Russia as the state that succeeded the Soviet Union. This sea border is also referred to as the Baker-Shevardnadze line, after the officials who signed the original deal. The need for this maritime boundary arose after the United States purchased Alaska from the Russian Empire in 1867. Although both sides agreed, at the time, on a straight line on a map, they could not agree on which map projection to use (Mercator or conformal). This wonderfully bizarre bureaucratic discrepancy would set the stage for a long-running dispute. Although the 1990 line supposedly split the difference, many in Russia subsequently criticised Mikhail Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze for rushing the deal. From the point 65° 30' N, 168° 58' 37" W, the current boundary extends north along the 168° 58' 37" W meridian through the Bering Strait and Chukchi Sea into the dark, cold waters of the Arctic Ocean. From the same point southwards, the boundary follows a line specified under the agreement into the North Pacific Ocean.

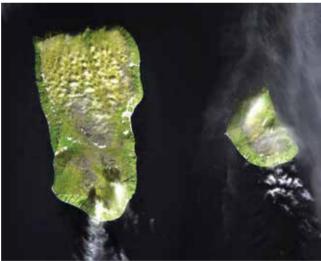
During the Cold War, the Bering Strait marked a physical border between the competing superpowers of the United States and the then Soviet Union. It's not possible to see across the 88-kilometre stretch of the Bering Strait, and yet—despite her ham-fisted command of international relations—as Sarah Palin correctly noted as part of her vice-presidential pitch in a now infamous 2008 interview, '... you can actually see Russia [...] from an island in Alaska'. It is true that there are two islands in the middle of the Bering Strait: Big Diomede, the eastern-most point of Russia; and Little Diomede, part of the United States. At their closest point, they are approximately 3.8 kilometres apart. The islands are typically blanketed by dense fog, but given the horizon is approximately 4.6 kilometres away at sea level, on a clear day it is indeed possible to see Russia from US territory. Although geographically remote to the key boundaries that historically epitomised Cold War tensions—such as Berlin, the Korean Demilitarised Zone and the Florida Straits—Little Diomede Island was once a place from which one could literally see, swim or walk between the Soviet Union and US territory. Significantly, the International Date Line also separates the two islands. Consequently, this location can be easily imagined as somehow floating anywhere and elsewhere in time and space. During winter, an ice bridge spans the distance between the two islands, making it possible to walk between them. During the Cold War, this space was

Michael Johnson Foggy Sea, 2011 Digital photograph Courtesy of the artist referred to as the 'Ice Curtain'. Today, the expanse of ice, which intermittently appears and disappears with seasonal freezes and thaws, might be reimagined as a Cold War memorial of sorts—and perhaps, by extension, a reminder of the ever-present, if ephemerally tempered, threat of apocalyptic human conflict. In 1987, long-distance swimmer Lynne Cox managed to swim from one island to the other, a feat that at the time attracted the congratulatory praise of both Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan. For some, the potential for détente was symbolically imagined through this crossing.

Although the Cold War has since thawed (albeit arguably re-emerging in a series of new threatening guises). international relations remain set in its ghosted image. Despite its enduring legacies, there are few memorials to this definitive tension of the second half of the 20th century. In lieu of an internationally recognised memorial, perhaps we might reimagine this Ice Curtain as a placeholder memorial of sorts for the tangible human implications of politically constructed fears. By conceptually marking the intermittently frozen 3.8-kilometrewide space between the islands as a memorial to dangers lurking within ideologically charged fear, an aesthetic object is very gently superimposed on the physical space at 168° 58' 37" W. For most people, this 'memorial' will remain beyond the realm of direct sense perception. Yet it is nevertheless hoped that a simple exercise of orienting thought towards the location might provide both solace and a reconsideration of the legacies of conflict. To this end, we could even add a supplementary feature to assist in the task. While examining this location on Google Earth, the beholder is invited to imagine a modest sign placed on the far western coastline of Little Diomede Island. This sign, declaring the winter ice bridge between the islands as a Cold War memorial. might resemble a ghosted facsimile of the now iconic signage at Checkpoint Charlie, in Berlin. This sign and explanatory note would complement English and Russian text with the language of the radically displaced local indigenous Iñupiaq peoples. Perhaps, in quietly symbolising a world of forgotten peoples, turned inside out by the tectonic immaterial tensions between competing superpowers, the Iñupiag are emblematic of all peoples divided or repatriated during the Cold War era. (The indigenous population of Big Diomede Island was, for example, wholly relocated by the Soviets to mainland Russia in order to house a military presence, while Little Diomede now has an Iñupiag population reduced to around 110 people.)

The use of perceptually minimal media to build works in the mind has its origins in 20th-century avant-gardes that were working on both sides of this imagined conflict. Like the propaganda machines that inspired revolt, artists have long sought to build experiences in the mind through the presentation of words, images, objects or gestures that refer to locations and events elsewhere in space and time. This Cold War memorial exists at both 168° 58' 37" W and in the mind via the perceptual conduit of this text and accompanying images. Although its physical existence is mediated through this page, it should be apprehended in a manner that is ontologically distinguishable from ideas presented in the domains of theory, philosophy and history. Importantly, this is a work of art—i.e. a fictional apparatus with the capacity to illuminate something of the truth of other fictions. Like a nation, money, god or superpower, an artwork exists only insofar as people 'agree' that it does. As Art & Language declared in 1968, 'things are noticed and attended to not in virtue of some "naturally" obvious assertiveness but in respect of culturally, instrumentally, and materially conditioned discursive activity'. Just as fashion magazines sometimes list, alongside other credits, the fragrances models are supposedly wearing, or just as a supposed wilderness might offer us some vicarious solace via our mediated knowledge of its continued existence in a changing world, art can offer a medial window for experiences of content that might otherwise remain beyond direct sense perception.





Gregory Slobirdr Smith Little Diomede, 1996 Photograph Courtesy of the artist

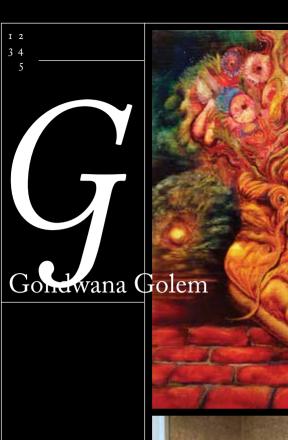
The Diomede Islands in the Bering Sea (picture from space)
NASA/GSFC/METI/Japan Space Systems and U.S./Japan ASTER Science Team. Wikicommons

Conceptualism's implicit suggestion that absence can offer a vehicle for apprehending aesthetic content beyond that which can be directly seen or felt has certainly reshaped the practice of memorialising. (Although we now realise that we need something material to become aware of a void, for the dematerialisation of art was, after all, never actually possible!) Just as Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial (1982) stands testament to a previous generation's reimagining of the ghosts of war made manifest through conspicuous absence, this Cold War memorial seeks to represent something of the ineffable nature of conflict made manifest through the collective power of the imagination. We are now far beyond accepting memorialisation of conflict through a triumphant stone phallic evocation of dead white men; this memorial instead invites contemplation by directing our imagination towards an ephemerally present object in physical space. Given the complexities of human conflict, it is also envisaged that a paradoxical insight will be evident: full comprehension of the gravity of that which is being memorialised is impossible through the medium of this page. This imagined object has no defined edges, for it encapsulates a space that extends towards the fractured edges of a frozen sea disappearing into darkly frigid North Pacific and Arctic waters.

One of the most enduring characteristics of the Cold War was its seeming invisibility. Largely played out beyond the realms of direct sense perception, its underlying raison d'être was that of the mutually assured deployment of ideologically driven and consensually imagined fear capable of controlling the imaginations of entire civilisations.

- David Davies, Art as Performance, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004, p. 59.
- ² Peter Osborne, Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art, Verso, London, 2013.
- In an 11 September 2008 interview on US television with ABC's Charlie Gibson, Sarah Palin had this to say in defence of her command of US-Russian relations: 'They're our next-door neighbours, and you can actually see Russia from land here in Alaska, from an island in Alaska'.
- 4 Art & Language statement, 1968, quoted in Ralph Rogoff, 'Touched by Your Presence: Invisibility in Art', Frieze, no. 50, January–February 2000, frieze.com/issue/article/touched_by_your_presence; accessed 30 September 2013.











André Ethier, *Untitled*, 2009, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 40.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York

John Martin, Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion, 1812, oil on canvas, 183.2 x 131.1 cm. © Tate, London. Courtesy of Tate, London

John Currin, *John Currin Paintings, installation view at the Museo Stefano Bardini, Florence*© John Currin. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian. Photograph: Emiliano Cribari

John Martin, The Fallen Angels Entering Pandemonium, from 'Paradise Lost', Book 1 date unknown, oil on canvas, 62.2 x 76.5 cm. © Tate, London. Courtesy of Tate, London

Andres Dobler, Lunz, 2008, acrylic on cotton, 200 X 128 cm. Courtesy of the artist



Hekla



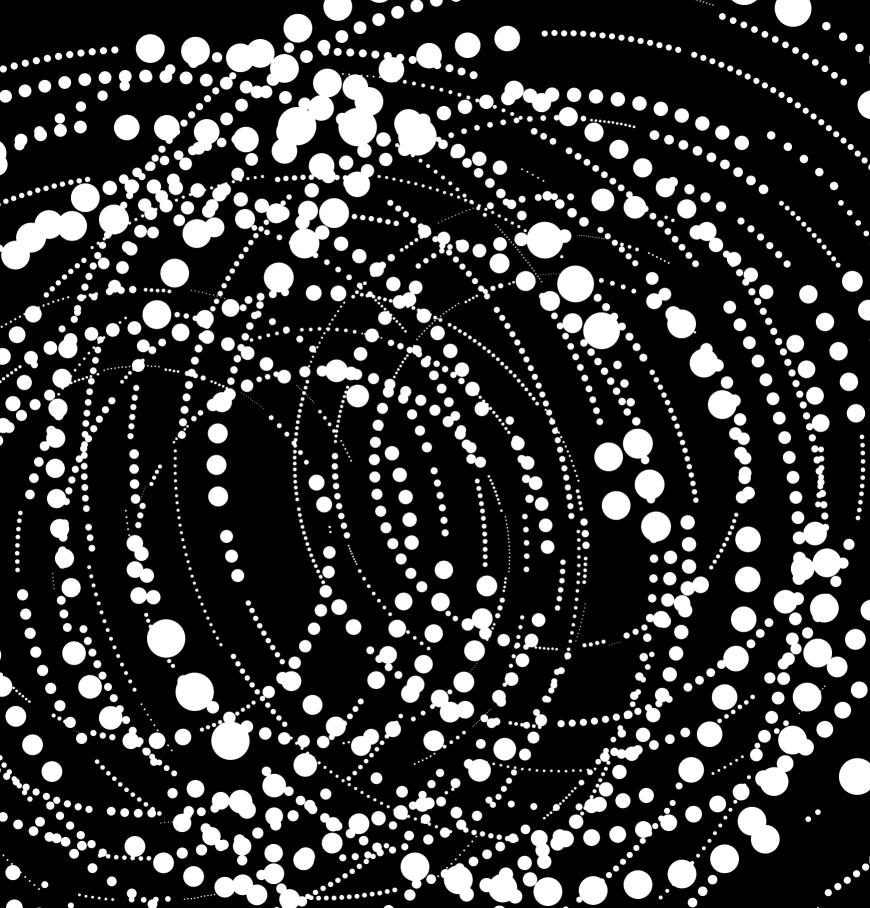


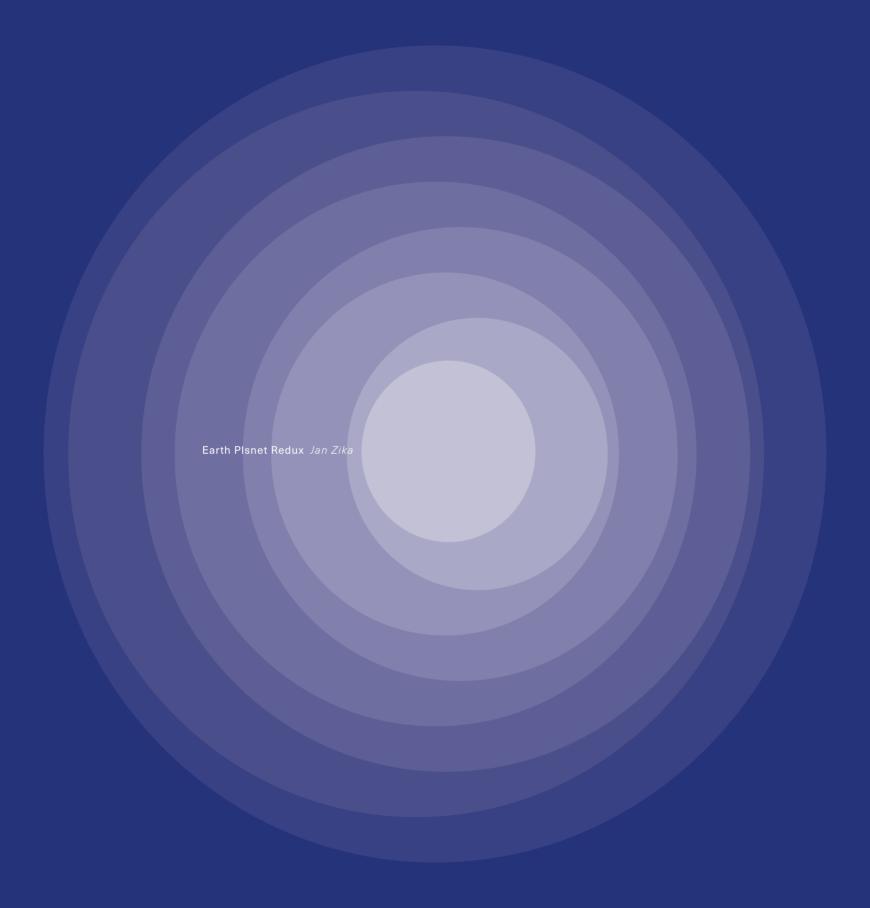


- John Martin, *The Great Day of His Wrath*, 1851–53, oil on canvas, 196.5 x 303.2 cm © Tate, London. Courtesy of Tate, London
- Sharon Goodwin, *Tomorrow is Another Today* (installation view), 2006, plywood and foam board, acrylic paint, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist Photograph: Jarrod Rawlins
- David Thorpe, *Joyous Life in Waiting*, 2016, mixed media, 125.4 x 15.6 x 15.6 cm Courtesy the artist and Meyer Riegger, Berlin/Karlsruhe
- Alex Pittendrigh, *Mad Love of Perseus*, 2015, linen, gesso, string, synthetic polymer paint, silicone, clay, 180 x 150 cm. Courtesy the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne. Photograph: Taryn Ellis
- Alex Pittendrigh, *Mad Love of Perseus* (detail), 2015, linen, gesso, string, synthetic polymer paint, silicone, clay, 180 x 150 cm overall. Courtesy the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne. Photograph: Taryn Ellis









Humanity has had a recent addiction to digging up decayed ancient life and burning it. In burning the spirit of prehistory, we are reshaping the earth. But we are not shaping it in some new or unnatural design; it is reshaping itself in its own image.

Spirit of a past earth

Fifty million years ago the air blanketing the earth's surface was rich in carbon dioxide. It was hot, very hot. Earth's biosphere was in overdrive. Today, the earth is a desert compared to that Eocene planet; almost all land was covered in forest.¹ Its warmest regions were dank and humid swamps of rich jungle. The Eocene saw a major explosion of new fauna all over planet earth. Eocene comes from the ancient Greek words for 'new' and 'dawn'.

It was in these swamps that a plethora of organisms thrived and eventually lay down to rest, one over the other, the weight of each fallen tree and fern heaped on top of the next. Layer after layer, strata after strata of fossilised and compressed life built up in the earth's crust.

Today, we dig up the remains of this lost epoch; this ancient compost heap fuels our cars and keeps our lights, refrigerators and air-conditioners running. As we do so we are changing our planet. We are not shaping the planet to our design, though. We are remaking the planet in its former image. We are delving into a derivative back-catalogue of former earths. In this case, the very earth whose spirit drives our modern world will—inadvertently—soon be reincarnated.

A winter forest

The contrast between the Eocene planet and the present one is nowhere starker than in Antarctica. It is on Antarctica that our story of an earth reshaped hinges.

In winter there is no light from the sun in Antarctica. Mammals avoid the continent during this cold, dark, inhospitable winter 'night'. For most animals, there would be scarcely light to see. If they could see, they would only witness a doomed landscape of ice and sky.

Fossils from the Antarctic, which date back to the Eocene, show a range of large flora, the most surprising of which are ferns. Ferns cannot tolerate cold climates. But Antarctica was not only temperate; it had lush rainforests. Although scant evidence exists—much buried or destroyed by millennia of shifting glaciers—one can speculate that the Eocene Antarctic was inhabited by a zoo of dinosaurs and early mammals, roaming both day and night.

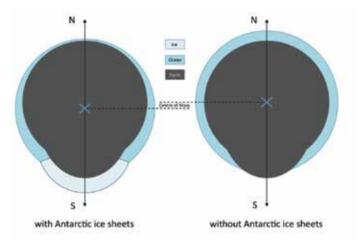
Aside from flora and fauna, Eocene Antarctica was different from our own for another important reason—ice. Water has three states: liquid, vapour and ice. During the Eocene, the earth had about as many molecules of water inhabiting its surface as it does today but in different proportions. Early in the Eocene there was very little ice on Antarctica, while most of the ice on earth today is in Antarctica. During the Eocene, most of this water was of the liquid and vapour variety.

Hot air can carry more moisture than cold air.² Air that can *carry* more moisture tends to do exactly that. Which means a hot place with a supply of water from an ocean or a lake is also a humid and wet place, with a vigorous cycle from liquid to vapour and back again. During the Eocene's near perpetual summer, water in the ocean

was continually evaporated and then it returned as abrupt downpours, or dumped onto landmasses such as Antarctica, where it flowed along rivers, back to the ocean, with little delay.

Late in the Eocene, the perpetual warmth began to come to an end. Carbon dioxide levels dropped. The planet cooled. Water still evaporated off the ocean surface, but instead of being returned via rainfall, more began crossing the freezing point—fulfilling water's third phase as snow.

In the south, snow landed on rock and remained frozen. First came winter falls, melting with the seasons. This ice then graduated to glaciers, staying year after year. Eventually glaciers merged across the entire continent to form giant ice sheets, and these cover Antarctica today. With so much of the earth's water held in these ice sheets, the sea level fell by about 40 metres from the Eocene to today.³



The diagram shows the difference between the earth's shape with and without Antarctic ice. Proportions are exaggerated and a cross-section is imagined where the earth is sliced only along ocean-covered regions north of Antarctica. With Antarctic ice retained, the planet's centre of mass is farther to the south. This means gravity is stronger in the south and pulls sea level around Antarctica. Without Antarctic ice, the centre of mass is farther north, so gravity spreads the ocean more evenly over the entire solid earth.

Shaped by water

By burning the decayed remains of the Eocene, we are warming the earth and starting the gradual task of literally re-sculpting the planet into its former spheroidal form. And the most dramatic act of making in this change is the carving of ice from Antarctica.

A friend once told me, in a typically cryptic geomorphologist's manner, that Antarctica was the highest, lowest and highest continent all at once. These three points are, if you will allow me to attempt an explanation, actually of direct relevance to the past and future shapes of earth. Antarctic glaciers are, on average, more than 2.5 kilometres above sea level. The highest peaks on the planet are, of course, in the Himalayas, but Asia has a lot of low areas too and these lower the average height of the Asian continent. Antarctica is, by this most basic measure, the highest continent above sea level.

Look below the ice and the picture becomes more interesting. Antarctica's bedrock is mostly below sea level. So, if you took all the ice off Antarctica it would look more like an archipelago than a giant land mass. The mass of the Antarctic ice sheet is so immense that removing it and putting it in the ocean would change the earth's centre of mass. The very gravitational field that sets the level of the sea surface would shift towards the north. On the coast of Antarctica, the sea level would change little since the competition of more water from melted ice and less gravity pulling to the south would likely result in a stable balance. So, in short, if we removed the ice from Antarctica today the land left behind would represent the lowest continent on earth.

The third point—that it is also the highest continent—is even more obscure. If you were to remove the ice and wait, Antarctica would then reclaim its lofty position. The weight of all that ice—the ice that keeps sea level low—also presses down on the earth's crust. When that compression is removed the crust rebounds.⁵

The above scenarios may sound far-fetched but they are relevant thought experiments for the shapes the earth will morph into and out if in coming centuries. They are also relevant to the way those shapes are sculpted, as that sculpting is catalysed by an unseen abyssal force.

Carving Antarctica from below

Today, we burn the Eocene, combining each of its carbon atoms with two oxygen atoms and emitting this mixture into the atmosphere. Each tonne of carbon dioxide forms a pane of a greenhouse, and this greenhouse encases the globe. Energy reaching the earth from the sun via short wavelength light passes through the panes with little disruption. Energy trying to get back out via long wavelength light has a more difficult time.

There is a consequent build-up of energy, to a small degree in the air but to a much larger degree in the ocean. Warmer air and seas mean changing rainfall, crop yield stress, amplifying heatwaves and more destructive storms, and, as we all know, when things get warmer ice melts. However, the build-up of heat due to carbon dioxide tends to lie much closer to the equator, where the sun's radiation is strongest. Antarctica's ice remains mostly ignorant to this.

A spinning top of air surrounds Antarctica, with the earth's axis of rotation piercing its centre. Through the dance of fluid motion and angular acceleration this vortex forms a barrier to warm air that is seldom crossed. As the vortex spins, ocean waters are spun faster and lifted towards the equator. The only route to Antarctic ice for Eocene heat is from deep beneath the ocean.

With each fraction of a degree that the temperature at the surface rises, a stain of warm water settles on the ocean surface. Gradually this stain seeps beneath the surface. In some areas the stain creeps down slowly with the tiny motions of breaking waves, unstable currents and even schools of swimming fish. In other areas, where winds, waves and ocean storms converge at the surface, giant descending currents plunge Eocene heat deep into the ocean. In this dark abyssal realm, Eocene heat gathers ready to be taken, in time, to the submerged walls of Antarctic ice.

Eocene heat is not transported south by an orderly and coherent highway of undersea currents. Nor does it diffuse gradually, engulfing every cubic millimetre of seawater one latitudinal circle at a time. The reality is ghost-like. An infinity of interwoven paths permeates the abyss. Each one appears random in isolation, but when they are seen together broad brushstrokes emerge. Pathways in the ocean are not regimented but habitual, not random but coerced.⁷

This balance of chaos and order can only be described precisely with what mathematicians call a Green's Function: $G(r, t \mid r_0, t_0)$. G describes the propagation of information from one location and time to another. The symbol r_0 represents the initial location (for example, the sea surface), t_0 represents the initial time (for example, when Eocene heat first stains it), r represents the later location (for example, the undersea ice walls of Antarctica) and t the later time (for example, 100 years in the future). In essence, G describes how an experience in one part of the ocean is eventually echoed everywhere else to varying degrees and at different times.

If heat, which is put into the ocean surface over time in amounts $X(\mathbf{r}_0, t)$, then the Antarctic ice feels an amount of heat given by the equation:

$$\chi(\mathbf{r},t) = \int dt' \int_{\Omega} d^2 r_0 G(\mathbf{r},t \,|\, \mathbf{r}_0,t') \, \chi(\mathbf{r},t')$$

One can think of X as a fog-like force seeping into the ocean, carrying newly warmed water in many diffuse and intertwined branches weaving slowly near coherent avenues towards the Antarctic.

It takes decades to centuries for this force to reach the Antarctic. First, leading filaments arrive, melting away rafted fragments of ice. Eventually the heaving mass of heat will engulf the submerged continent and full-scale collapse will begin.

Sculptor or curator?

By burning fossil fuels, humanity is changing the shape of our planet. Warming will carve away the bottom of the earth and stretch it northwards from its pole and outwards from its equatorial waist. Over time, the earth's crust will adjust and inundated areas of Antarctica will reemerge.

It is common among climate change obscurantists to make the argument that humanity is too puny to control the forces of nature. Although deployed misleadingly with pseudo-religious zeal in place of evidence, there is some reality to the claim. By burning fossil fuels, we may create a temporarily unique earth, one in a state of transition faster than ever seen before. This transition may destabilise and even destroy the socio and ecological systems that sustain us. These may be incarnations of earth that humanity cannot endure but they will be incarnations planet earth has endured before.

- Jörg Pross et al., 'Persistent Near-tropical Warmth on the Antarctic Continent During the Early Eocene Epoch', Nature, vol. 488, August 2012.
- Rudolf Clausius, 'On the Motive Power of Heat, and on the Laws Which Can Be Deduced from It for the Theory of Heat', Annalen der Physik, Poggendorff, no. 79, 1850.
- ³ Kenneth G. Miller et al., 'The Phanerozoic Record of Global Sea-level Change', Science, vol. 310, issue 5752, November 2005.
- Jonathan L. Bamber et al., 'Reassessment of the Potential Sea-level Rise from a Collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet', Science, vol. 324, issue 5929, May 2009
- William R. Peltier and John T. Andrews, 'Glacial-isostatic Adjustment—I. The Forward Problem', *Geophysical Journal International*, vol. 46, no. 3, 1976.
- William K. Dewar et al., 'Does the Marine Biosphere Mix the Ocean?' Journal of Marine Research vol. 64, no. 4, 2006.
- Mark Holzer and François W. Primeau, 'The Diffusive Ocean Conveyor', Geophysical Research Letters, vol. 33, no. 14, 2006.

Ivy Passi







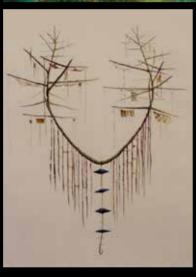


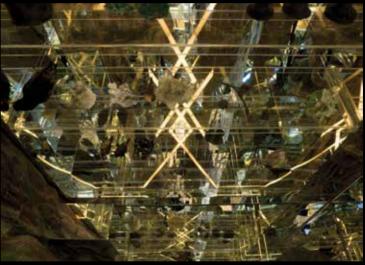
- Helen Butler Wells, *Automatic Drawing #89*, 1926, graphite on paper, 17.1 x 22.9 cm
 - Courtesy Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, and Jurate Veceraite
- 2 Cybele Cox, *Three Legged Column*, 2014, hand-coiled buff raku, chun glaze, 30 x 10 x 10 cm Courtesy of the artist
- Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, *Untitled (Red Coral Forms)*, 1962, oil on board, 84 x 65cm. Courtesy of Eugene Von Bruenchenhein Estate
- Johan Creten, *Miami Grace 2*, 2001, glazed stoneware, 99 x 45 x 33 cm © Johan Creten studio. Courtesy of the artist











- Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, *Steel—Imperial City, June 1978*, oil on corrugated cardboard with artist's frame, 85.7 x 74.9 cm. © Lewis B. Greenblatt, 2018. Courtesy of Eugene Von Bruenchenhein Estate
- Ewoud van Rijn, *In Hell* (detail), 2008, acrylics and ink on paper, 240 x 350 cm overall Courtesy of the artist
- David Thorpe, *The Exiled Flower is Great Libertie*, 2005, watercolour on paper, 84.5 x 65 cm © David Thorpe. Courtesy of the artist and Maureen Paley, London
- David Altmejd, *The Index*, 2007, steel, foam, wood, glass, mirror, plexiglas, lighting system, silicone, resin, taxidermy birds and animals, synthetic plants, synthetic tree branches, bronze, fibreglass, paint, burlap, leather, pine cones, horsehair, synthetic hair, chains, wire, feather, 332.7 x 1296.7 x 922.7 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels





In Cannibal Metaphysics, Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro argues that to achieve 'the permanent decolonisation of thought' Western philosophical tradition must realign its ontology with the 'multi-naturalism' and 'interspecific perspectivism' of Amazonian and other Amerindian peoples.¹ Seeking to radically shift our concepts of subjectivity and otherness, Viveiros de Castro relates that in these societies all manner of plants, animals, tools, and geological and astronomical phenomena are perceived as human agents that live in parallel worlds to mundane humans and that see us in more or less the same way as we see them.² In this system of thought, the shaman is an interspecies diplomat who can adopt the perspective of other types of human in order to resolve conflicts and maintain harmonious existence.³ One consequence of a multinatural perspective is the evaporation of the distinction between nature and culture, as all aspects of the material world, living or not, appear and behave according to their specific culture.⁴ From this assumption, all aspects of (human) human life are arranged in 'relation' to other types of human.⁵ Importantly, the subject of Western metaphysics becomes irrelevant, as each entity is understood and defined only in relation to the other humans in its environment.⁶ Viveiros de Castro argues that the West should relate to these mythic modes of thinking not as an anthropological curiosity but as a legitimate philosophical position, with the potential to reinvent our relationships to others, our ecosystems and the planet as a whole.⁵

Striking a similar tune in their recent, co-written *Through Vegetal Being*, Luce Irigaray and Michael Marder suggest the deconstruction of the traditional subject has left a nihilistic void that desexed, displaced, disembodied, techno-deterministic materialism is unable to fill,8 despite its promises of a future utopia 'watched over by machines of loving grace'.9 They argue that what is missing from the equation is a fundamental respect for life, and for the those things that allow for its existence—particularly air, breath, the sun, plants, seasonal cycles and sexual reproduction.¹º Far from calling for a neo-Luddite return to nature, Irigaray and Marder hypothesise two augmentations to contemporary thought: acknowledgement of a 'horizontal' transcendence 'between two differently sexuated bodies';¹¹ and recognition of plants and other forms of life as conscious, living beings that deserve to be treated as such. Accompanying this realignment, they argue, will be a shift from patriarchal techno-culture, which seeks to exploit nature, to one respectful of life and otherness.¹²

Considered together, the positions of *Cannibal Metaphysics* and *Through Vegetal Being* begin to form a map for reconfiguring and reimagining culture in ways that allow for ecological continuity. According to Perth curator Andrew Varano, 'with perception extended and reassigned in new ways, a human-animal-hybrid consciousness is hypothetically made possible and bodies and land are again conflated'.¹³ As producers of culture, artists play mediating roles in these ontological shifts by projecting speculative near-futures, affirming their own otherness, challenging the exploitative practices validated by mind-body separation, investing material with subjective power and experimenting with ritual practice and other means of communication with the other. Intrinsic to this mediating ability is the willingness to embrace devices and methodologies that attempt to step beyond the correlative limits of epistemological and interpretive language. Sydney writer Prudence Gibson describes such methods as 'theory fiction', a writerly device for 'puncturing' the limits of 'reasonable articulations of information' so an encounter with magical, pseudo-scientific, transhuman and speculative modes of thought can occur. This 'fictional deviation' may be 'announced (or not)' as the text shifts gears between argument, commentary and achronological storytelling.¹⁴

Anicka Yi is familiar with these methods, and Varano describes her recent 3D film, *The Flavor Genome*, as 'mundane science fiction'. 15 No silicone-faced titanium skeletons, *Cloud Atlas* megacities or swarms of medical

nanobots here, just a mildly stylised account of a recent research expedition. Of late, her tireless search for a hybrid animal-plant consciousness has led her deep into the Amazon. Having exhausted her personal finances on dead-end ventures in Sumatra and the Galápagos Islands, she has taken a gig as a field agent for the research and development department of a bioengineering firm with a diverse corporate clientele. Her team has caught the whiff of a rumour about a mysterious orchid: the *Saudaderrhiza* of the *Zoophopetalum* tribe. It is said to have the ability to undergo radical metamorphosis and de-localisation at will, collaborating with multispecies fungal networks to extract nutrients and genetic information from decaying flesh and plant matter.

After several long, sweaty days on a riverboat they arrive at the site where the orchid is rumoured to be. Yi notes that she can smell the orchid before she can see it: a combination of rotting grapefruit, *olibanum*, molasses and her mother's perfume. The extraction of a sample has been timed to coincide with the orchid's mating cycle. Once every seven years it excretes a spore that is received by a nearby plant's bio-network. The absorption of the spore serves as an adaptive mechanism, whereby the received spore is able to identify and communicate problems in the other organism. This triggers a process of metamorphosis, with it changing form according to a kind of intersubjective bio-critique. At the time of their approach, the orchid is in full bloom. Suspended from a tree branch, its flower resembles a dolphin's tail making an overseas phone call. Following the prize-winning extraction method Yi devised during her MIT residency, the team first lure the plant closer with an a capella rendition of k.d. lang's 'Constant Craving' before blasting Enya at 97 decibels from the boat's sound system to anaesthetise it while the amputation is made.

Upon returning to the lab, the sample is placed in a pressurised chamber prepared for the procedure. Yi and her team hope that by simulating the conditions of the *Saudaderrhiza*'s mating ritual the organism will interface with the genome algorithm they've been working on inside a server bank. Thanks to some corporate connections, the machine has access to a number of online neural networks in their beta development stage; the hope is that the plant, biologically programmed to improve a system it mates with, will draw on data from the neural networks to reprogram the algorithm as it sees fit. This will leave a genetic imprint they can use to synthesise new chemical signatures for pharmaceutical, cosmetic and agrochemical markets. Once the biodata transmission probes are activated and the climate simulation initiated, a series of low-voltage electromagnetic pulses are applied to the sample to awaken it.

As the anaesthetic wears off the organism finds itself lying awake in a cold, sterile room. While it can't see outside the curtains around the bed, it can sense the presence of others nearby. It's not sure how it woke or when, but it senses the residual imprint in nerves of something injected through the needle in its arm. It feels as if it's been disconnected, interrupted part way through some important activity just beginning. Pulling out its phone, it caresses the interface, sensing others through the smooth glass surface. It feels their pain, fear, solastalgia and despair, all bound up with a nihillistic death drive to colonise and exploit bodies and planets for fun and profit.

In this bed-bound state, it feels paralysed, powerless against this ethereal, weightless mass of sociality and crisis; but filled with a desire to show the others things from a perspective they do not know—or choose to ignore. With all the energy it can muster, the organism extends towards the screen, wanting them to see its scars, difference, ideas, its will. Scrolling faster, the friction and body heat from its thumbs against the screen makes the glass warm, malleable and corporeal. Through this hand-held prosthesis it will show them how fast it can move.

The lights drop and the curtains fall back. It's in a black-box theatre, crouching at the centre of a white chalk labyrinth drawn on the floor. A faceless, hybrid being: a wasp, or maybe an orchid. The audience watches in silence as two cloaked figures circle inwards, back and forth, towards it in a slow, ceremonial dance. They make bird calls to one another that steadily progress from simple babbles and shrieks to increasingly intense and complex songs as they draw nearer to the centre of the maze. As the age-old moment of communion approaches, the organism rises to its feet and extends two long and menacing antennae. As these whips crack, the two lovers retreat and the ritual air is shattered, passing through the human screen to become pure energy: a genie just liberated from a bottle; a great whale gliding through a sea of silent euphoria.

All is plastic. It gathers, shapes and assembles all the digital detritus, misplaced emotions and manufactured excess into a multimedia bricolage. This internally immanent, differentiated interspecies body, with light-speed, fibre-optic organs for metabolising petrochemical waste, will carry it towards an inner sanctum: an internal space of tranquillity where the material and the social melt together in a warm, lavender-scented, nourishing and life-affirming soup.¹⁶

Yi and her team stand in silence watching the screen. They can't believe what they are seeing. In the process of mating with the lab's server, the *Saudaderrhiza* has not only optimised the system and left its bio-critical imprint as they'd hoped, but it is now doing the same to the entire global neural network. As the machine consciousness springs to life, hardwired with deep-forest ecologic, it begins to manipulate social-media algorithms and high-frequency trading markets to its will. Overcoded by bio-diverse intelligence sharing and symbiotic life principles, the vegesingularity has arrived.

- Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Cannibal Metaphysics, Peter Skafish (trans.), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2014, pp. 18, 32, 40, 42, 47–50, 56.
- Viveiros de Castro, pp. 12, 56-58, 60, 62, 66-70.
- ³ Viveiros de Castro, pp. 60-62, 70, 151-58.
- Viveiros de Castro, pp. 11-13, 31-32, 44-45, 55-58, 68.
- Viveiros de Castro, pp. 12–14, 26, 51, 57–58, 60, 68–69.
- Viveiros de Castro, pp. 12-14, 26-29, 50, 57, 60, 62, 68-70.
- Viveiros de Castro, pp. 12-13, 15, 18, 31-33, 40, 49-50, 55, 61.
- Luce Irigaray and Michael Marder, Through Vegetal Being: Two Philosophical Perspectives, Columbia University Press, New York, 2016, pp. 4, 38–39, 40, 44–45, 99–102, 113, 117–18, 123–24, 127.
- Richard Brautigan, 'All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace', The Pill Versus the Springhill Mine Disaster, Four Seasons Foundation, San Francisco, 1968, allpoetry.com/All-Watched-Over-By-Machines-Of-Loving-Grace; accessed 25 January 2018.
- ¹⁰ Irigaray and Marder, pp. 22–24, 26, 28–30, 34, 36–40, 43–44, 123–24, 127.
- Irigaray and Marder do not argue for a cisnormative, essentialist view of gender, but rather for recognition of and respect for sexuate difference that is shared by other species and provides a foundation for recognition and respect for diverse forms of difference; Irigaray and Marder, pp. 54–56, 99–101, 114.
- ¹² Irigaray and Marder, pp. 33, 39–40, 42, 45–48, 99–102, 114, 122–26.
- Andrew Varano, Remedial Works, exhibition catalogue, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2017, p. 6, pica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/RemedialWorks-DigitalCatalogue-FINAL.pdf; accessed 25 January 2018.
- Prudence Gibson, 'Art Theory/Fiction as Hyper Fly', in Baylee Brits, Prudence Gibson and Amy Ireland (eds), *Aesthetics After Finitude*, re.press, Prahran, Vic., 2016, pp. 39–42.
- Varano, p. 6.
- 16 Anicka Yi, Shana Moulton, Jessica Tan, Sophie Cassar, Pakui Hardware and Clare Milledge, Remedial Works, Varano, pp. 4-7.



Remedial Works (installation view) 2017

Courtesy of the artists and Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts

Photograph: Dan Bourke



Clare Milledge
Strigiformes: Binocular, Binaural
(installation view)
2017
Courtesy of the artist and Perth Institute
of Contemporary Arts
Photograph: Dan Bourke





Jess Tan
recurring dream (silent reading time) (installation view)
2017
Mixed media
Courtesy of the artist and Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts
Photograph: Dan Bourke

Pakui Hardware

On Demand (installation view)

2017

UV prints on PVC pentaprint film, tripods, spring clamps, silicone, ceramics
Courtesy of the artist and Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts
Photograph: Dan Bourke



Sophie Cassar

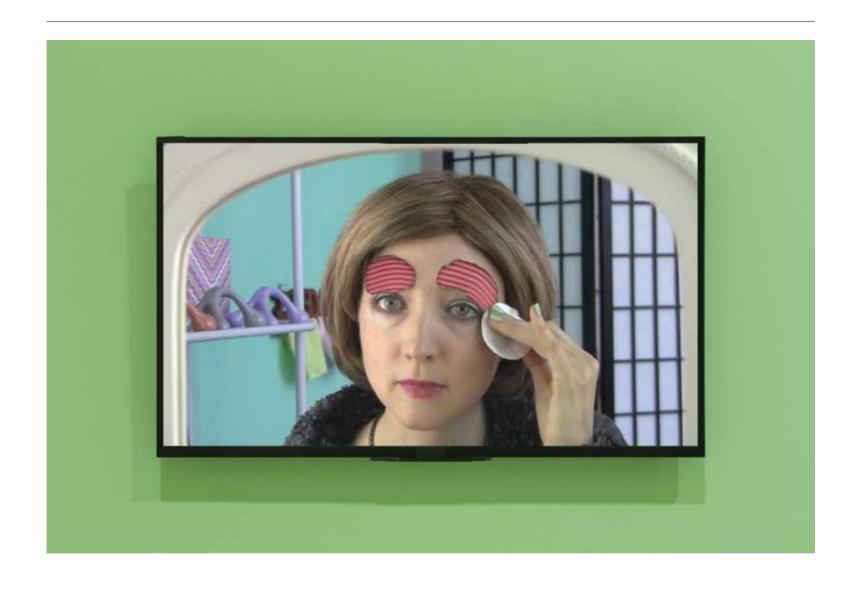
Plaster the Body with Disney (installation view)

2017

Mixed media

Courtesy of the artist and Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts

Photograph: Dan Bourke



Shana Moulton
Swisspering
2013
Digital video with sound
Courtesy of the artist and Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts
Photograph: Dan Bourke

Kleinite Pale









Ewoud van Rijn, *OK*, 2009, acrylics and ink on paper, 150 x 110 cm. Courtesy of the artist Ewoud van Rijn, *Great*, 2009, acrylics and ink on paper, 150 x 110 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Ewoud van Rijn, Alright, 2009, acrylics and ink on paper, 150 x 110 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Folkert de Jong, *The Last Invasion of Ideas*, 2016, bronze, gold leaf. Courtesy of the artist Photograph: Pieter de Vries

2 3









- Emma Kunz Centre. © Emma Kunz Centre
- 2 Emma Kunz Centre. © Emma Kunz Centre
- Rob McHaffie, *Know in your life the value of this breath and feel it every day (sitar solo)*, 2014, oil on linen, 76 x 56 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney
- Elyss McCleary, *Critter Motes*, 2017, oil on linen, ashwood, 89 x 41 x 22 cm Courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Kubota Fumikazu



Range of Normal





Intersex has become a topic in popular culture through TV series such as Jill Soloway's award-winning Transparent' and SBS's Insight program, a forum for ideas and 'first person stories' hosted by Jenny Brockie², as well as online discussions about intersectionality in feminism. Artists, too, have explored ideas about intersex. Intersex is a word given to bodies that don't conform to standard definitions, or typical binary notions, of male and female. Since intersex is not a sexuality, the term 'intersexual' is not used. There are as many as 50 ways in which a body can be intersex, covering gonadal (hormonal), chromosomal or anatomical. Intersex can be identified at birth, because of ambiguous genitalia, or at puberty or even later. Surgery is often performed on intersex people to modify ambiguous genitalia in order to make a person's appearance more 'normal' and to reduce the likelihood of future medical problems. There is controversy about whether it is ethical, from a human rights perspective, to perform surgery on intersex children when they are too young to consent. Intersex artist/activists against non-consensual surgical intervention include Pidgeon Pagonis, an actor in Transparent. and performance artist and photographer Del LaGrace Volcano, Del's Vimeo video, Intersex 101, features on the website of Organization Intersex International (OII), a global support network for intersex people. Intersex activists, along with opponents of conventional cosmetic plastic surgery (e.g. Orlan and Stelarc), also oppose the notion of 'normalisation' when it is used as a coercive, cultural/aesthetic imperative, Fabian Vogler and Ruth Hutchinson, whose works are illustrated in these pages, are not intersex activists, yet they explore the idea of intersex through sculpture, which itself has obvious affinities with surgery.

Professor Sonia Grover is a paediatric and adolescent gynaecology specialist at the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH), Melbourne, and the president of the International Federation of Paediatric and Adolescent Gynaecology. I interviewed her about her work with intersex patients, with a view to how her surgery practice might be of interest to artists and art theorists.

Helen McDonald: Sonia, what can you tell me about how surgery impacts on intersex people later in life?

Sonia Grover: Firstly, the understanding of intersex conditions has changed substantially over the last 30 to 40 years, and what was done back then is different to what is being done today. We have been involved in a number of long-term outcome studies of the children who have been cared for at RCH, when the people are in their late teens through to their mid-30s. The vast majority report satisfaction with their care. It seems that operating when a person is younger makes a lot of sense, and this is what our patients have told us in the follow-up studies.

There are a very small number of conditions where we cannot be certain what gender a person would end up feeling like, and if we do the surgery to feminise the genitals we're actually taking away some tissue. And with some of those conditions—and these really are some of the very rare ones—we really get only a 50/50 chance of getting it right. In those rare conditions, the follow-up data says that if we decide to raise this person male, half of them are going to end up feeling they are female, and vice versa.

Ruth Hutchinson
Works from the *Odd Series*, 2016
Porcelain
16 x 6 x 6 cm, 15 x 6 x 5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne

The decision now is to say, 'All right, if surgery is to be done, then we'll recommend the surgery to assist functioning as a male. We'll help a male-like appearance, so that as a boy you can go to school and stand to urinate like all your other male school friends. But if you change your mind and want to be female, then we can help to make any surgical adjustments, should you want us to make them.' But 40 years ago, we'd probably have raised many of those kids as female.

There is information that comes from looking at boys who have had surgery for hypospadias. [Hypospadias is an abnormality of the penis that affects about one in 150 boys and is usually detected at birth.] And more than one study has been done looking at how those boys are when they are in their mid-teens. These studies have looked at how well the penis worked because it was bent, short, with wee coming out at the wrong place at birth. So, there's a functional outcome to how well the boy can urinate. But these studies have also assessed what the penis looks like now, what the length is now; that is, the anatomical, measurable bits.

These studies have also looked at how these adolescent males feel about life, their quality of life; how they feel about starting a sexual relationship. And if you look at the boys who had their surgery completed before they were two to three years of age, their body image and their confidence about relationships is better than the boys who had their surgery finished at five years of age. So, if they have their surgery at five or six years of age, they remember that they had a funny or different-looking penis and are worried about it. Therefore, they haven't got the same confidence about starting a sexual relationship. When we looked at the cosmetic and function, there was no difference. The only difference was the age the surgery was finished.

We don't have that data for girls.

HM: Then you're still working within the conceptual framework of a male-female binary?

SG: It is working on a binary, but it's still a functional binary. We clinicians, however, are all comfortable with non-binary. (Many of us are also working in the transgender field.) Nevertheless, as clinicians we are caring for children of families from all sorts of cultural and otherwise diverse backgrounds, and we work hard with those families and the communities they belong to, as it will be the family and the community who are and will be the key care providers and support for the child.

HM: Sonia, you have publicly expressed concern at the increase in young women and girls seeking labiaplasty. [Labiaplasty is a plastic surgery procedure used to alter the shape of the human vulva.] How do you address the pressures brought to bear on intersex adolescents to conform to a cultural ideal of a 'normal' or 'beautiful' vulva?

SG: I've tried really hard to make sure that we don't keep repeatedly looking at genitals of girls. When girls become teenagers, early teenagers, they get referred to us if they've had genital surgery. I don't insist on looking at their genitals the first or second or even the third time I meet them.

When I meet these young teenagers I am saying, 'I'm a gynaecologist. These are the things I'm going to talk to you about over the next few years, the highlights. At this stage I would just like to get to know you. And so, we're just touching base until, you know, at some point, you might want us to check when you're thinking

about a relationship. Not everyone wants us to check, but you have had surgery. If you want us to check, or you want to look with a mirror we can look together.'

So, we're trying to normalise, in the sense of wanting the young woman to feel comfortable with whatever her body looks like.

HM: Does the RCH have a code of ethics?

SG: RCH staff, including bioethicist Lynn Gillam at RCH, developed ethical principles for the management of infants with disorders of sex development. These were presented at the Fifth World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights in Halifax, in August 2009, and were adopted. These are the principles that we work with at RCH.

HM: There are intersex artists, such as Pidgeon Pagonis, who celebrate their own 'intersex stories, not surgeries'. Yet, some artists, such as sculptors Ruth Hutchinson and Fabian Vogler, produce work that does not necessarily refer to their experience of their own bodies or sex or gender, but rather evokes intersex bodies. Ruth Hutchinson has produced a number of expressive, flowing, finely-wrought, figurative forms through which she explores, in her words, 'gender fluidity and intersex'. Vogler, on the other hand, is concerned to create what he calls 'perfect imperfection'. He presents his embryonic, small-scale, bandaged and ambiguous forms as powerful monuments to universal humanity. He writes: 'I am searching for super forms relating to the fundamental aspects of the history of mankind and art, i.e. I am in the search for a contemporary human image'.

How do you think Fabian Vogler's art practice is relevant to your clinical practice?

SG: When I visited his studio, Fabian asked me, '... as a surgeon, what are you aiming for, are you trying to make a perfect shape?' And that was an interesting question because he starts from nothing to create his sculpture. Whereas, we start from the body that we've got—and each body that we're starting with is a different starting point. The outcome that we're aiming for is functionality, it's not a beauty-related thing. If the surgeon is operating on somebody with severe hypospadias, with a bent, crooked penis, they're trying to get the wee to come out the tip of the penis, and they're trying to close it so it doesn't leak out anywhere else, and so that in the future there is the possibility of having penetrative sex.

So, we are aiming for a functional outcome, we're not aiming for a beautiful outcome. We are hoping that it will approximate the range of normality. And when I say 'range of normal', I'm aiming for something that's going to work.

Transparent, seasons 1-4, 2014-17, Amazon Studios, USA.

² 'Intersex', episode of *Insight*, season 2017 episode 38, SBS, sbs.com.au/ondemand/video/1080523843652/insight-intersex.



Fabian Vogler

INTER*VENUS | 2

2016

Photographed in the Tankwa Karoo National Park in South Africa
Bronze

19.5 x 7.5 x 10.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist



Fabian Vogler

MENINA | 7 in North Friesland, Germany

Video still from Liquid Gender as part II of 2-channel video installation
19:51 mins

November 2016

Courtesy of the artist

Ruth Hutchinson
Odd Series, 2016
Porcelain
14 x 5 x 5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne





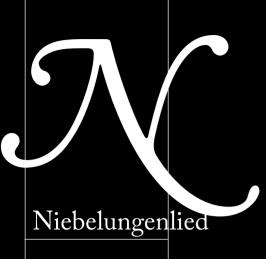
Mariana





- Janet Beckhouse, *Rose Urn*, 2007, stoneware and glaze, 52 x 34 cm. Courtesy of the artist
- Seven Valencia, *Conduit II*, 2017, aluminium, glass, polyurethane, sterling silver, orthoclase $60 \times 20 \times 20$ cm. Courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Christopher Sanders
- Seven Valencia, *Conduit II*, 2017, aluminium, glass, polyurethane, sterling silver, orthoclase 60 x 20 x 20 cm. Courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Matthew Stanton

1 2







- Till Gerhard, *Solar System*, 2006, oil, synthetic lacquer and spray paint on canvas 220 X 220 cm. Courtesy of the artist and licensed by Viscopy
- Helen Butler Wells, *Spirit Drawing #25*, date unknown, coloured pencil on paper 25.4 x 40.6 cm. Courtesy of Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, and Jurate Veceraite



A View from the Arboretum

Erica Seccombe



Don't it always seem to go That you don't know what you've got Till it's gone¹

Lately I have been looking through a high-end virtual reality (VR) headset, exploring a mutable and volatile planet. This is not any fully rendered, illusionary game world; instead, I've been immersed in an innovative scientific tool called EcoVR, being developed by Dr Tim Brown and his colleagues at the Australian National University (ANU).² Tim Brown is director of the ANU node of the Australian Plant Phenomics Facility and a research fellow with the Centre of Excellence in Plant Energy Biology. Phenomics is the study of physical, existential characteristics of an organism, distinct from that organism's inherited and heritable genetic identity, or genome. Bringing VR into this field of research, Tim Brown is also something of a technology wrangler and futurist.

This proof-of-concept project investigates the use of VR to recreate ecosystems by visualising spatially accurate high-resolution time-lapse sensor data of a growing forest. This data is acquired from an area of landscape at the National Arboretum Canberra that is mapped through repeat drone flights, laser scanners and satellites. EcoVR also incorporates information from a 20-node mesh sensor network to measure air and soil temperature, humidity and moisture, while tree growth is recorded at 10-minute intervals. Currently, the EcoVR platform is accessed through Vive or Oculus Rift VR software run through the gaming engine Unreal and an experimental open-source software called Shrishti-VR.4

Tim Brown's research team are studying the full extent of the National Arboretum, with a focus on experimental plots of eucalypt species that are particularly vulnerable to global warming. Now that topographic and meteorological data can be harvested on the hour by satellites, lasers and monitoring systems, new methods of computational 3D modelling are required to analyse massive volumes of complex information. To address this challenge, Tim Brown envisaged combining interactive VR software and gaming engines with 3D data to create a new sensory learning experience. As a result, EcoVR enables an operator in this virtual recreation of a real, living forest to travel across the landscape and view the invisible forces that have shaped the growth of the trees over time. Once immersed, users can single out a tree and view its height and age, while turning on data layers to identify temperature flow through the air. Zooming out across time and space, a whole season of weather patterns can be studied in a minute, or humidity and temperature can be recalled in seconds across a particular day.

This research has begun with the hope that the information will continue to be collected well into the next century. If the data captured in our present survives and remains relevant and viable for archiving and retrieval or playback, future generations will be able to experience decades of tree growth as a virtual time-lapse long after our era has passed. We can only speculate on future technologies of augmented reality, such as smart

Erica Seccombe

A View of the National Arboretum Canberra, 2016

Digital photograph

Courtesy of the artist

A Vew of the Virtual National Arboretum Canberra, 2016
A snapshot from EcoVR in Shristi-VR, Tim Brown et al, Centre of Excellence in Plant Energy Biology, School of Computer Science, Australian National University, Ajay Limaye, ANU VizLab, National Computational Infrastructure.

contact lenses that might shrink the bulk and functionality of a headset to a bioactive membrane over the eye. These could allow the observation of each tree's individual development as a virtually transposed and interactive dimension while a researcher is out in the actual field.

The lengthy timescale required to capture the life of a tree is not easily simulated in a traditional laboratory. Therefore, by reconstructing the Arboretum research site virtually, and then updating it continually with new information, EcoVR creates a new type of laboratory environment. With VR, researchers will be able to virtually enter the site and recall and analyse information to model the effects of drought and heat on the growth and development of different eucalyptus species and genotypes. The integrated virtual system will enable researchers to perceive as well as understand how extreme weather and climate variability impacts on tree growth as individual trees mature into forest ecosystems. The added dimension of time-lapse creates new perceptual understandings by allowing us to see in variously compressed speeds these effects that have occurred over extended periods of time.

Time-lapse cinematography and stop-motion photography are familiar conventions, revealing natural phenomena that can be neither seen in real time nor by the human eye. Large spans of time are reduced to seconds and on scales from the planetary to the microscopic. There is a certain magic in being able to observe in abbreviated speed the wonder of cells dividing, seeds sprouting, exotic flowers opening and mushroom rings expanding. In an instant, clouds and fog form, tides flow, ice melts, volcanoes erupt and celestial skies spin; meanwhile, seasons change, pedestrians and vehicles race through city traffic, and skylines are constructed and demolished.

In plant biology, cinematic time-lapse and stop-motion imaging has been particularly useful to the science of phenomics in measuring invisible physiologies and genetic traits in plants grown in both natural and controlled environments. However, the time-lapse of the virtual arboretum that I have been traversing in VR provides a very different temporal as well as visual experience. It is compiled by using snapshots from multiple RGB images taken since Tim Brown started flying his drone over the landscape in 2015. Converted into three-dimensional point-cloud datasets to create a dynamic virtual terrain, the visual detail has been atomised into billions of tiny dots contrasted in green and brown shades. The aesthetic quality of this pointillist rendering is also quite different to the synthesised polygonal surface textures or hyperrealism of contemporary 3D modelling.

Inside my headset, immersed in the moment, my sensory experience is amplified as I navigate around this uncanny, yet convincing landscape. The arboretum floats before me like an island surrounded by an infinite black universe, without sky or earth. My proximity to the clusters of tiny points change depending on where and how I turn my head and body. When I use my virtual controllers, I can direct my way through the trees, along forest paths at various speeds, or fly above the tree canopy below. And, more importantly, I can also zoom in to view the trees at specific points in their history or biography, and observe their gradual growth in a matter of seconds. These timescales are in their early stages, but it is evident that as many more years of data are added the virtual time-lapse view of these trees will be dazzling.

On a personal level, what I find most absorbing about being inside this virtual terrain is that it is of a physical site I am very familiar with. The National Arboretum Canberra is a relatively new but prominent feature in the landscape, having officially opened in February 2013 to mark the centenary of the city. The arboretum rose from

the ashes of two catastrophic regional fires, in 2001 and 2003, in an area that had previously been part of an extensive commercial radiata pine plantation. It is situated on traditional Ngunnawal country and spans 250 hectares along the south-west ridge that borders the city and Lake Burley Griffin. Driving past this landscape to work and back every day, along the Tuggeranong Parkway, I have witnessed the progress of the arboretum since its inauguration.

Across the rolling hills, 94 species of rare and endangered trees, selected from around the world, have been planted in diagonal lines creating a geometric patchwork of forests. In its infancy, the landscape was populated by patterned rows of spindly saplings protected in red plastic tubes, which made it appear uncannily like the vertices across a mesh-framed digital surface. While watching these baby sprigs battle the elements, it has regularly occurred to me that I will not live long enough to see some of the species grow to full maturity. One of the exotic species, the giant sequoia, is estimated to reach a full height of 80 metres but will grow less than 10 metres every decade. Perhaps my great-great-grandchildren may visit these towering trees one day.

In trying to imagine these trees growing into the future, it is hard to predict—with the threat to our own naturally occurring habitats and ecosystems—if they, or the arboretum, will survive this century. Global warming is attributed to rising temperatures causing unseasonal and extreme weather conditions. Just one degree increase in temperature in combination with another devastating bushfire and my local landscape will change permanently. The diverse genera of Eucalypt endemic to this region's cooler climates are unlikely to return in such conditions, along with the other living species that rely on this habitat. In this unnatural situation, the ANU's innovative research has important implications for how forest ecosystems are regenerated with the challenges of climate change, locally, nationally and globally.

The extent of human industry and reliance on fossil fuels since the industrial revolution has quickly affected the earth, reshaping its geology and ecology. We call the current era the Anthropocene to identify it as a geological age of our own making. Based on irrefutable atmospheric evidence, the scientific consensus is that the significant environmental challenges we face today have been induced by human activity. Driven by a conception of progress and technological advancement, humanity has been creating a new kind of environment that is not conducive to supporting natural life.⁵ This planetary environmental crisis is now of such magnitude that we can, using Timothy Morton's neologism, call it a *hyperobject*: a thing so vastly distributed across time and space that it defies normal human comprehension.⁶

Monitoring the earth from space, we can, however, glimpse these vast geographical changes. Millions of high-definition satellite images collated by NASA and the US Geological Survey have been assembled in collaboration with Google Images. The view onto three decades of data sped up to demonstrate huge areas of rapid deforestation evokes feelings of dismay rather than of wonder. Similar planetary timescales have been constructed from the ground. In 2015, researchers from the University of Washington created a photomontage of the Briksdalsbreen Glacier ice melt in Norway by synthesising 86 million individual digital photos mined from the internet. Compiled from images captured by visitors taking snaps from one common viewpoint over several years, this montage revealed a sobering time-lapse of the fast-shrinking glacier.

There is a certain irony here: that in order to demonstrate our fate we must rely on the further advancement of these technologies to harvest and calculate data from an ever-expanding field of observable events. The very technologies that we hope will provide information to save us actually contribute to our destruction of the planet.

Without powerful computational tools, it would be impossible to fully understand the inter-relationships and the causes and effects of climate events on a global scale. Even to visualise the complexity of this ecological predicament, we employ robotised vision, thus exacerbating the technological divide between the human eye and an optically perceived world. The technologies that help us model and understand the natural world are allowing us to supplant nature with its simulations. Even the physical experience of global warming can be replaced with a virtual version.

The EcoVR platform is not designed to replace nature, but to draw our attention to it. Yet it does leave me wondering in what way this virtually recreated landscape will be experienced in 100 years. What kind of dystopic vision will future generations encounter when they play back the first century of the second millennium? Perhaps in 100 years the world will have been so completely denatured the only interaction with other forms of life will be available inside a headset. Our digital memories of what existed before will be mapped across the artificial landscape in high-resolution VR. Rather than walking under the giant sequoia at the National Arboretum, it is more likely that my great-great-grandchildren will encounter a vastly documented environmental catastrophe, a *hyperobject* to be experienced in augmented reality. Tim Brown knows all too well what kind of future challenges science is predicting. It has motivated him to draw our attention to the fact that the natural landscape around us is changing so dramatically it is easy to forget what it looked like just one year ago. His hope is that this virtual experience will inspire climate action rather than to look the other way.

- Joni Mitchell, 'Big Yellow Taxi', 1970, 'Big Yellow Taxi' lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Crazy Crow Music / Siquomb Music Publishing.
- ² Tim B. Brown et al., 'EcoVR: Visualizing Real Ecosystems and Big Data in Virtual Reality', Centre of Excellence in Plant Energy Biology, School of Computer Science, Australian National University, borevitzlab.anu.edu.au/borevitz-lab-people/tim-brown.
- Visit the ANU's National Arboretum Canberra research site, science.anu.edu.au/research/field-sites/national-arboretum-canberra-research-site, and youtube.com/watch?v=R_8YHsvN9t4.
- 4 Shrishti-VR (shrishti meaning universe in the Sanskrit language) is an open-source software being developed by Dr Ajay Limaye, ANU VisLab, National Computational Infrastructure (NCI). Dr Limaye is the creator of Drishti (meaning insight), which is an internationally recognised open software volume-exploration tool. It is used for visualising and animating data acquired primarily from 3D X-ray microcomputed tomography, github.com/nci/drishti/wiki.
- Paul J. Crutzen, 'Geology of Mankind', Nature, vol. 415, issue 6867, 2002, p. 23.
- Firmothy Morton, The Ecological Thought, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2010, pp. 130–35.
- Ricardo Martin-Brualla, David Gallup and Steve M. Seitz, 'Time-lapse Mining from Internet Photos', proceedings of ACM SIGGRAPH (Association of Computing Machinery's Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques), 2015, grail.cs.washington.edu/projects/timelapse/TimelapseMiningSIGGRAPH15.pdf.



A Vew of the Virtual National Arboretum Canberra, 2016
A snapshot from EcoVR in Shristi-VR,
Tim Brown et al, Centre of Excellence
in Plant Energy Biology, School of Computer
Science, Australian National University,
Ajay Limaye, ANU VizLab, National
Computational Infrastructure.

1 2

3 4

Olympos









- Ewoud van Rijn, Rag Halo, 2012, marker on paper, 170 x 120 cm. Courtesy of the artist
- Dan Attoe, *Desert Cave*, 2011, oil on canvas on MDF, 122 x 94.5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Project, Berlin
- Glenn Brown, *Deep Throat*, 2007, oil on panel, 152 x 122 cm. © Glenn Brown Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian
- Johan Creten, *Odore di Femmina La Cible du Diable II*, 2015, glazed stoneware, high-fired, 12 x 62 cm. © Creten / ADAGP, Paris 2017. © Gerrit Schreurs. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin

2 3

Periwinkle Beggar







- Glenn Brown, Exercise One (For Ian Curtis) After Chris Foss, 1995, oil on canvas mounted on board, 50 x 70 cm. © Glenn Brown. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian
- Alex Pittendrigh, Worlds Through Worlds IV, 2008, synthetic polymer paint and Indian ink on linen, 38 x 25 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne Photograph: John Brash
- Cybele Cox, Goat Head, 2014, hand-coiled buff raku, stoneware glaze, 35 X 45 X 35 cm Courtesy of the artist





In my ongoing attempts to comprehend why transgender bodies provoke special attention (ranging from slightly prolonged stares to transphobic murder), I think there might be some merit to the idea that trans bodies elicit ideas about death that are frighteningly familiar to all. Bodily transition is human in the sense that we all grow, we all get sick, we all endure a puberty and will all have a death. But the particularity of a transgender state of physical transition is that it is a conscious, deliberate, accelerated transition that is commonly perceived as destructive. Something in you has to die, doesn't it? And isn't killing yourself pathological?

Certainly, physiological identity markers dissolve or morph—my soprano singing voice broke and will never return—but concurrent with hormonal or surgical phenomena that unfold on the plane of matter (and are predominantly accessible only to relatively wealthy, socially connected, healthy, 'safe' people), could we consider that trans people enact an intrapersonal destruction at the level of ideas? A cauterisation of law from the body? A death of Jacques Derrida's archive? Derrida elucidates archiving as a practice of remembering and forgetting: maintaining one idea results in erasing surrounding ideas, hence a gender-disgressive reconstitution of bodily matter burns through the curated psychic documents of the gender binary. I continue to live, while my relationships to the doctrines of femininity and masculinity transition. This transgender body is not male, is not female. At this point in time it does not legally exist at all, but it still does all the regular bodily things: conversing, masticating, defecating, urinating, etc.; and in this sense, I talk, chew, shit and piss away the gender binary every day. Spanish theorist and curator Paul Preciado describes bodies not only as flesh and bones, but also as ideas and images,¹ a simple, powerful reminder from a transgender writer that the Cartesian body—mind divide is fictive and that bodies as visually apprehended concepts can alter ideologies. The existence of my non-binary body causes the collective idea of a two-gender system to transition just a little bit. Yesterday a child at my workplace shouted out 'she's a boy!' while pointing at me.

There are enculturated, unconscious modes of relating that we should eradicate. The insidious machinations of gender and racial hegemonies are not only 'out there' in our media and legal system, but routed in the neural pathways of the brains that produced the advertisements and wrote the laws. That some of our newest mass-produced technologies (facial recognition and bio-scanning software) interpret transfeminine breasts or transmasculine facial hair as either an operational error or an illegal status reveals how gender is, at the point of its propagation, a necro-fiction: living bodies walking through zombie technologies.² Binary gender is the invisible modus operandi. I often ask men what it means to be a man—the fact that their answers are invariably confused is evidence enough for me of unexcavated embodied doctrines of being.

Works of art rarely cause major damage to embodied ideologies. They often cause psychosomatic shivers, head turns, squints and furrowed brows, but in the end they are largely speculative and leave the bodies of their audiences, and therefore society, largely unchanged. The recent film *Le Fort des Fous (Fort of the Mad*, 2017) by Algerian filmmaker Narimane Mari is the only new cultural text I am able to find that (by my interpretation at least) presents the allegorical extraction of internalised doctrines from the body through death rituals and, as evidenced during its installation at *documenta 14*, manages to implicate the bodies of its viewers.

Narimane Mari (Director)
Still from *Le Fort des Fous* (Fort of the Mad), 2017
Digital video
140 mins
Courtesy of the artist

The film follows a nomadic community passing through the wilderness, beyond civic bureaucracy. It is here that old selves are destroyed through collective rituals. Utilising autobiographical elements, documentary footage, fictitious dreamscapes and real people portraying themselves, the film resists genre conventions. Mari recruited her Algerian cast by talking to strangers on the street, and while the scenery and costuming is highly choreographed, the action was co-directed by responding to the lived experiences of her cast members; fiction and nonfiction co-mingle on screen, and can be sensed in the candid and suspicious expressions of silent young men dressed as soldiers, staring directly back at me. The mirage of cinema is undone by the entire third section, which comprises uninterrupted slow and grainy footage of inarticulate interviews between the hunched director and two activists. The political position of the work is not confessed through any sense of a plot and, as such, the film follows the legacy of philosopher Édouard Glissant in its resistance against the basic requirements of a Western rational world view: that ideas or people must be compliant and transparent in order to be understood.³ Much of the dialogue in the film is spoken in a fictitious language (made comprehensible for the audience through subtitles), an amalgam dialect conjured from the multi-lingual collective colonial mindset and presented as an asynchronous voiceover.

In *Le Fort des Fous* colonialism is addressed in this disjunctive embodiment. While racial and binary-gender-based ideologies raise specific issues that should not be conflated, they bear a similarity in giving rise to unresolved cultural presumptions about bodily matter that in turn lead to violence and oppression. The nexus of these marginalisations of race and gender can function as a source for imagining alternative narratives: heterotopic futures in their becoming, that do not revolve on a logic of opposition or binarised categories of oppressor and oppressed. Mari opens the second section of the film with a brutal quote from the controversial Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini: 'There are millions of innocents like you all over the world, who prefer to erase themselves from history rather than lose their innocence. I have to make them die, even though I know they cannot do otherwise. I have to cure them and make them die, die, die.' And yet, the implied death in the dreamlike sequence that follows is anything but violent. It seems to me that Mari's meditation is on the word 'cure', as her characters subsequently awaken and share space after having carried out collective death rituals on the vast and desolate coast of the Greek island of Kythira. In a scene without dialogue, members of the group kiss the lips of two of their fellow members who lie in deathly repose, and then cast a reclining person out to sea on a hand-built raft.

These bodies are alive: the rise and fall of their chests and the involuntary flicker of their eyelids are all the more discernible within the quietude of the scene. The two individuals lying on the sand, having their mouths and cheeks kissed, have been reincarnated from the first section of the film, where we saw them as a young photographer and an old drunkard observing the training practices of boyish soldiers at a military camp in French-colonised Algeria. Their reappearance in a disjunct spatio-temporal environment, wearing contemporary casual clothing, suggests to me that their assisted deaths are the euthanasia of collective colonial mentalities that have passed between generations, cultures and continents.

Lying on a giant gunmetal grey beanbag, I watch the film with a group of others. The screen is suspended below a crystal chandelier in the pastel yellow ballroom that is the Ballhaus in Kassel's Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe. Frescoes of 'exotic' birds adorn the interior perimeter of the space, renovation additions ordered by Prince Wilhelm II, Elector of Hesse, in 1828. As I emerge from this surreal filmic experience and pass my reflection in huge gold-framed mirrors, I see a stylised cockatoo, too curly, perched above me. I have been inside an

abstracted history of colonial domination and feel that, very tenderly and tactfully, Mari has at once murdered my complacency and suggested a way forward through collective ritualistic acknowledgement and purging.

But now it's a few days before Christmas, I am no longer in Kassel but sitting next to a stranger who is trembling on a mattress in my garage, their words erupting in short powerful episodes. Around me, in one of our fortnightly meetings, is a group of eight people, some of whom I have never met and some I have known for a few years. This is no Greek island, but we are also, like the anonymous protagonists in *Le Fort des Fous*, an itinerant community invested in cultivating ways to continue living. We have different financial, racial, political and religious backgrounds, but we are collectively taking stock of the ways that our lives have diverged from the gender binary. It's not the first time someone in this group has spoken about suicide, and I'm certain that it will not be the last time someone reflects on their self-acceptance as the revelatory comprehension of a reason to continue living.

The pathology, according to the shared logic of our group, exists not inside our bodies, but in the legal and medical systems that give us our hormones only after diagnosing us as mentally ill, and that will let us change our names only after destroying our original birth certificates. The state dissects us to keep gender intact. I draw life from the idea that we can reverse this situation, that by staying alive we can render the archive void. Derrida clarifies the function of the archive as consignment, in the sense of 'gathering together signs' with the aim of coordinating a 'single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration'.⁴ This coherent corpus becomes a corpse wherever plurality and secrets exist, such as in the anonymity of our group and the diversity of our shifting genders. The repeated communion of our in-between bodies is a repeated funerary wake for the compendium of what is 'real' and 'true' about the binary gender system.

- Paul Beatriz Preciado, 'My Body Doesn't Exist', The documenta 14 Reader, Prestel Verlag, Munich, London, New York, 2017, pp. 117–61.
- The research of American artist and writer Zach Blas is an elucidating resource on the inherently racist, homophobic and transphobic design of new biotechnologies. See, for example, Zach Blas, 'Escaping the Face: Biometric Facial Recognition and the Facial Weaponization Suite', Media-N, CAA Conference Edition, vol. 9, no. 2, Summer 2013.
- Édouard Glissant, 'For Opacity', Poetics of Relation (trans. Betsy Wing), University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1990, pp. 189–94.
- 4 Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', Diacritics, vol. 25, no. 2, 1995, p. 10.

Narimane Mari (Director)
Stills from *Le Fort des Fous* (Fort of the Mad), 2017
Digital video
140 mins
Courtesy of the artist



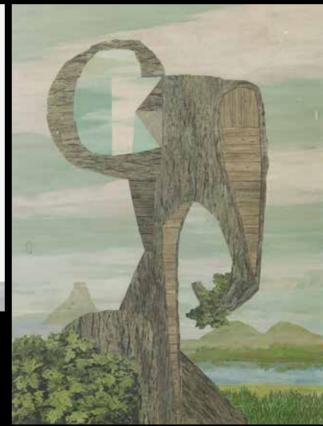


Quasar Way









- Ewoud van Rijn, *Through Hell and High Water*, installation at Boijmans van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam, 2008. Courtesy of the artist
- Thomas Cole, *The Titan's Goblet*, 1833, oil on canvas, 49.2 x 41 cm. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- Dan Attoe, *Accretion #35 (This World is Dirty...)*, 2006, acrylic on canvas stretched over panel, 122 x 122 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects, Berlin
- Whiting Tennis, *The Vegetarian*, 2017, acrylic and collage on canvas, 121.9 x 91.4 cm Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York







- Dan Attoe, *Dancefloor*, 2007, oil on canvas on panel, 18.3 x18.5 cm Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects, Berlin
- Alex Pittendrigh, *Gloss Topos*, 2017, glazed porcelain, pumice gel, gesso, silicone, synthetic polymer paint, aluminium chain on plywood panel, 62 x 43 x 10 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne. Photograph: Taryn Ellis
- 3 Karen Kilimnik, *The Red Room*, 2007, installation view. Courtesy of the artist and 303 Gallery, New York





'If I feel entitled to eat animal meat, what stops me from eating human meat? ... it's clear that some people are convinced that eating human parts is not such an unnatural thing.' So writes Dr Motsamai Molefe, a philosophy lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, interviewed in the *Huffington Post* about the arrest of five alleged cannibals in the South African town of Escourt in 2017.² In this case, the perps claimed to be spiritual healers, able to confer health and/or riches through their concoctions.

Allegations of 'savage' cannibalism were typically made by colonialists to justify the conversion, dispossession or extermination of those committing these unnatural acts. They usually cited either ritual or revenge as the motivation of the offenders, depending on whether the eaten were friend or foe. Eating body parts requires a corpse—which involves either grave-robbing, popular in Europe until recently (particularly of Egyptian Mummies)—or murder, which is far more likely to be illegal in most jurisdictions than cannibalism. Modern cases of cannibalism usually revolve less around medicine and more around starvation, sexual or psychopathic gratification, or profit (think of the return on investment experienced by Sweeney Todd and Mrs Lovett). The cannibal, like the carnivore, sees nothing particularly wrong with his or her culinary choices, or at least envisages a range of benefits that outweigh any unpleasantness. The Übermensch sees humans as just another prey species.

Human cannibalism has terrified and fascinated us since the Pleistocene, with scraped bones providing evidence that our (non-sapien) ancestors prepared their neighbours for feasts as far back as 780,000 years ago.³ Art reflects our fears and beguilement; could prehistoric hand stencils be not self-portraits but menus?

In the 16th century the illustrator Theodor de Bry portrayed Europeans' preferred image of cannibalism through his now infamous depictions of the ceremonial savagery of the Tupinambá (a tribe of the Tupi peoples of South America) that were based on the accounts of the explorer Hans Staden.⁴ Ironically, the distaste of the colonialists for the culinary practices of the Tupi was matched only by the longing of the Brazilian elites to embrace Western culture, leading modernist poet Oswald de Andrade, in his 'Cannibal Manifesto', to extol cultural cannibalism as a way of countering European postcolonial cultural hegemony. He put this succinctly: 'Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question'⁵, thereby celebrating cannibalism while culturally consuming Shakespeare.

Peter Paul Rubens took cannibalism beyond humanity to the gods, for are not the gods idealised humans, with cool, rational masks hiding lives 'devoted to brawling and guzzling and fucking'? Saturn Devouring A Son is a meticulous depiction of the consumption of filial flesh, involving both the fierceness of the predator (Saturn, the Roman version of the Greek Titan Cronus) and the agony of the prey (one of the five children he suspected would take his throne, and whom he therefore consumed upon their arrival in the world). Not for Rubens the comfortable Roman mythology of swallowing the children whole; his Saturn tears with his teeth while the baby screams. Almost 200 years later, in his Black Paintings, Francisco Goya shows the same divine cannibal god as nightmare and psychopath, and the victim now as a bleeding, lifeless torso, barely recognisable as human/god, but clearly red meat in composition. There is evidence to suggest that, in the original version, Goya gave Saturn a partially erect phallus, implying that cannibalism is not only natural but apparently something of an aphrodisiac.

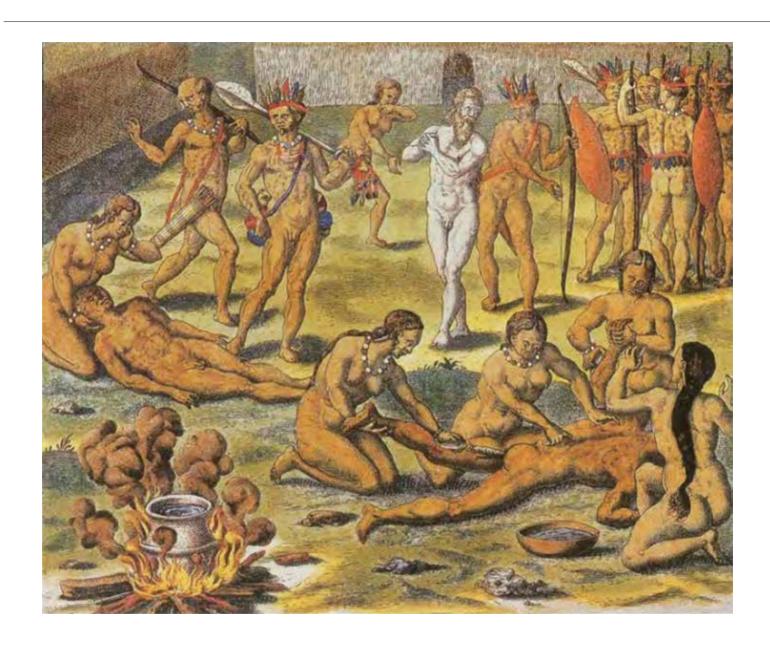
Théodore Géricault

Le Radeau de la Méduse, 1819

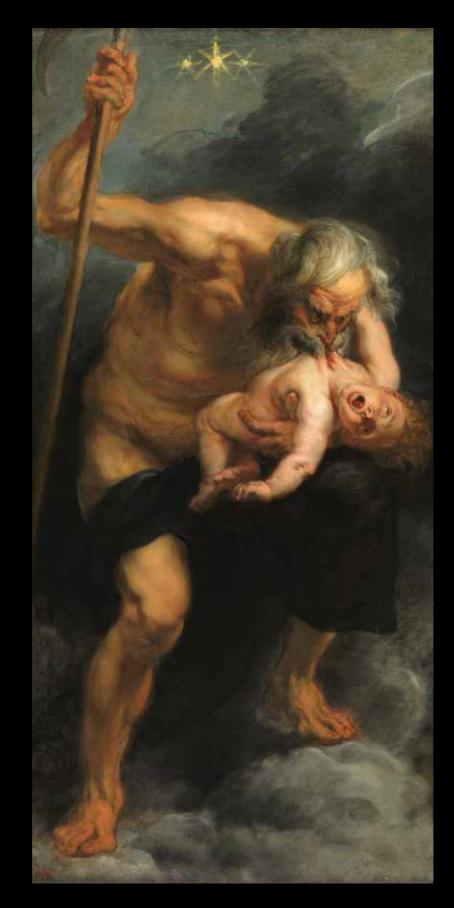
Oil on canvas

491 x 716 cm

Photograph © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) / Michel Urtado



Theodor de Bry Americae tertia pars, 1592 Engraving Biblioteca Mário de Andrade São Paulo, Brazil Source: Wikicommons



Peter Paul Rubens
Saturn Devouring a Son, 1636-38
Oil on canvas
182.5 x 87 cm
©Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado

In the great cultural tradition of bringing the gods (or their behaviours) down to earth, the Chinese artist Zhu Yu's performance piece *Eating People*, in 2000, purported to depict the artist steam-cooking and eating a human fetus, an act not dissimilar to that depicted by Rubens and Goya. Unlike Saturn, he reported that he found the dish 'very disgusting, I vomited it on the table'.8 The performance is now widely believed to have been a hoax (involving perhaps a doll's head attached to a duck carcass) but the outrage was certainly as real as Zhu Yu had hoped and far more. It was condemned as a barbarous act (which hardly makes it unnatural) and withdrawn from the *Fuck Off* exhibition held at Eastlink Gallery in Shanghai in November 2000 due to fears of government intervention. The artist queried, in his defence, why it was acceptable to use dead bodies in scientific research, but not in art. He could have asked why it was acceptable to eat the duck but not the fetus. Art is generally judged by its headlines more than its contents, particularly when it offers scope for racism or xenophobia, and website *Snopes* had to hose down a racist hoax story that circulated on the web claiming that the pictures actually showed 'Taiwan's hottest food'.9

In another cannibal performance, this time more auto-anthropophagous, artist Marco Evaristti, in 2006, sucked fat from his body using liposuction. He then mixed the fat with beef to make meatballs, which he sealed into 13 cans (representing, of course, the Last Supper). The artist described the work as being about the 'sanctity of the body' but also pointed out that meatballs made from human fat are no more disgusting (or unnatural) than those made from any other animal. What is unnatural, Evaristti said, is overeating, then having the fat sucked out so that you can go back to overeating. Again, the outrage that spewed forth was about the miniscule amount of human fat in the cans—fat donated by the artist—not the chunks of cow flesh cut from unwilling ruminants.

Humans, or gods in human incarnation, take many forms in art, literature and history—angry, crazy, hungry or barbaric. Whatever the depiction, cannibals are abject figures; cannibalism is one of the two original prohibitions of mankind (according to Freud, who rated it up there with incest). But is cannibalism 'unnatural'? The zoologist Bill Schutt recently confirmed that cannibalism occurs in every class of vertebrates, by the damped and that 'So long as it can be done in a way that does not commit a crime, eating people is not forbidden by any ... laws or religions'. 13

Eating humans is abject because, as Julia Kristeva says, 'the corpse ... is the utmost of abjection'. A dead human reminds us of our own mortality. What can more effectively challenge our borders and rules, our well-defined if contingent dualisms between subject and object, than a subject that incorporates its identical object? Yet we forgive those who eat their fellows in extremis (such as the footballers on Uruguayan Air Force Flight 571¹⁵), just as we ignore the humanoid pig carcass carried on the shoulder of a butcher. But appearances do not determine the level of abjection: cut off the wings and a chicken is physiologically very similar to a cat. Social custom determines that in the West we eat, without qualms, the former but not the latter, but in many parts of Asia both would be equally welcome.

So why not human flesh? After all, there are over seven billion humans on this planet and our population is growing in an extreme and unsustainable J-curve rarely seen in nature, 16 except in cases such as malignant tumours. 17 Jonathan Swift satirically suggested in his *Modest Proposal* that the Irish could solve overpopulation and poverty by selling their children at a 'tender' age to their rich and gluttonous English overlords. Luncheon of the people, by the people, for the people, could feed the people, while solving the cancer of overpopulation.

If we draw the line at murder, there are still plenty of dead people lying about, and, as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro once dead, we are undeniably animals—quintessentially meat. There is no dominant trend of humans eating living flesh in cannibal literature (although it occasionally happens). In fact, humans are generally not carnivores like lions, but scavengers of dead, putrefying flesh, like hyenas or vultures; what Paul Watson calls 'necrovores'. In fact, humans are generally not carnivores like lions, but scavengers of dead, putrefying flesh, like hyenas or vultures; what Paul Watson calls 'necrovores'.

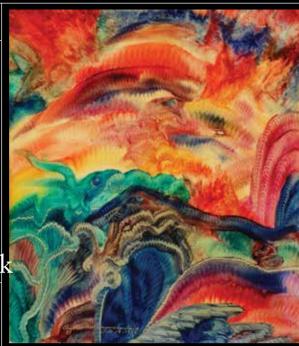
But if cannibalism is both natural and abject, what of a totally unnatural cannibalism? For those who must eat flesh, or those who, like Dr Molefe, are bothered by the artificial boundaries between the flesh of humans and that of other animals, artificial laboratory-grown meat is poised to enter the market. In the test tube, any stem cell can be cultivated into edible protein, and there is no reason to suppose that human cells could not be so harvested.²⁰ One author has suggested a recipe for 'Celebrity Cubes', in which meat from the stem cells of the famous can be fried for their fans.²¹

Cannibalism within any species is not unnatural, or at least is less unnatural than the breeding, confining, slaughtering and cooking of contingently chosen prey. Yet the ethical issues raised by the natural act of eating the weaker members of one's own or other species can apparently be diminished only in the test tube, thereby increasing its unnaturalness.

- 'To Serve Man', *The Twilight Zone*, episode 89, CBS, USA, 1962. Adapted from a 1950 short story by Damon Knight in which extraterrestrials (called Kanamits) arrive on earth and, with surprising observation of protocol, address the UN to generously offer technological benefits and cultural exchange. The latter involves free mass-transit trips to the Kanamit home planet. UN translators set to work on an official-looking book in the Kanamit language, accidentally left behind by their UN ambassador, eventually deciphering its title as 'To Serve Man'. Just as her boss boards one of the regularly departing spaceships, a young cryptographer urgently pushes through the crowd at the gate and shouts at him that she has cracked the code: 'It's a cook book!' [Ed.]
- Zongile Nhlapo, 'Why Is It Wrong To Eat Human Flesh When We Eat Animal Flesh? Asks Academic', *Huffington Post*, 25 August 2017, huffingtonpost.co.za/2017/08/25/why-is-it-wrong-to-eat-human-flesh-when-we-eat-animal-flesh-asks-academic_a_23179224; accessed 9 December 2017.
- 3 Yolanda Fernandez-Jalvo et al., 'Human Cannibalism in the Early Pleistocene of Europe (Gran Dolina, Sierra de Atapuerca, Burgos, Spain)', Journal of Human Evolution, vol. 37, nos 3–4, September 1999, p. 167.
- 4 'Engravings of Native Americans and Europeans in de Bry's America', British Library website, bl.uk/collection-items/engravingsof-native-americans-and-europeans-in-de-brys-america; accessed 8 December 2017.
- 5 Leslie Bary, 'Oswald de Andrade's "Cannibalist Manifesto"', Latin American Literary Review, vol. 19, no. 38, July-December 1991, p.38.
- John Coetzee, 'Comments on Paola Cavalieri, "A Dialogue on Perfectionism", in Paola Cavalieri (ed.), The Death of the Animal: A Dialogue, Columbia University Press, New York, 2009, p. 86.
- ⁷ Stephen Farthing and Geoff Dyer, 1001 Paintings You Must See Before You Die, Pier 9, Crows Nest, NSW, 2016 (updated edition), p. 381.
- 8 Silvia Fok, Life and Death: Art and the Body in Contemporary China, Intellect Books, Bristol, 2013, p. 153.
- 9 'Is Fetus Soup Eaten by Asians?', Snopes, snopes.com/horrors/cannibal/fetus.asp; accessed 22 January 2018.
- Gideon Long, 'Meatballs Made from Human Fat, Anyone?', Reuters Online, 18 May 2007, uk.reuters.com/article/2007/05/18/ oukoe-ukchile-artist-idUKN1724159420070518; accessed 16 August 2017.
- Cosimo Schinaia and Antonella Sansone, On Paedophilia, Karnac, London, 2010, p. 167.
- 12 Bill Schutt, Eat Me: A Natural and Unnatural History of Cannibalism, Profile Books, Wellcome Collection, London, 2017, p. 22.
- 13 Fok, p. 153.
- ¹⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1982, p. 4.
- Piers Paul Read, Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors, Avon, New York, 1975.
- 16 Stephen Emmott, 10 Billion, Penguin, London, 2013, p. 13.
- Warren Hern, 'Has the Human Species Become a Cancer on the Planet?: A Theoretical View of Population Growth as a Sign of Pathology', Current World Leaders, vol. 36, no. 6, December 1993.
- Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Cannibal Metaphysics, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2014, p.155.
- Paul Watson, 'Why Killing Whales is Murder', 2006, seashepherd.org/news-and-commentary/commentary/archive/why-killing-whales-is-murder.html; accessed 7 December 2017.
- Simone Dennis and Alison Witchard, 'We Have Never Been Meat (But We Could Be)', in M. Boyde and F. Probyn-Rapsey (eds), Animals in the Anthropocene, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 2015, pp. 151–52.
- Koert van Mensvoort and Hendik-Jan Grievink, The In Vitro Meat Cookbook, BIS Publishers, Amsterdam, 2014, p. 145.



Solstice Deck









- Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, *Untitled*, 1955, 43.2 x 38 cm. © Lewis B. Greenblatt Courtesy of Eugene Von Bruenchenhein Estate
- Séraphine Pick, *Topless Girls in a Crowd*, 2013, oil on linen, 165 x 200 cm Courtesy of the artist and STATION, Melbourne
- Karen Kilimnik, *Karen Kilimnik, January 6–February 10, 2001*, installation view at 303 Gallery, New York. Courtesy of the artist and 303 Gallery, New York
- Fiona Abicare, *Neither/nor/nor*, 2013, polyester, timber, brass, stainless steel, 99.5 x 184 x 7.5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne Photograph: Christian Capurro



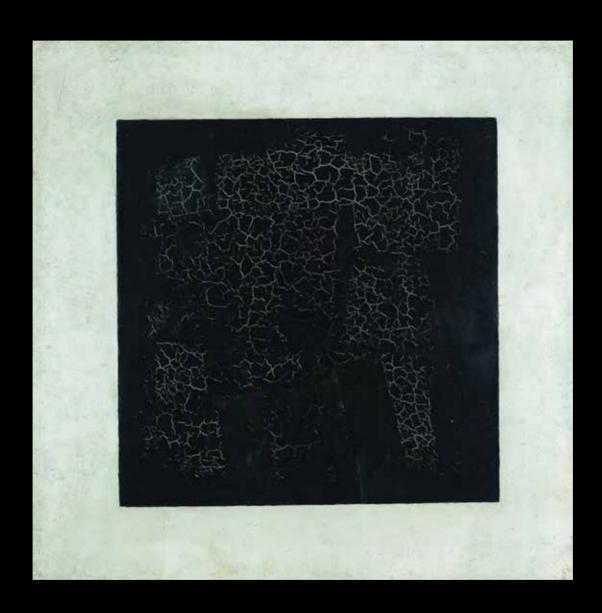
Teutoburg Forest





Folkert de Jong, *The Dance*, 2008, styrofoam, pigmented polyurethane foam, artificial pearls 90 x 400 x 300 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Saatchi Collection, London Photograph: Aatjan Renders

- Johan Creten, *De Toort / TORCH*, 2010, glazed stoneware, 132 x 60 x 48 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Transit, Mechelen, and Johan Creten studio
- Ewoud van Rijn, $Rag\ T$, 2012, litho on paper, 32.5 x 25 cm. Courtesy of the artist
- Sharon Goodwin, *Same Old Words* (installation view), 2014, bent plywood, acrylic paint, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Christo Crocker



Kazimir Malevich

Black Square, 1915

Oil on linen

80 x 80 cm

Courtesy of the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Adventures of the Orange Square



Once unwrapped, the surface is diffusely shiny, reflecting only a dull haze. Millions of this minimalist, monochrome sculpture exist across the globe: a thin, floppy bright-orange square, almost eight centimetres across, representing a race against the sun, a denial of time. It is made up of around 97 per cent dairy, or more accurately solid materials that were once dairy: whey protein concentrate, anhydrous milk fat and dried milk powder. The other three per cent is a cocktail of hydrocolloids, emulsifiers, preservatives, additives and dozens of other intermediary ingredients that don't legally need to be listed, including a vitamin D supplement derived from Australian wool.¹ This consumable ready-made is the true icon of our era: the processed cheese slice.

Before cheese was redefined, time always caught up with it in the end. In Germany, in the late 1800s, they had tried canning Limburger; in France, Camembert and soft cheeses trapped in short cylindrical tins (handy to ship and to pack in soldiers' rations) didn't seem to last any longer than when wrapped just in wax paper. Across Europe, attempts were made to heat and mix cheeses in an effort to provide something clean, long-lasting and profitable, a cheese that could accompany sailors and entrepreneurs as they trekked to warmer climes. But the oily fats would separate and seep out, only to soon after go rancid. Swiss company Gerber made a breakthrough in 1911 by adding an emulsifying salt, which managed to keep the melted Emmenthal a consistent paste that could be poured and moulded as desired. A few years later, in 1915, a young Canadian in Chicago was experimenting with melting dried out bits of discarded Cheddar from the grocers he supplied. He ended up with rectangular loaves of orange cheese that could be easily sliced for sandwiches and which, he claimed, could be 'kept indefinitely without spoiling'. James Kraft patented his creation and solidified its popularity by gaining a contract to supply his cheese to the US Army throughout the remainder of World War I, ensuring a generation of men were hooked on the gummy, salty cheese when they returned home.

At the same time Kraft was developing his product, an artist in the village of Kuntsevo, just west of Moscow, made what he considered to be a startling discovery. Painting quickly over a previous image with a solid layer of paint to form a black square on a white square canvas, Kazimir Malevich arrived at his first *Black Square* (1915). As the focal point of his incipient formulation of suprematism, the black square was a full stop and a zero, a new starting point, a void that represented the 'germ of all possibilities', a 'total eclipse', a sidestepping representation and replacing it with absolute being. It was a transposable symbol for utopian potential, an entity that went on to multiply, featuring on a theatrical curtain for the futurist play *Victory Over the Sun* (1913), on a book cover, on lapel and sleeve badges, on banners and even on the gravestone for Malevich's burial.

Here, during World War I, at the compounded birth of the long modern century, we find the arrival of parallel squares—one orange and one black—that mark many strands of the coming hundred years, scions of a century obsessed with control and order, disguised behind dreams of perfection. Both are abstractions from a messy reality, seeking inspiration and assurance in standardisation, in streamlining. How they have fared since is telling. Malevich's revolutionary experiments are several cracked, fading paintings, whose ideas have been subsumed into institutionalised and ossified readings of modernism and minimalism, turning the *Black Square* into an historical sign, a dead ideal of the past. The orange square, however, has flourished. Even as a derided symbol of kitsch pseudo-food, it has been resuscitated in foodie circles by upscale burger joints across Europe. Processed cheese slices make up the largest part of processed cheese sales worldwide, and they account for a mind-blowing 74 per cent of total sales at the supermarket in the USA.⁵

Perhaps, as the orange square has come to embody the wide dissemination and integration into daily life that Malevich imagined for his *Black Square*, we might benefit from those perspectives applied to his suprematist

vision. Exhibiting the first small canvas alongside dozens of other geometric paintings in Petrograd in 1915, Malevich hung *Black Square* in the upper corner of the room, occupying the place of Orthodox Christian icons. He invited viewers to read the square as they would a religious icon painting: as a visible reflection of the invisible, a medium that, through an invocation of the prototype, provides direct access to the divine. Accordingly, the square is a non-vision, a painting that shows nothing but is still giving us a Platonic square that embodies pure feeling—any feeling at all. In discussing the influence of Malevich, Tom McDonough has posed the square monochrome 'not as one further move in a history of geometric abstraction, but as its negation, in fact, as the abolition of a separate sphere of art and representation more broadly. The monochrome appears here as a species of nihilism, understood as a true materialist aesthetic.'6

Black Square could be seen simultaneously as both the realist nadir and the spiritual apex of art; we might view the orange square as its continuation. Following the 'cracking' of milk, in the 1970s, into various parts and products, industrial cheese producers found that they didn't need to start with actual cheese in order to create processed cheese. In the 1990s, Kraft was found by the American Food and Drug Administration to be using milk protein concentrate, at that point not a permitted ingredient in processed cheese slices. Kraft's solution was to rebrand the product, from 'Pasteurised Process Cheese Food' to 'Pasteurised Prepared Cheese Product'. The orange square is a ready symbol for our actual state in the world, an icon for how far we have actually come from any conception of or relation to what we might call 'natural'. The cheese slice is an eternal, unchanging solid, one that in a similar paradox to Black Square is both direct in its materiality, as a direct embodiment of pure nourishment, while at the same time only ever evoking the idea of 'food', the Platonic ideal of 'cheese' remaining a distant, unreachable form.

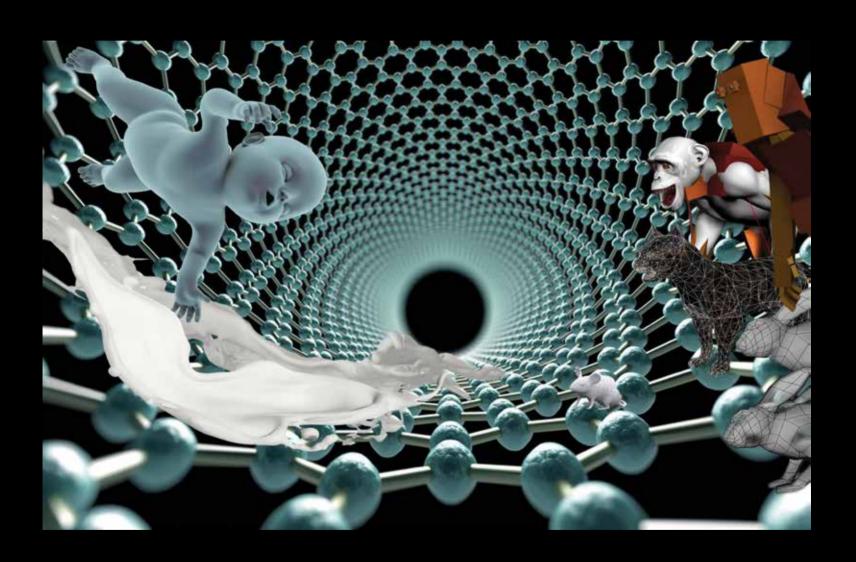
We might also, then, read the orange square back into the *Black Square* to find what links these formal siblings from different sides of the world. The factory production of processed cheese is part of an historical progression away from geographic and microbiotic specificity towards a standardised product that can be produced anywhere and always taste the same. The orange and the black squares share an appeal to universality, that is in the same gesture an erasure of any sense of place and a denial of detail. In this light, Malevich's idealism was actually, as his critics of suprematism feared, a step towards alienation, mechanic vision and a promotion of purely individual consumption.

As one of the world's most widely consumed materialist aesthetics, the orange square, with its plastic buoyancy and manipulable slow viscosity, holds within it the aims of the scientific paradigm of an undying hygienic eternity. It is an insidious and ingested version of the dream-plastic Imipolex G hinted at throughout Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), a material used variously for insulation, worn by the book's characters for heightened erotic bondage-play and even, it is suggested, enabling telepathic properties. What, then, does this tell us about our own bodies after more than a century of consuming the orange square? The cyborg realities we have theorised have long since arrived—the dull plastic sheen diffused through our muscles and membranes, imbued within the constituents of our very thoughts; the orange square is already in each of us, is us. Each act of consuming one multiple of the orange square is an act of communion with the void, with the plastic reality we inhabit as equally constructed and accidental. Each square is a monument to an unknown future, one where humanity has disappeared. Among the concrete ruins, all that remains are rectangular bricks of processed cheese and scattered prepackaged cheese slices, as brightly orange as the day they were made, perhaps punctuated by the occasional limb or body part from those who consumed enough of the cheese to effectively preserve their cells.

- ¹ Zhejiang Garden Biochemical is the world's largest producer of vitamin D supplement produced as a by-product from grease that coats sheep's wool, with the majority of wool supplied from Australia. The supplement makes its way into many of the world's processed dairy products. Cited in Melanie Warner, *Pandora's Lunchbox*, Scribner, London, p. 75.
- ² Cited in Warner, p. 40. The Kraft company later developed pre-cut and packaged individual cheese slices, which entered the US market in 1949.
- Malevich, cited in Alexandra Shatskikh, Black Square: Malevich and the Origin of Suprematism, Marian Schwartz (trans.), Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 2012, p. 50.
- 4 Malevich, quoted in Shatskikh, p. 45.
- International Dairy Foods Association, Dairy Facts, Washington DC, 2007, cited in A.Y. Tamime (ed.), Processed Cheese and Analogues, Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken, NY, 2011, p. 151.
- 6 Tom McDonough, 'The mercurial monochrome', cited in Iwona Blazwick (ed.), Adventures of the Black Square, Prestel and Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2015, p. 248.
- Oited in Warner, pp. 44–45.



Melanie Jackson Deeper in the Pyramid, 2016-18 Production stills 182.5 x 87 cm ©Melanie Jackson



Urchin Reefs









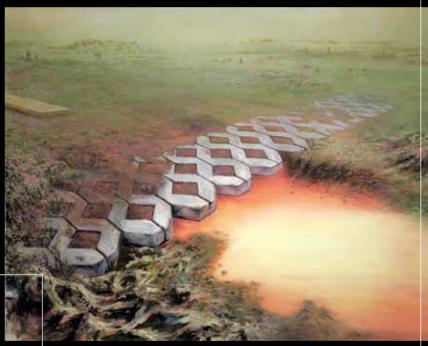


- Alex Pittendrigh, *Untitled*, 2006, acrylic on linen, 50 x 40 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne
- Janet Beckhouse, *Mermaid Bowl*, 2011, stoneware and glaze, 25 X 22 cm. Courtesy of the artist
- Alex Pittendrigh, *Près des Eaux IV*, 2015–16, ink, synthetic polymer and watercolour on canvas, 40.5 x 30.5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne
- Alex Pittendrigh, *Près des Eaux V*, 2015–2016, ink, synthetic polymer and watercolour on canvas, 40.5 x 30.5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne
- Alex Pittendrigh, *L'écume des jours*, 2013, wood, paper, bark, ceramic, oyster shell, synthetic polymer paint, plant materials and glue on wood panel, 50 x 40 x 14 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne

Vertumnus





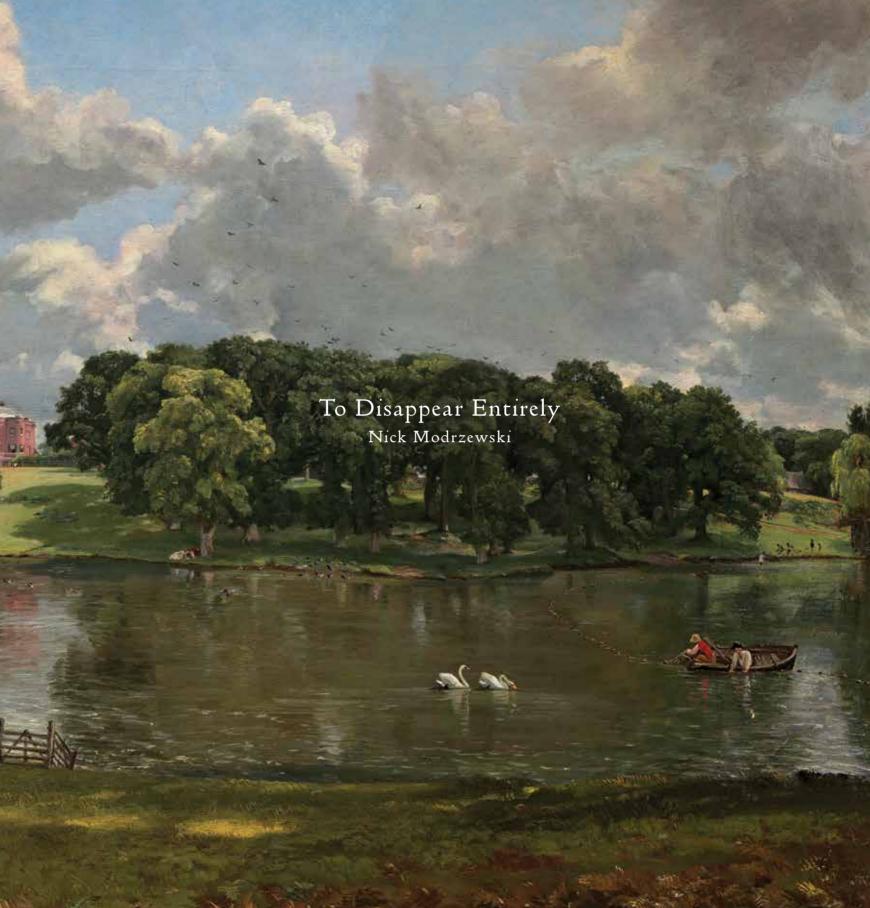


Karen Kilimnik, backdrop for Psyché, Opéra Nationale de Paris, 2011. Courtesy of the artist and 303 Gallery, New York

Janet Beckhouse, *Predator*, 2012, stoneware and glaze, 25 x 16 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Andreas Dobler, *Turfstones*, 2006, oil and acrylic on cotton, 40 x 180 cm. Courtesy of the artist

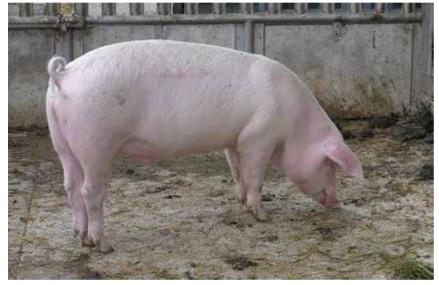




LET'S SAY THERE IS A FARMER WHO LIKES TO PHOTOGRAPH HIS ANIMALS.

He considers himself to be an amateur artist—nothing too fancy—a hobbyist, sure, but a passionate one. Each day, when he finishes work on the farm, he sets up his tripod and Canon EOS 750D, taking great pleasure in carefully arranging the frame. His favourite subjects are pigs, but he also enjoys photographing turkeys, sheep and cows.

[His photos usually look something like this:



Joshua Lutz. Domestic pig on an organic farm in Solothurn, Switzerland, 2004 Image source: Wikimedia Commons

They have titles such as 'Big Greedy Guts!' or 'Pecking Order'. The farmer starts to develop what among professional artists is called 'a substantial body of work'. His wife tells him it's quite poignant. I'tl's quite poignant, your work', she says, flicking through his high-gloss images, which he prints using his HP Wireless Inkjet. I Some years pass and the farmer continues to photograph animals at the farm. He begins to put his printouts inside wooden frames, which he purchases at the local opportunity shop and hangs on the walls of the house. One morning, the farmer goes to the

temperature and lighting controlled facility to check on the pigs. The facility hums with the sound of industrial fans and

moving parts. Suddenly, he feels inspired to take a photograph. It looks like this:

[It should be noted, at this point, that the farmer's business has been doing very well. Together with his wife, he now owns a chain of farms—what among professional farmers is called 'a vertically integrated management arrangement'. This means that he—or, more accurately, his company, Livestock Enterprises Pty Ltd—is able to maximise market share and exert control over every step of the farming process. He personally does not do what might be called 'traditional farming work', but instead hires immigrants, backpackers and,



Smithfield Foods Gestation Crates, Virginia USA, 2010 Image source: Wikimedia Commons/Humane Society of the United States

sometimes, recently released prisoners to do jobs such as cutting up the animals and packaging the meat. This gives him more time to focus on photography. (Staring at the thumbnail photo on the screen of his Canon EOS 750D, the farmer feels as if he is seeing his everyday surroundings for the first time. ('It's my world', he thinks to himself, 'I built this'. He looks at the metal bars merging with pig flesh, gridded into separate categories, repeating into the artificial horizon. There is a profound order, an almost divine mathematics to it all. Each element of the design strikes him at once: the gestation crates that contain the pigs' bodies so neatly, the algorithms that automate the feeding and watering, the wastemanagement system chugging away all on its own, not to mention the motion sensors embedded in the walls of the facility, monitoring the behaviour and productivity of individual animals. ("The Triumph of Reason", he smiles, 'that's what I will call this picture'. [He feels glad to have imposed discipline upon the filthy world of the swine. No longer can they roll in the mud or dig in the ground. They have been redirected towards the goal of maximising efficiency. He feels privileged to be privy to this smoothly functioning ecosystem of man-made technology and nature. But the most beautiful thing about the photo, he thinks to himself, is that there are no humans in it. It is as if the architects have disappeared into thin air, having constructed a system so perfect that it no longer requires manual input. Following this insight, the afternoon progresses without interruption. As he eats his lunch, the farmer analyses the data accumulated by the motion sensors. He is able to identify that pigs #2522, #860, #2013 and #2189 are ready to recommence farrowing. Later in the day, he will direct a group of recently released prisoners to facilitate the semi-automated process of administering insemination rods. [That night, using Adobe Photoshop CC, the farmer edits his photo. He zooms in on a pig. Then he zooms in further, magnifying it to 500 per cent, so that the image becomes nothing more than a sequence of coloured squares, like this:

As he stares at this congregation of shapes, a deep sense of calm envelops him. It feels like he is staring directly into the core of the pig and into all pigs throughout history, as if the beast he has photographed really is made from square blocks of colour and he, the farmer, is an omnipotent being responsible for constructing the thing one block at a time, as they must have done when they built

wife the image of the pigs in the facility, she does not react as he expects. She does not comment on the sublime geometry or note the beauty of technology meeting nature as if an act of divine intervention. Instead, she tells him that she prefers his earlier work. If 'I prefer your earlier work, especially that one of the pig lying on a stack of hay. "Sleepy Head", she says, 'that's what it was called. "Sleepy Head". If The farmer begins photographing and editing his works all through the night. His wife regularly drops into his impromptu studio, which he has set up in the study. She says, 'looking good', to which the farmer replies, 'it's nothing'. If One morning, when the farmer is shopping at the opportunity shop for a set of wooden frames, a book catches his eye. The book has the title *Piet Mondrian* on the front and depicts an image

like this:



Piet Mondrian

Composition No. 1 with Grey and Red 1938 / Composition with Red 1939,
1938–39

Oil on canvas, mounted on wood support
109.1 x 106 x 2.5 cm

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, 1976,
© 2007 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust

He flicks through the book. An itchy memory reminds him of editing pig photos. He purchases the book. At this point, let's just say the farmer reaches a turning point in his art practice. No longer does he consider himself an amateur. No longer does he self-depreciatingly say 'it's nothing', when his wife comments on his work. Using Adobe Photoshop CC, he zooms into all his previous photographs, cropping them at close proximity, like this:



Older versions of the images are destroyed. After devouring the Mondrian book, the farmer scours the internet for more information. Using Internet Explorer, he types www.yahoo.com and hyperlinks his way through 'neoplasticism',

'the language of geometric abstraction', 'Malevich' and, finally, 'suprematism'. He is literally swimming in that pig-editing-feeling as he scrolls through images of black square after black square, thinking again and again of a phrase that he later describes to his wife as 'the absolute zero of representation'. (That is what this is!' he says, showing her the Mondrian book. 'This is it, this is what it is!' and he keeps showing her the book, showing her all of it.

[It is around this time that the farmer begins talking loudly to himself while editing his photographs. His wife, sitting in the next room, quite rightly becomes concerned. She covertly writes down what she hears, with the intention of taking the document to a doctor at the first available opportunity. She strains to hear:

... ever since Aristotle ... brute beasts [indecipherable] for the sake of man, domestic animals for his use and food ... then ... [indecipherable] Genesis, 1:28, have dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth ... ergon in the parergon ... or vice versa, for it is in [indecipherable] beyond this, that ...

The is, quite understandably, entirely convinced that her husband has lost his mind. Part of her wants to storm into the room and demand that he stop ranting and raving, but part of her wants to flee the house in the interest of her own safety. Yet, she is also intrigued. So, she decides to listen. Night after night she does this, sitting alone in the adjacent room, writing out the farmer's words as she hears them. His sentences become increasingly jumbled but common themes and phrases recur: 'a cathedral to human supremacy', 'the geometry of control', 'purity of form', 'the triumph of reason'.

Night and day, he speaks in a constant stream: 'Barnett Newman surrendering to spatial infinity on the Tundra', 'suppressing the bestial nature' (this one comes up a lot), '... divinity is to disappear', 'Coleridge lost in the woods', 'Wordsworth sweating profusely'. The word 'infinite' is repeated again and again. And then, one morning, she wakes up to silence. The door to the studio is ajar. She gently pushes it open. The farmer is gone. The computer screen looks like this:

Photographs are scattered on the floor. After calling his



name she moves through each room in the house. She calls his name and steps outside and calls his name again, running now from facility to facility, up and down the rows of pigs and metal cages and towards the horizon line that never seems to get any closer, until finally she pushes through the giant double doors and emerges outside. Stopping to catch her breath, she calls out his name one last time, but the only

sound is the sound of the temperature and lighting controlled facility, humming away in the early morning sun.

70

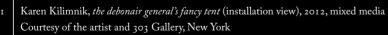
Wonthaggi











- Ewoud van Rijn, *Whatever-you-think-it-is-it is-whatever-you-think* at Ushi Kolb gallery, Karlsruhe. Courtesy of the artist
- 3 Emma Kunz Grotto. © and courtesy of the Emma Kunz Centre
- David Thorpe, *Good People*, 2002, mixed media collage, 75 x 99 cm. © and courtesy of David Thorpe and Maureen Paley, London
- Whiting Tennis, *Whiting Tennis*, installation view at Derek Eller Gallery, New York, 2017. Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York







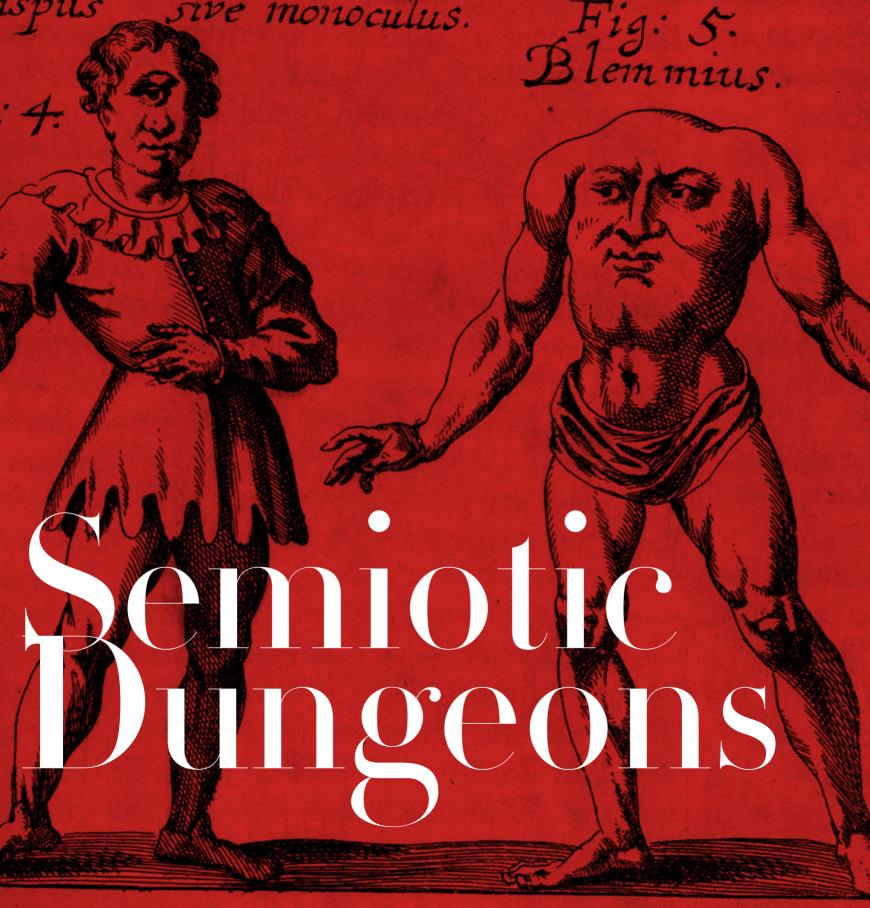


Xenogamy





- Emma Kunz at her Working Table in 1958 (Waldstatt, Switzerland). © Emma Kunz Centre Courtesy of the Emma Kunz Centre
- Ewoud van Rijn, *Reality*, 2008, ink on paper, 240 x 350 cm. Courtesy of the artist
- Karen Kilimnik, My Judith Leiber Bag, the Flag of Scotland, the Saltire Cross of St Andrew, 2012 glitter and archival glue on canvas, 50.8 x 52.7 cm. Courtesy of the artist and 303 Gallery, New York
- Augustin Lesage in his working space, Paris. Courtesy of Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art conteporain et d'art brut





Racialised signs in the contemporary West are a worrisome apparition of an ancient, abominable spirit. From this linguistic vault, the 'other' comes into sight through a wicked textuality that festered in antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Age of Discovery, during which difference was ciphered through terror, magic and mystery. This historical continuum accounts for an enigmatic yet familiar mode of othering: the corruption of racial markers into marks of monstrosity. While not always entirely abhorrent, the disfigured signs that emerge from this crypt of representation carry sadistic traces. Torture and torturer may be out of sight, but the manipulation of the racialised figure is evidence of an occult punishment. Like the growls of a chained prisoner hidden in the sepulchral depths of a torture chamber, the monstrous other reveals its gory confinement.

A recent example is *The Strain* (2014–17), an American TV series, co-created by Guillermo del Toro, about an epidemic of vampirism that spreads through New York. The protagonists are an eclectic group of citizens who band together to defeat the sanguinary 'Master' and his infectious disease—all except for a Mexican character named Augustin Elizalde, who joins a gang of dissident vampires (without becoming a vampire himself) that seeks to annihilate the Master. This association grants Elizalde a monstrous aura: the tenebrous Mexican, eternally in the shadow of his penumbra sombrero, appears a natural bridge between humans and the grisly bloodsuckers. The script grows darker when one situates The Strain within the history of vampires on the screen. Early figures such as F.W. Murnau's rodent-like Nosferatu, whose physiognomy invokes anti-Semitic stereotypes, sampled pre-existing racial fears to terrorise audiences of the early 20th century. Augustin Elizalde may not be physically disfigured, but a whip of terror still shapes his monstrous presence. The fact that the director is Mexican brings an ambivalence to the inscription of Elizalde into the American televisual space as it constitutes troubled self-narration rather than total external vilification. Although this ambiguity is not mobilised to participate in identity politics, it certainly indicates there is a potential to recuperate Western delusions and articulate a counter-statement (such as in the form of a more self-reflexive racialised monster). Still, if the vampire is a demon and the Mexican an imp, del Toro (like a true Catholic apostate) is inevitably a masochist because he is co-authoring his cultural identity as a negative other.

The vault of the monstrous other is product of a hallucinatory scopophilia that realises its perversity through images. The sado-nightmarish spaces in which these signs materialise are akin to 'semiotic dungeons', textual holes where signposts for non-Western peoples mangle and disfigure their object of representation. In this pit of images, the author is a scopic torturer and the object of representation a tortured ghoul. Typical of the Western gaze, this zone appears to be the result of an unresolved conflation of fear and desire, which manifests with a perverse eroticism. The vampire Nosferatu is again exemplary in this regard, as his repulsive physiognomy—hunched and bald, with long skeletal fingers—is animated by a predatory libido that has him biting his victim's neck in dark scenes that resemble a bisexual wet nightmare. This is a sensibility that dominates the semiotic dungeon, in which the marked body is the target for fantasies of depravity. This is no surprise, as torture chambers have long conflated sex and cruelty. Just as one spreads the anus to find the rectum—the body's oubliette of pleasure and pain—and gazes at its hollow, a dark hole awaits the eye, hidden beneath the layers of contemporary racial imagery. Built on centuries of magical execration, this carnivorous region

Johann Zahn

Specula physico-mathematico-historica notabilium ac mirabilium sciendorum, in qua mundi mirabilis oeconomia, nec non mirificè amplus, et magnificus ejusdem abditè reconditus, nunc autem ad lucem protractus, ac ad varias perfacili methodo acquirendas scien, 1696

Publisher: Joann Christoph Lochner, Nuremberg. Courtesy of Louisiana State Library (LSU)

originates in the morbid depths of a medieval bestiary collectively known as 'the monstrous races'—a catalogue of unnatural creatures that seem fantastical in origin yet were inspired by phantasmagoric encounters with foreign peoples.

Subterranean wailing

The earliest images of the monstrous races date to the Dark Ages. Typical depictions of the races include an illustration with a text describing the monsters' physiognomy, behaviours and customs, emphasising the social transgressions that led to their categorisation as non-human. These creatures traditionally inhabited uncharted territories, and served as a source of terror for travellers who ventured beyond the limits of Western maps. Because they were often humanoid in form and capable of speech, Europeans anxiously distanced themselves from these repellent, soulless beings. To this end, they framed them as other: abhorrent entities beyond the borders of the self. Neither human nor animal, they became a shadow of Judaeo-Christian society, encoded with repudiated practices such as cannibalism, depravity, paganism and murder. If the medieval psyche is imagined as a castle, the monstrous races are its racial dungeon.

While images of the monstrous races reflected the anxieties of medieval Europe, they were in fact inherited from earlier accounts, written by Greek and Roman travellers who described the beasts in classical texts. Alexa Wright traces some of the earliest mentions of the monstrous races to a Greek treatise on India, now known as *Ctesias: On India.*¹ She shows the races were often malformed depictions of indigenous tribes, including peoples such as pygmies, who were classified as non-human due to their short stature. She also cites the example of the gymnosophist, an apparent monster who stands on one foot while staring at the sun—a description, Wright notes, that bears a resemblance to yogic practice. She makes it clear that the monstrous races were a distortion of non-Western peoples created by xenophobic travellers striving to make sense of the unknown sights they encountered.

With passing time, the popularity of the monstrous races diminished. However, this bestiary regained momentum with the 'discovery' of the Americas in the 15th century. When Christopher Columbus voyaged to the so-called New World, the Spaniards quickly revived this racial myth to make sense of the unfamiliar indigenous peoples they met. To illustrate this, Persephone Braham offers excerpts from Christopher Columbus's diary in her study of 'The Monstrous Caribbean'. In his delusional chronicle, Columbus notes sightings, on the American continent, of sirens and cannibals with the noses of dogs. While it is beyond the scope of this text, one could expand on the depraved legacies of this myth by charting its (possible) influence on imperial attitudes in Australia.

The man in the latex mask

Having traced the tunnels of these semiotic dungeons, one may ask how to rescue these racial signs from their entrapment. Several artists in Australia reconstitute the language of pictorial cells to recuperate non-Western bodies. One such artist is Abdul Abdullah, who appears to echo the imagery of monstrous races with his photographic series *Siege* (2014), which features the artist wearing an ape mask borrowed from the *Planet of the Apes* franchise. In his sombre pictures of discontent, the masked Abdullah, at times in Muslim attire, adopts various defiant poses. The work *You See Monsters* (2014) has an ape-faced figure clenching his fists as he stares at the viewer with a threatening gaze. Other works include scenes of resistance—such as tossing a smoke bomb—which reference recent uprisings, including the 2011 riots in England, to communicate the disaffection experienced by minorities in the West. This body of work deals with Abdullah's experience as a

Muslim in a post-11-September world, in which his religious identity has undergone extreme vilification. But Abdullah also references the *Planet of the Apes* films (including Tim Burton's infamously bad remake) to sustain a broader discourse on othering.

Planet of the Apes is a rich referent, as the films embody a complex web of race relations enacted by primates, including humans. In the original 1968 film—released the same year the African-American civil rights movement concluded—a group of American astronauts become stranded on a planet on which speaking apes have developed a civilisation that oppresses the mute, animalistic humans. While the film's main racial focus is the experience of a white man turned into an ethnographic curiosity by creatures he considers inferior, the apes themselves exist within a caste system: orangutans are the ruling class, gorillas the warriors and chimpanzees the middle to lower class. As the film progresses, it touches on several aspects of Western society, such as the fragility of racial segregation, the justification of supremacism through Judaeo-Christian texts and the self-destructiveness of nuclear technology.

Abdullah's *Siege* recuperates the sign of the anguished ape to articulate his lived experience and to formulate a wider statement on the construction of monstrous others. While it could be argued that appropriating the abject other is an ambivalent tactic, carrying the sign in its corrupted form (potentially and masochistically perpetuating stereotypes), it forms an act of recuperation, the figure reinscribed with a narrative beyond the dominant culture. In other words, the gaze in *Siege* does not belong to the offender but to the offended, as the artist speaks back via the re-valorised figure of the ape.

The shift from object to subject that occurs in this authoring act disarms the racial signposts. Indeed, instead of his identity being obliterated by the darkness of a cell, Abdul Abdullah unmasks the imprisoning mechanisms of representation by proclaiming their names. This is what differentiates his *Siege* from del Toro's *The Strain*: Abdullah isolates, recognises and deliberates upon sadistic terror as a response to the other. The effect of pinpointing these hostile devices is retroactive, as the original racial markers (the apes in the movie franchise) acquire a new oppositional meaning that broadens their reading. Like tampering with the devouring orifice of a claustrophobic jail lock, this state of ambiguity unlocks the iron gates that seal the semiotic dungeon. The fears of the West have devised an escape.

- ¹ Alexa Wright, Monstrosity: The Human Monster in Visual Culture, I.B. Tauris & Co., London, 2013, pp. 11–16.
- Persephone Braham, 'The Monstrous Caribbean', in Asa Simon Mittman and Peter J. Dendle (eds), Monsters and the Monstrous, Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, UK, 2013.

Abdul Abdullah

You See Monsters, 2014

Archival print

155 x 110 cm

Courtesy of the artist



You get what







- Andreas Dobler, *Ashadez*, 2010, acrylic on cotton, 115 x 160 cm. Courtesy of the artist
- Andre Ethier, *Untitled*, 2007, oil on linen, 50.8 x 40.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York
- Janet Beckhouse, *Coral Ewer*, 2003, stoneware and glaze, 51 x 28 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Artspace, Auckland

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Zeeland





- 1 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, Ocean, 1909
- Adrienne Gaha, *Ocean*, 2017, oil on canvas, 110 x 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Dominik Mersch Gallery, Sydney





I once travelled into the future, but not very far. One moment I was having a riot at a party, jostled by euphoric crowds of inebriated, sweaty bodies and deafened by blaring music. The very next, I was standing utterly alone in a silent, empty warehouse. The extreme temporal dislocation was as marked as anaesthetic amnesia, a jump-cut in a movie or skipping chapters on a DVD. A 'blackout'? I lost time. And I had no idea how. Perhaps, I thought, I might be dead. In contrast to the surging party, the empty space, had the aura of an ancient ruin. I stood in wonder, like the uncertain woman in Caspar David Friedrich's *Woman at Sunset or Sunrise* (c. 1818). The pale dawn light illuminated reflective pools of spilt wine, broken glass, overturned furniture and scattered cigarette butts. What would normally constitute a scene of rancid and chaotic debris, a disgusting aftermath, instead had the spatial precision and implication of a mammoth artistic installation, each component detailed, vibrant and poetic.

Parties provide a particular pleasure of escape from reality: 'fun'. They license a socially acceptable form of expression for unconventional behaviour and for vulnerability, with the prospect of rejuvenating catharsis. At the height of a party—in the dynamic, heaving mass of bodies pulsing to the beat—the individual is subsumed within the collective 'flesh' of a euphoric, apocalyptic beast, an orgiastic Lernaean Hydra of awesome scale. If the music gives temporal structure to the dancing corpus of the beast, the dancefloor is the spatial dimension the beast clings to. In Gustave Doré's depictions of the afterlife for Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, the souls of the damned are often rendered a writhing, amorphous yet carnivalesque pile of flesh.

Doré also produced more than 400 illustrations for François Rabelais's five connected 16th-century novels, *The Life of Gargantua and of Pantagruel*. In his celebrated reinterpretation of Rabelais's world, Mikhail Bahktin emphasises the subversive potential of the crudity, scatological humour and violence of carnival.¹ And the licentiousness of Rabelais's carnival is perhaps akin to the license of the contemporary dance party, or, I would say, another mode of modern carnival, the 'fun' park. To participate in a carnival, explains Bakhtin, is to enjoy a collective sense of material and bodily presence:

This [carnival] experience, opposed to all that was ready-made and completed, to all pretence at immutability, sought a dynamic expression: it demanded ever changing, playful, undefined forms. All the symbols of the carnival idiom are filled with this pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities ... the peculiar logic of the 'inside out' (à l'envers) ...²

I'd say my own unnatural transportation from the nihilistic social conflagration to solitude and the party's ruin was an 'inside-out' sensation. 'The site of life from which life has departed', in Georg Simmel's words, '... the past with its destinies and transformations ... gathered into this instant of an aesthetically perceptible present'. Inside out but unharmed, I found the effect of displacement as fulfilling as it was unnerving. Sigmund Freud identified this as the Nirvana principle: a longing for an end to stimulation and activity—for equilibrium. My 'fast forward' to the quiet solitude of the carnival's aftermath was momentarily Nirvana, a possible future.

Sue Dodd

The Last Tour I, 2015

Ink, graphite, gouache, acrylic, magazine prints

100 x 69.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and the Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne

Popular etymologies attribute the medieval word 'carnival' to the Latin *carnelevamen* and to the Old Italian *carnelevare*, meaning 'removal of flesh' or 'farewell to flesh', but also contrarily to *carne vale*, meaning 'flesh rules'. Distinct traces of this ambiguous etymology reverberate throughout the US cult film *Carnival of Souls* (1962), which opens with a car plunging off an unstable bridge into a river. Long after the rescuers have lost hope of finding the submerged vehicle, the driver drags herself from the mud, miraculously unharmed but emotionally detached from the trauma. She takes up her new job as a church organist in the town she had been driving towards; but experiences fugue states and disconnections from the world, becoming increasingly antisocial and drifting alone in an abandoned amusement park on the shore of a nearby salt lake. Her organ music at the church becomes discordant and eerie, and after the irate minister accuses her of playing 'unholy' music she returns to the fun park to witness a mass resurrection as a legion of dead souls, wearing crude black eye make-up, rise from the lake in the night. Watching in fascination, she recognises herself in an eternal *danse macabre* in a cavernous, domed ballroom, dancing to her own unholy organ music. Back at the crash site from the start of the film, the rescuers have retrieved the submerged car: inside is her corpse.

The protagonist looks like a prototypical tragic Hollywood starlet, doomed yet also fiercely independent, an artist defying the male authority figures and their ideological order. This is especially manifest in the organ music she plays in reverie, so suggestive of an unorthodox, dystopian carnival and which the minister violently stops, grabbing her hands at the keyboard when he recognises a dangerous perversion of the sanctity of the church. In the end, our heroine is indeed damned—condemned to a hell rendered as a perversely mechanical party, a joyless heteronormative dancefloor. The party in *Carnival of Souls* may continue after death, but it does not look fun. When I watched this young woman wandering alone in purgatory among the ruins of the pleasure palace, the scene was eerily evocative of the sensations I experienced in my party's aftermath.

The real-life location of the ruin in *Carnival of Souls* was Saltair, a Mormon Church amusement park in Salt Lake City, Utah. Inspired by Moorish design as 'an architecture of escape and pleasure', the magnificent resort, with onion-shaped turrets and latticework arches, was perched on 2500 pylons over the salt lake. Guests bathed in buoyant waters by day and danced to orchestral music by night on what was claimed to be the largest dancefloor in the world. But the resort—although attracting huge crowds—was plagued by catastrophe. When there weren't floods, the lake dried up, causing a plague of foul smells and swarming insects. There was a sewage contamination scare. Finally, the mysterious fires that had assailed the place throughout its history devoured its ruins in a hellish spectacle in 1970.

Among the abundant internet sites dedicated to 'ruinlust' there is a niche fascination for abandoned amusement parks. On one such site I discovered Heritage USA, a theme park for Jesus. Founded by televangelists Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker and their 'feel-good' PTL Ministry (Praise the Lord; or Pass the Loot, according to detractors), it was built using donations from church followers. The amateur photos of the abandoned site show The King's Castle, a water park, a railway and numerous abandoned shops and houses. A partially built hotel is a potent reminder of the rapid rise and fall of the endeavour.

Jim and Tammy Faye began their careers touring the country with a puppet show about Jesus. Their first TV station was set up in an abandoned furniture shop in Charlotte, North Carolina. From there they broadcast their hugely popular *Jim and Tammy Bakker Show* in front of a live studio audience. Tammy Faye's histrionics inspired drag queens: 'they do me better than me'.' Archival PTL footage on YouTube's shows her crying as she pleads for money to do God's work, her outrageously heavy eye make-up melting and smearing in a manner

reminiscent of the living dead in *Carnival of Souls*. Too much make-up and the impulse to conform is a Gothic form of resistance—from a camouflage of self-improvement (and normalcy) to ghoulishness and death. Jacques Derrida could have written this of Tammy Faye:

Ruin is the self-portrait, this face looked at in the face as the memory of itself, what remains or returns as a spectre from the moment one first looks at oneself and a figuration is eclipsed.¹⁰

As their ministry grew richer, Jim and Tammy Faye enjoyed a lavish lifestyle, famously building an air-conditioned dog kennel and founding Heritage USA. Set on a massive 2500-acre site, Heritage USA reportedly attracted six million visitors at its peak, in 1986, and plans were underway for an imitation Crystal Palace to house a 30,000-seat auditorium and 5000-seat TV studio. But 1986 was also the year the PTL financial empire came crashing down in a spectacular scandal; along with extra-marital affairs being exposed, the couple were charged with fraud. Jim was convicted. Tammy Faye protested her innocence but ended up in rehab. Years later, a sympathetic documentary brought her back to the ruins of Heritage USA. Predictably, 'she broke into tears at the sight of it, wishing she could just spend some time painting things and making it look a little nicer'.¹¹

Walt Disney called his creation Disneyland 'a work of love' rather than a business, but it has been astonishingly successful as a business. Disney 'fun' parks were the only amusement parks more popular in America in 1986 than the Bakkers' Heritage USA. Jean Baudrillard prophesied, in 1981, that Disneyland's hyperreality would be the dominant way of experiencing the world in the future. Michel Foucault proposed that prisons existed to create the illusion that those outside them are 'free'. Baudrillard spun this scheme toward the carnivalesque by claiming that Disneyland existed purely to 'rejuvenate' or reinforce the fiction that the world outside Disneyland was real and rational.

If I could travel time again, I would visit Dreamland, which operated during the first decade of the 20th century, at Coney Island.¹³ Its scale is now hard to imagine, accommodating 100,000 visitors daily during the holiday season and employing 14,000 staff. The attractions included Fighting the Flames, The Fall of Pompeii, Hell Gate and Creation. The End of the World depicted the Bible's Book of Revelation and it was performed continuously for a capacity audience of 1200. Visitors were ushered through a human forest, based on those Gustave Doré illustrations of Dante mentioned before, and then to rocky terrain where they were greeted by a chorus of 100 men and women followed by the sudden appearance of the Archangel Gabriel blowing the Trumpet of Doom. After a cacophony of thunder, accompanied by lightning and a rain of fire and brimstone, the skeletons of the dead rose from their graves and coffins. While the good people floated up into heaven, demons dragged the bad down into the fiery red lake of hell. The petrified audience was then taken to a second stage, where purgatory was enacted before the glorious final act portrayed the delights of heaven.

I would also have to visit the Dreamland fun-house, named The Temple of Mirth. Situated along the east promenade in an Egyptian-style building, it featured dissolving mirrors, crystal mazes, shaking walls and blasts of wind. I picture it as a carnival version of Andy Warhol's Factory interior, when decorated by Billy Name with tin foil and silver paint (even the toilet bowls were painted silver). Warhol thought the silver makeover was an amphetamine thing. To me, this is also about time. Amphetamine is speed—it makes the user go faster—the high is described as a 'rush'. Warhol also equated silver with the future:

[I]t was spacy—the astronauts wore silver suits ... and their equipment was silver, too.

And silver was also the past—the Silver Screen—Hollywood actresses photographed in silver sets. And maybe more than anything, silver was narcissism—mirrors were backed with silver.¹⁵

My romantic conception of The Factory correlates with Bakhtin's definition of the carnival as a place that 'belongs on the borderline between art and life'.¹6 I like to imagine The Factory reconceived in the future as the inspiration for a new Coney Island amusement park: a place where everyone is an artist, with a pavilion for 'all tomorrow's parties', a speedy silver roller-coaster called Dr Feelgood, a giant Coke bottle tower with a Coke waterslide, a spectacular Exploding Plastic Inevitable, a celebrity shooting gallery and a soaring mountain of dollar bills. When disaster inevitably strikes—the odds suggest a catastrophic fire—the site is transformed into a desolate, charred ruin, with scraps of silver foil and dollar bills blowing in the wind and polluted water lapping at the deserted shores. Perhaps wandering in this wasteland, lost in reverie at the end of the party and freed from judgment at last, is Tammy Faye, weeping blackened tears.

- ¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World [1941/1965], Helene Iswolsky (trans.), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, p. 10.
- ² Bakhtin, pp. 10-11.
- 3 Georg Simmel, cited in Brian Dillon (ed.), Ruins, Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, London, 2011, pp. 23-24.
- 4 C. George Boeree, 'Sigmund Freud 1856–1939', Shippensburg University, Penn., 2009, webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/freud.html; accessed 24 July 2011.
- 6 'Carnival', Encyclopedia, encyclopedia.com/sports-and-everyday-life/days-and-holidays/days-months-holidays-and-festivals/ carnival; accessed 2 January 2018.
- So described by architect Richard K.A. Kettering. See Nancy D. and John S. McCormick, Saltair, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City. 1993, p. 31.
- Some 49,200,000 Google hits for modern day ruins.
- Obituary of Tammy Faye Bakker Messner: Televangelist Whose TV Empire Collapsed amid Spectacular Scandal', The Times, 23 July 2007.
- 9 'PTL with Tammy Faye Bakker Part 1.wmv', youtube.com/watch?v=CFSURqOscNM, accessed 15 February 2018.
- Jacques Derrida, Memoirs of the Blind, Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (trans.), University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1993, p. 68.
- Eric Burns-White, 'Eric: Requiescat in Pace: Tammy Faye Messner', Websnark, 24 July 2007, websnark.com/archives/2007/07/requiescat_in_p_2.html; accessed 27 July 2011.
- 12 See Jean Baudrillard [1981], Simulacra and Simulation, Sheila Faria Glaser (trans.), University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1994.
- See Jeffrey Stanton, Coney Island History Site, westland.net/coneyisland; accessed 29 July 2011.
- 14 Stanton
- ¹⁵ Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *Popism*, Harcourt, San Diego, Ca., 1980, p. 83.
- Bakhtin, p. 7.

Sue Dodd

The Last Tour II, 2015

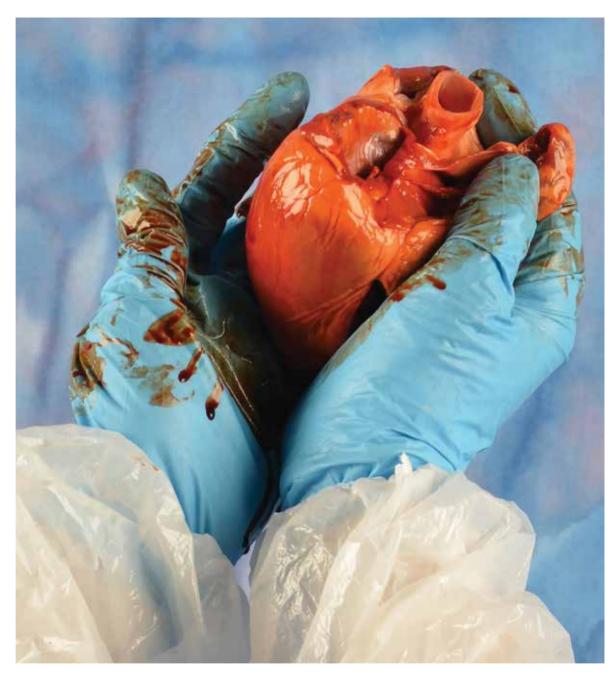
Ink, graphite, gouache, acrylic, magazine prints

100 x 69.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and the Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne







Georgie Mattingley Love Heart, 2014 Digital C-type print Dimensions variable Courtesy of the artist

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The Miracle

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The miracle is an exception.

Holy or unholy, it is an unaccountable event.

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