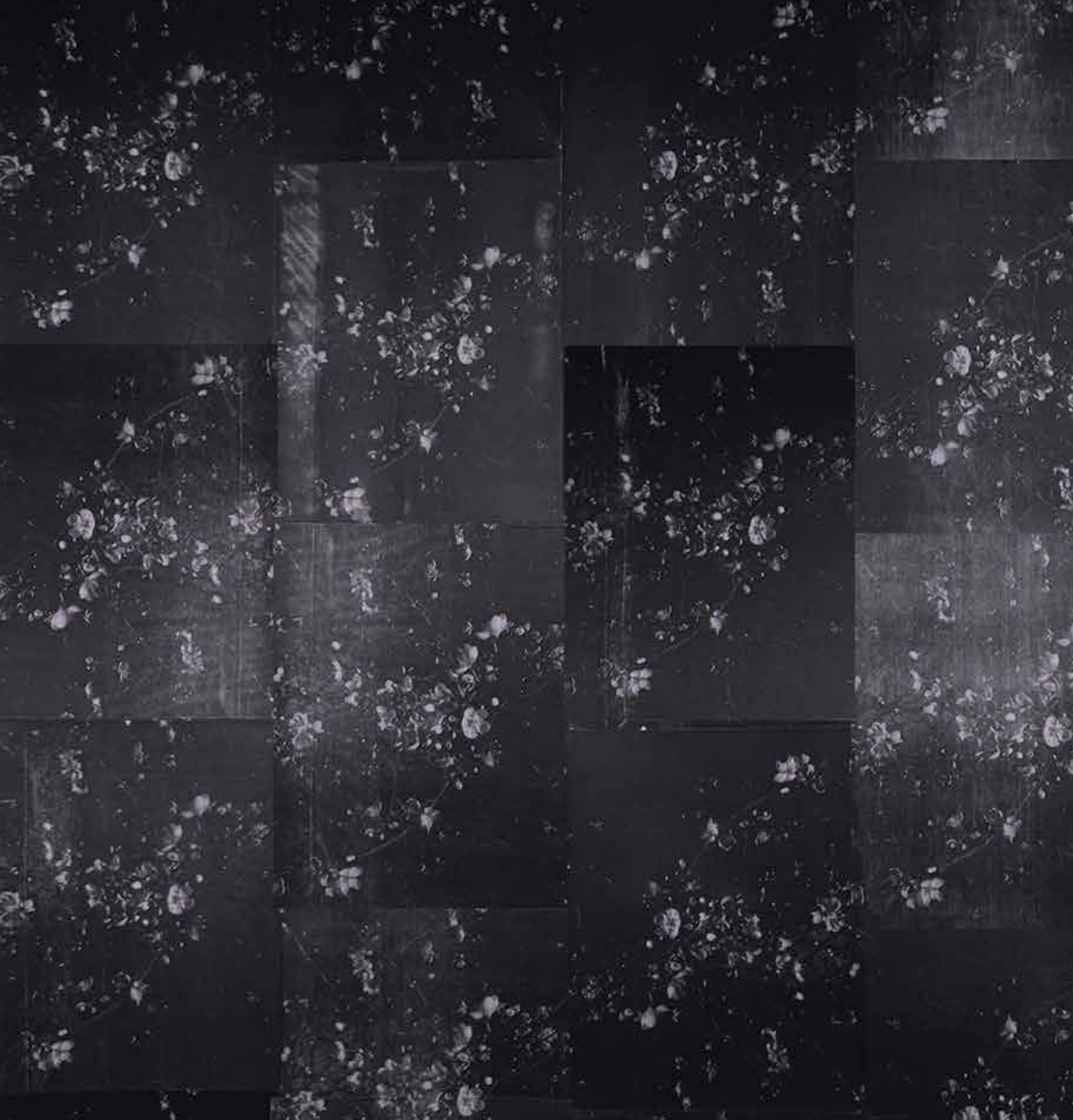
57.1 2021

Art + Australia

MULTINATURALISM

Issue 8



Kumirrigan Dreaming

I'm not one for words. My vocabulary doesn't do me any favours when I'm trying to articulate my artworks. I don't have any great theories about the art I make, and really see it as a reflection on my life lived. I was always Ngarigu, but adoption saw me grow up away from my culture, dislocated from it. I would spend my life trying to get back to it, to find my own way home. My tribal name is Ngurran (Emu) and it was given to me in recent years. It marked a reconnection that my soul had longed for. The male Emu sits on the eggs and raises the Emu chicks, a gender-bending of prescribed binaries. I paint my Ngarigu kin creatures, the most powerful being the alpine Dingo, also the most misunderstood creature, getting in the way of colonial agricultural progress. It has become a symbol of my queerness, which is often seen as a menace to heterosexual family norms and a threat to the status quo. I added Crowe to my name to honour one of my ancestors, little knowing that the Crow is a family totem and even a creator being of the Kulin Nation where I find myself living. I have often included crows in my art, and my encounters with them are cherished moments of staying in the present. They are always a good omen.
I've recently painted the Corroboree Frog, another endemic species of my Country. The alpine Dingo and the Corroboree Frog are both on the edge of extinction, and I honour their lives and struggles. In this selection of artworks, I have some queer art heroes, big influencers, cultural warriors, collaborators, friends and some of my own creations. I hope you enjoy delving into a bit of what makes me tick as a person and an artist.

Peter Waples-Crowe

Artist Peter Waples-Crowe wearing *Ngarigo Queen – Cloak of Queer Visibility*, 2018,
at the opening of *A Lightness of Spirit is the Measure of Happiness*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2018,
curated by Hannah Presley
Photo: Jacqui Shelton. Courtesy of the artist and ACCA

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Endpapers:
Kate Daw
Grace (Sky, Tilmouth Wells, Cherry Blossom, Merricks), 2016
Silkscreened ink on Indian calico, repeat pattern installation
Each panel 115 x 75 cm
Courtesy of Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne

The editors and publisher respectfully acknowledge the Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nation, on whose land *Art + Australia* is produced. We acknowledge their ancestors and Elders, who are part of the longest continuing culture in the world.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this issue contains an image of a deceased person.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
CENTRE of VISUAL ART

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Jarra Karalinar Steel
Possum Spirits / Walert Murrup, 2020
Photograph of augmented reality
Courtesy of the artist

Chris Berthelsen is in Tāmaki Makaurau (formerly known as Auckland), mostly. He mainly runs the Neighbourhood Negative Emissions and Waste Studies (Neighbourhood NEWS) program in Waipapa (formerly known as Mairangi Bay).

Tony Birch is the author of three novels: the bestselling *The White Girl*, winner of the 2020 NSW Premier's Literary Award for Indigenous Writing and shortlisted for the 2020 Miles Franklin Literary Award; *Ghost River*, winner of the 2016 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Indigenous Writing; and *Blood*, which was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award. He is also the author of *Shadowboxing* and three short-story collections, *Father's Day*, *The Promise* and *Common People*. In 2017, he was awarded the Patrick White Literary Award for his contribution to Australian literature.

Sophie Chao is a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Sydney's School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry and the Charles Perkins Centre. Her research explores the intersections of capitalism, ecology, Indigeneity and health in Southeast Asia.

Xin Cheng is an artist based in Auckland. Through her research on everyday resourcefulness and ecology, she has run performative workshops, has published a book collection with Materialverlag and is currently working on a documentary. She regularly writes for *Hainamana: Asian New Zealand Art & Culture* and has an MFA from the Hamburg University of Fine Arts.

Debris Facility is a corporate entity established in 2015 whose portfolio enacts parasitism through im/material exchange and the administration of post-commodities. They produce a multiplicity of artworks, programs and performance in 'Victoria', where they are a MFA candidate under the supervision of Spiros Panigirakis and Nicholas Mangan at Monash University. Working with pedagogy with Liquid Architecture and the Victorian College of the Arts expands the collective scope of the Facility. Debris Facility is represented by Debris Facility Pty Ltd.

Caitlin Franzmann is a Brisbane-based artist who creates installations, performances and social practice works that focus on place-based knowledge and clairsentience. Her work has been featured in exhibitions globally, including at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane; Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney; Kyoto Art Centre; and New Museum, New York. Franzmann was a member of the feminist art collective LEVEL from 2013 to 2017, co-curating exhibitions and forums with a focus on generating dialogue around gender, feminism and contemporary art. She is currently a member of Ensayos, a collective research practice centered on extinction, human geography and coastal health.

Tessa Laird is a Pākehā artist and writer. Originally from Aotearoa New Zealand, she lives in Naarm / Birrarung-ga and is Lecturer in Critical and Theoretical Studies at VCA Art, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne. She has been an art critic for more than 25 years and co-founded and edited two New Zealand art magazines: *Monica Reviews Art* and *LOG Illustrated*. She edited *Art + Australia* Online from 2017 to 2019. Her book on colour, *A Rainbow Reader*, was published by Clouds in 2013, and her cultural history of bats, *Bat*, was published as part of Reaktion's celebrated Animal series in 2018.

Niningka Lewis was born in 1945, out bush near Areyonga, in the Northern Territory. She grew up in Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, where she attended school and later worked in the Ernabella craft room, learning to spin wool and weave floor rugs, and make batik. Niningka was a celebrated multi-disciplinary artist, creating fibre art for Tjanpi Desert Weavers, punu work for Maraku Arts and canvas painting for Ernabella Arts. Her work was exhibited in many major art institutions in Australia, and was most recently shown in the exhibitions *Sappers and Shrapnel: Contemporary Art and the Art of the Trenches* and *Nganampa Kililpil: Our Stars—Art from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands*, in 2016, and *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters*, in 2018. Niningka sadly passed away in November 2020, and this article has been approved by her family as a fitting memorial.

Alert to both history and science, Nicholas Mangan is a multi-disciplinary artist known for unearthing and interrogating narratives embedded in objects, times and places. Through a practice bridging drawing, sculpture, film and installation, Mangan creates politically astute and disconcerting assemblages that address some of the most galvanising issues of our time: the ongoing impacts of colonialism, humanity's fraught relationship with the natural environment and the complex and evolving dynamics of the global political economy. Mangan is represented by Sutton Gallery, Melbourne; Mossman Gallery, Wellington; and Labor, Mexico City.

Camila Marambio is a curator, private investigator, permaculture enthusiast, amateur dancer and writer. In 2010, she founded and now directs the nomadic research program Ensayos. Ensayos brings together artists, scientists and locals to exercise speculative and emergent forms of eco-cultural ethics at the world's end. Marambio has a PhD in Curatorial Practice from Monash University (2019), a Master of Experiments in Arts and Politics from Sciences Po, Paris (2012) and an MA in Modern Art: Critical Studies from Columbia University, New York (2004). She is co-author of the books *Slow Down Fast, A Toda Raja*, with Cecilia Vicuña (Errant Bodies Press, 2019) and *Sandcastles: Cancerous Bodies and Their Necro/Powers*, with Nina Lykke (forthcoming).

Alexis Milonopoulos is a writer and curator. By following his guts, hungers and appetites, he is entangled in food-related (ad)ventures and (pro)positions, such as *Clareira* and, with Jorgge Menna Barreto, *Restauro: Environmental Sculpture*. Milonopoulos is also a PhD candidate in the Postgraduate Programme in Collective Health at the University of São Paulo Medical School, Brazil.

Nick Modrzewski is an artist, writer and barrister working in Melbourne. He has previously written for *Running Dog*, *Art + Australia*, *un Magazine*, *The Lifted Brow*, *Fireflies*, *The Canary Press* and *The Research Handbook on Art and Law*.

Richard Orjis was born on the banks of the Whanganui River in Aotearoa New Zealand, a body of water known for having legal personhood. He is an interdisciplinary artist and lecturer at AUT University in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland. His work seeks to challenge dominant and singular narratives of sex, gender, colonisation and ecology through visual arts and curatorial practices that engage with queering representation.

Mykaela Saunders is an award-winning Koori writer, teacher and community researcher, who makes occasional forays into other types of arts. She writes across forms and disciplines and has won awards for her fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction and research. Of Dharug and Lebanese descent, she belongs to the Tweed Aboriginal community.

Kuai Shen, media artist and ant lover from Ecuador, is currently working on his practice-based PhD at Deakin University, Melbourne. In cooperation with ants, he generates techno-ecological installations and performances that explore the concept of invertebrate aesthesis, problematising the entanglement between nonhuman subjectivity and scientific objectivity. His research has been published in journals such as *Society & Animals* and *Acoustic Space* and in the book *Biologically-Inspired Computing for the Arts* (ed. Anna Ursyn, IGI Global, 2012). His work has been exhibited at a number of international venues and has received several awards: the 2016 Bridge Stipend from Michigan State University, the 2014 Cynetart Award of the Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture and, in 2013, an honorary mention at Prix Ars Electronica as well as the Edith-Russ-Haus Media Art Prize.

Linda Stupart is a Birmingham-based artist, writer and educator. They are interested in the possibilities for writing and making discrete grounded encounters with different kinds of bodies (of knowledge, objects and affect, as well as corporeal bodies) as a way to think through less alienated ways of living and thinking together. Their work has recently been shown/performed at Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, and at Tate, The Showroom, Gasworks and IMT Gallery, all in London. They completed their PhD at Goldsmiths University in 2016, with a project engaged in new considerations of objectification and abjection.

Mick Taussig is from Sydney town, studied medicine then joined the revolution and ended up writing a bunch of books about Colombia and writing, beginning with *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (University of North Carolina Press, 1980) and ending with *Mastery of Non-Mastery in the Age of Meltdown* (University of Chicago Press, 2020), which has an exquisite cover.

Artist-poet Cecilia Vicuña created the concept of Precarious Art in Chile in l966, an early response to the ecological crisis. Her improvisatory, participatory performances emphasise Indigenous cultural memory and the collective nature of action and creativity to bring forth justice, balance and transformation of the world. In 2017, Vicuña exhibited at documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel. *Cecilia Vicuña: About to Happen* was presented at five museums in the US from 2017 to 2020. Her retrospective *Seehearing the Enlightened Failure* opened at the Witte de With / Kunstinstituut Melly in Rotterdam in 2019 before travelling to MUAC in Mexico City in 2020. Vicuña is the author of 27 books.

Peter Waples-Crowe is a queer Ngarigu artist whose practice is informed by his lived experience and operates at the intersection of identity, blak spirituality and Australia's ongoing colonisation.

Sebastian Wiedemann is a filmmaker-researcher and philosopher, working in the fields of experimental cinema and environmental humanities. He is also editor and curator at *Hambre | espacio cine experimental*. He is the author of *Deep Blue: Future Memories of A Living's Cinematic In-Between* (Evidence, 2019).

Alexis Wright is a member of the Waanyi nation of the southern highlands of the Gulf of Carpentaria. She is the author of the prize-winning novels *Carpentaria* (Giramondo, 2006) and *The Swan Book* (Giramondo, 2013), as well as works of non-fiction. She currently holds the Boisbouvier Chair in Australian Literature at the University of Melbourne.

Danni Zuvela's research-based practice encompasses writing, curating, installation and sound, and focuses on non-human subjectivity. Extending from *Why Listen to Plants* (2018), Zuvela's most recent work, *ORCHID HOUSE*, explores the feelings of endangered swamp orchids in the former chain of lagoons now called the Gold Coast.

Peter Waples-Crowe and Glynn Urquhart
The Emergence, 2019
Video still
Courtesy of the artists

wrapped in flowers, listening to frogs

Tessa Laird

This issue is born out of forest fires and deforestation. It is born out of extraction and despoliation, which ravage landscapes and people, including unique and irreplaceable lifeways, languages and cultures. This issue is born out of anger and despair for irretrievable losses, including plant and animal relations we will never see again. This issue is dedicated to the *three billion animals* that lost their lives on this continent in the summer of 2019–20, losses subsequently eclipsed by a virus spiralling out of control in the anthroposphere. But this issue is also born out of fierce love and an undying spirit of joy, as we celebrate the indescribable beauty that still lives on this planet, and fight for its 'ongoingness', its 'survivance'.[1] This spirit was attested to in the overwhelming number of proposals we received for *Multinaturalism*; had we said yes to them all we would have needed to print five different versions of the issue. Since the theme encompasses diversity on every level, including the inter-dimensional, I imagine these other versions existing in parallel to this one.

Peter Madden
Coming from all the places..., 2014 (detail)
Inkjet on perspex and wood
Private collection. Courtesy of the artist and Ivan Anthony, Auckland

The term multinaturalism is a curious mouthful. It evokes, but destabilises, the more commonplace 'multiculturalism', which has been critiqued as a neoliberal strategy to present as 'diverse' while maintaining white hegemony. Decentring the human, multinaturalism ensures that conversations about culture necessarily encompass nature, guided by epistemologies that have thrived on this planet for millennia without the damaging duality of a nature–culture divide. Coined by the Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, multinaturalism grows out of Amerindian thought, in particular the writings of Yanomami shaman Davi Kopenawa. Like many Indigenous epistemologies, including those of this continent, Amerindian thought posits a time when all life was human. Various events led to the differentiations we see today: mountains, rivers, plants, animals but, underneath these external differences, beings maintain kinship. Some of these relationships are being reacknowledged in a global ripple effect of 'ecological jurisprudence', which sees legal title and personhood status granted to bodies of water, such as the rivers Ganges and Yamuna in India, Vilcabamba in Ecuador, Atrato in Colombia and Whanganui in Aotearoa. Here in Victoria, the *Yarra River Protection Act*, or *Wilip-gin Birrarung murron Act*, was passed in 2017, the first in the state with a dual-language title and an Aboriginal language preamble. Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Alice Kolasa spoke from the floor of the Victorian Parliament, noting, 'Our Ancestors and the Birrarung shaped one another—living in balance together for countless generations. The State now recognises something that we, as the First People have always known, that the Birrarung is one integrated living entity.'[2] The Birrarung is not defined as an 'individual', 'but rather as a relational entity, bound into reciprocal relationships'.[3]

We urgently need to decentre the human, yet we christen (Judeo-Christian overtones intended) our current geological era the Anthropocene. Once again, *Homo sapiens* declares himself Master of the Universe. As Elizabeth Povinelli notes, however, '… it is not humans who have exerted such malignant force on the meteorological, geological, and biological dimension of the earth, but only *some* modes of human *sociality*'.[4] Marisol de la Cadena reminds us of the 'anthropo-not-seen', encompassing 'heterogeneous worlds that did not make themselves through the division between humans and nonhumans'.[5]

But surely, you may be asking, if multinaturalism posits *all of nature* to be human, isn't it just another form of anthropocentrism? Are we unable to ascribe agency to nature unless we bequeath it a human face? Artist-lawyer-trickster Nick Modrzewski satirises Western laws in which human privilege must be invoked to protect more-than-human entities from exploitation by humans. In this world view, the entangled nature of ecologies is overwritten by the Western concept of bounded individuals with human rights and human fallibilities. Modrzewski's council of trees, who consider themselves persons, have become selfish. No longer seeing themselves as part of an ecosystem, they don't want to share.

Modrzewski's parody urges us to consider the risks of 'strategic anthropomorphism', while having fun with its comic potential and raising awareness of the game-changing laws. Before Descartes declared that animals were mere automata without soul, and Western scientific paradigms favouring separation over relation invaded every corner of the globe, animals, plants, rocks, winds and waters were ascribed human-like capacities. In an animate world, where everything has the ability to think and feel, decisions about who to eat and where to excrete are made with a good deal of consideration. Jane Bennett suggests that anthropomorphism can work against anthropocentrism, revealing isomorphisms between categories that Western science insists are distinct.[6] Karen Barad declares an investment in anthropomorphism will act as 'an intervention for shaking loose the crusty toxic scales of anthropocentrism, where the human in its exceptional way of being gets to

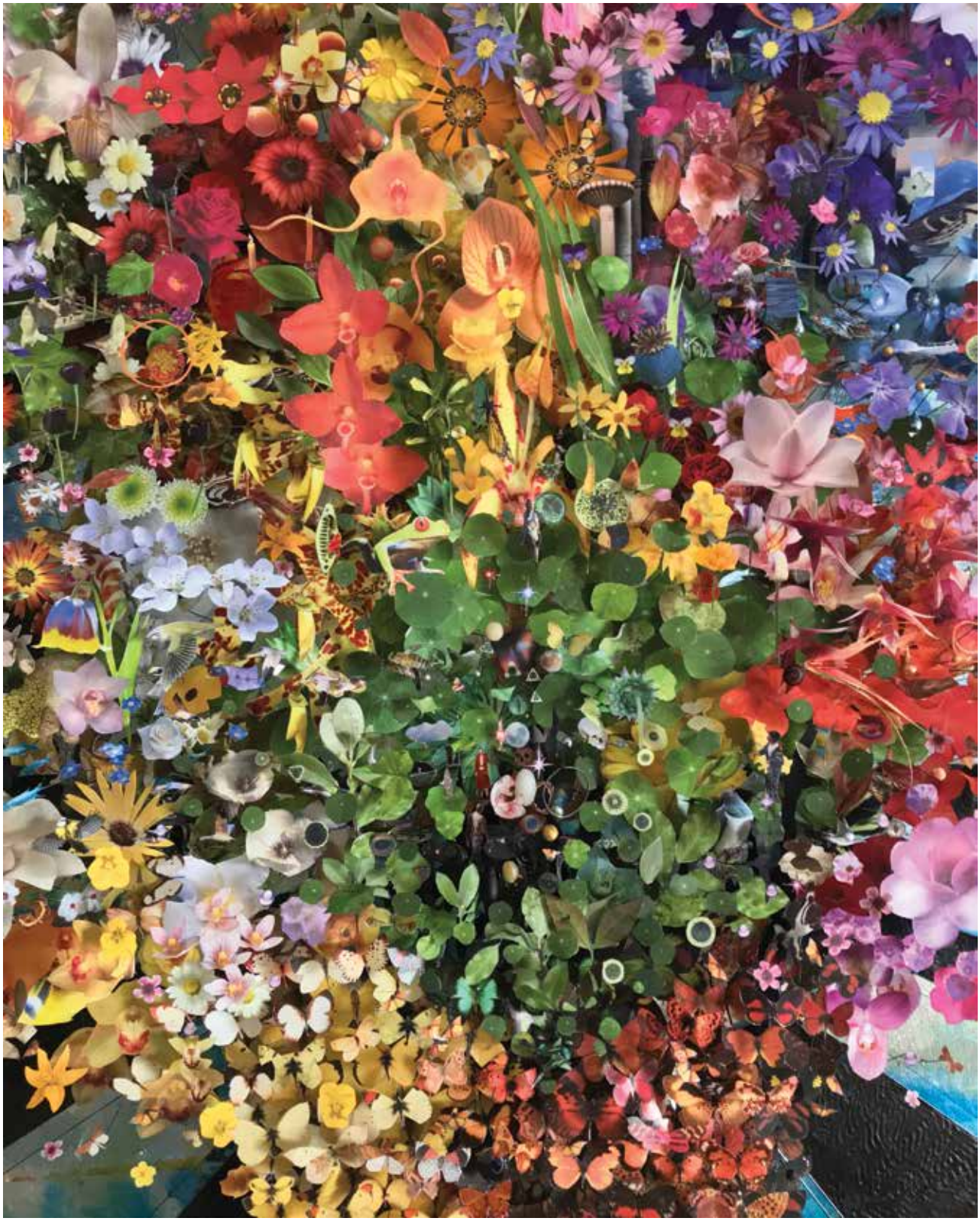
hold all the "goodies" like agency, intentionality, rationality, feeling, pain, empathy, language, consciousness, imagination, and much more'.[7]

What some white scholars are arguing for as a necessary ontological shift is a matter of 'cultural survival' for others. This is how Gunnai-Gunditjmara woman and Victorian Green MP Lidia Thorpe described the imperative to save Djab Wurrung's sacred trees from further destruction. A proposed highway extension would see the destruction of trees that have hosted the delivery of an estimated 10,000 Djab Wurrung babies, trees which 'literally contain the blood of Aboriginal women'.[8] Blood was also invoked, metaphorically, in the case for the Whanganui River, or Te Awa Tupua, in which the river was said to run 'through the veins' of local Māori as 'the central artery of their tribal heart'.[9] Indeed, a regional proverb states 'Ko au te awa. Ko te awa ko au', or 'I am the river, the river is me'.[10] This is echoed by Yorta Yorta Dja Dja Wurrung scholar Lou Bennett AM, who writes, 'The word for bones in Dja Dja Wurrung is galk. It's the same word for stick, branch and a general term for tree. They are us and we are them.'[11] No wonder, then, in Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book*, the state-sanctioned destruction of a sacred tree leaves its kinspeople feeling 'unhinged from their own bodies, unmoored, vulnerable, separated from eternity'.[12]

'No one writes Country like Alexis Wright', Mykaela Saunders said to me via email when we were discussing this issue. Saunders has deftly woven Wright's *Carpentaria* into an array of Country-centred practices by Australian First Nations artists and writers. We're thrilled to be able to reprint a scene from *Carpentaria* in which Country and its carers team up against a mining company. This small serving of fictional justice seems appropriate after Rio Tinto's desecration of sacred caves at Juukan Gorge in Western Australia. As Lidia Thorpe's uncle, veteran activist Robbie Thorpe, has been reminding protesters for years, ecocide and genocide are one and the same.[13]

Melbourne, like many cities, consists of a grid of straight roads imposed on an undulating landscape. Even rivers were straightened. Boon Wurrung celebrate the fact that their Ngargee tree, a 700-year-old river red gum, was saved and roads forced to curve around the majestic being N'arweet Carolyn Briggs AM calls 'our story board' and 'a witness'.[14] In a COVID-era conversation over Zoom, Briggs reminded me of the importance of culture in sustaining nature and that it is her mission to 'Sing into Country, connect Country, help spirit return to this world.'[15] As *Art + Australia* is produced on Boon Wurrung as well as Wurundjeri Country, Briggs' words resound as both a reminder and a directive, which each of the writers in this issue attempts to address in their own way. While poetry was never explicitly called for in the CFP,[16] nevertheless, poetry erupts from every crevice of *Multinaturalism*. Writers are compelled towards a kind of song in an effort to connect with life forces that surpass quotidian speech. It is no surprise that veteran poet Cecilia Vicuña expresses herself in poetry, but so too it erupts in Saunders' article, sprouts in the entwined text of Caitlin Franzmann and Camila Marambio, declares itself concretely in the collaborative page-works of Debris Facility and Nicholas Mangan, and gently in the playful observations of Xin Cheng and Chris Berthelsen. So, too, poetry is the way Alexis Milonopoulos provides his interpretation of multinaturalism, perhaps the best working definition of this term I have seen and one which fittingly emanates from Brazil.

How we use language is crucial, for 'It matters what stories tell stories'.[17] Robin Wall Kimmerer talks of the difficulty of learning her native Potawatomi because what we consider in the West to be nouns (inert objects) are verbs in her mother tongue, entities in a constant state of relational becoming: 'To be a hill, to be a sandy



beach, to be a Saturday, all are possible verbs in a world where everything is alive'.[18] In such a lively, mobile and relational world, language must also be pliant enough to do justice to justice. Here, small and subtle shifts include the capitalisation of 'Indigenous' wherever and however that word is used, as well as a deliberate loosening of the rules around italicisation. Italics frequently designate non-English words as 'other' to the linguistic monoculture of the Anglosphere. Eventually, through long use, certain words get 'naturalised' (read: assimilated) just enough to lose their oblique angle (and here we might pause to reflect on the use of the words slope and slant as racial slurs, as if anything that is not 'straight' is suspect). For this issue, following the logic of poetry, we have let the authors decide what they want to italicise and what they don't: what they wish to accentuate and what they wish to let flow. If only our roads were as sinuous as our language! Let's not build any more 'straight' roads; rather, let them bend to accommodate Country.

Speaking of an active refusal of the straight, Kimmerer says, 'It's all in the pronouns'.[19] She's talking here about giving gender and personhood to entities English characterises as 'it', and while this is different to the recent surge in non-binary pronouns for people, it also actively queers language by opening life to a multitude of possibilities. In this issue, proud Ngarigu queer artist Peter Waples-Crowe shares his rainbow-coloured cloak of influences, while Linda Stupart unleashes a queer Arctic demonology, and Richard Orjis sniffs out the scatological underbelly of an Auckland public park. Each of them reminds us that nature's queer diversity, from multi-sexed mushrooms to hyper-sexed bacteria, far exceeds anthropocentric heteronormativity. The prismatic exuberance of life is what New Zealand artist Peter Madden celebrates in his unbelievably detailed relief collages, which shimmer and pulsate, each leaf, flower, butterfly and frog carefully differentiated but vibrantly interconnected.

Following the most recent *Artlink* issue, *Kin Constellations: Languages, Waters, Futures*, in which editors Léuli Eshrāghi and Kimberley Moulton acknowledge recent publications that have provided inspiration or sustenance, I would like to acknowledge *Kin Constellations*; the two publications coming out of NIRIN, the 22nd Biennale of Sydney; Lisa Radford and Yhonnie Scarce's year-long collaborative editorial project for *Art + Australia* Online*, The Image Is Not Nothing (Concrete Archives)*; and the 2019 combined issues of *Más allá del fin* and *Discipline*, for their astute South American–Australian connections.[20] *Multinaturalism* continues to cross-pollinate the two continents, most notably in Franzmann and Marambio's 'To Move Through the Dark Night of the Soul', in which two endemic tree species call to each other across the vast Pacific. What do they say to each other? In my conversation with N'arweet Carolyn Briggs, she noted that trees, whether native or introduced, 'start talking to each other, complimenting each other'. She mimed their enmeshment by wiggling her fingers.

Clearly, the continents are talking to each other; beyond Marambio's and Vicuña's native Chile, there are contributions from Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil. As Jair Bolsonaro was repeatedly bitten by rheas while convalescing from COVID-19 in his presidential palace, we wondered if the birds had been inspired, as we have, by Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu*. While many people suggest COVID-19 is Gaia in action,[21] Brazil's ratite insurgency was celebrated globally as a 'rhea-sistance'—the natural world biting back at one of its foremost

Peter Madden
Stillness, 2020 (detail)
Inkjet photo on wire and pins
Courtesy of the artist and Ivan Anthony, Auckland

persecutors. Bolsanaro's wilful destruction of the Amazon and its First Peoples for extraction and plantations enacts what Vandana Shiva recognised decades ago as 'monocultures of the mind'.[22] What we need instead is a 'polyculture of complementary knowledges',[23] and indeed Vijay Prashad has suggested we should supplant 'multiculturalism' with 'polyculturalism': solidarities across and through difference.[24]

Similarly wary of monoculture's devastation of naturalcultural diversity in his beloved Colombia, anthropologist Michael Taussig learned to eschew not just agribusiness but 'agribusiness writing', which invades institutions and, worse still, mindsets.[25] In this issue, Taussig also connects the continents, moving seamlessly from his Sydney childhood, lolling on the carpet listening to Tom the Naturalist on the radio, to imbibing *yagé* in the jungles of the Putumayo, while his shaman friend shapeshifts into a jaguar. The metamorphic sublime Taussig evokes that issues, as he says, like a pilot fish from the glowing radio dials, finds its analogy in the NoctilucaScreen Project of Sebastian Wiedemann, a 'cosmomorphic cinema' which honours bioluminescent sea creatures, and Kuai Shen's use of 'tactical media' for 'artistic amplification' of rain ants in the Ecuadorian jungle.

In a different jungle environment, that of West Papua, Sophie Chao writes of the Marind people's 'conjoined ethics and aesthetics'. Challenging ideas of what might constitute artistic practice, daily life for the Marind is a 'multispecies choreography'. The women Chao speaks of imbue their unborn children with linguistic and affective tools for a life of 'more-than-human care, respect and response-ability'. Similarly, *Multinaturalism* is punctuated by features on strong Aboriginal women artists, representing a diversity of practices and locations. Tony Birch takes time out from his inimitable opinion pieces on climate change to sing the praises of Wemba-Wemba/Gunditjmara artist Paola Balla. Danni Zuvela narrates a case of the South talking back to the colonising North, via politicised plants in the practice of Ngugi woman Libby Harward, and we print, with permission from her family, the words of the late Pitjantjatjara woman and celebrated artist Niningka Lewis, who spoke of her life and practice, from the heart of the continent.

As I said at the start, the impetus for this issue came out of the devastation of forest fires; it has been created in the midst of COVID-19. And, as we were editing these articles, we lost our beloved Kate Daw, head of VCA Art, to cancer. Kate's office was next door to the *Art + Australia* team, and we will miss her cheeky smile, her sunny disposition and all the coffees and chats, more than words can say. Kate's elegant cherry blossoms on a black ground wrap this issue like a hug, promising renewal in dark times. The end of Wright's *Carpentaria*, which Saunders alludes to in her article, also signals the potential for renewal, vocalised by a '… mass choir of frogs—green, grey, speckled, striped, big and small, dozens of species …'[26] This too echoes Taussig's characterisation of the *yagé* spirits sounding 'like a duet back and forth between the wind coming off the river and the croaking of numberless frogs vibrating in millennial mud', as well as the Corroboree Frog to which Peter Waples-Crowe pays homage in his artwork. In Wright's novel, the frogs are 'singing the country afresh', which is the most urgent, yet, I hope, joyful multispecies task ahead, for all of us.

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1. Donna Haraway uses the term 'ongoingness' throughout *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2016; Gerald Vizenor popularised the term 'Survivance' in Native American Studies, and edited the collection *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2008.
2. Alice Kolasa, 'Yiookgen Dhan Liwik-al Intak-kongi Nganyinu Ngargunin Twarn / Dreams of our Ancestors Hopes for our Future' (parliamentary speech), 22 June 2017, Wurundjeri, wurundjeri.com.au/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Wurundjeri_parliamentary_speech_download_a.pdf. Interestingly, in an address to the Victorian Parliament in 2000, Boon Wurrung N'arweet Carolyn Briggs AM noted that the Parliament building is located on the very site the Kulin Nations used as a meeting ground to resolve differences for thousands of years. Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 31 May 2000, extract from Book 9, *Aboriginal Reconciliation*, p. 1994.
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19. Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, p. 57.
20. This is taken further in *Más allá del fin* 3.5 by Sonja Carmichael and Sarita Gálvez in an article called 'Knotting Together South-South Connections'. I would also like to acknowledge the South Project, brainchild of Kevin Murray, for much valuable work in networking artists and thinkers in the Southern Hemisphere in the early to mid-2000s.
21. See, for example, Brazilian anthropologist Els Lagrou's article 'Nisun: Revenge of the Bat People', *Jornalistas Livres*, 14 April 2020, jornalistaslivres.org/nisun-a-vinganca-do-povo-morcego-e-o-que-ele-pode-nos-ensinar-sobre-o-novo-coronavirus; accessed 14 September 2020.
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Overleaf:
Peter Madden
Coming from all the places..., 2014 (detail)
Inkjet on perspex and wood
Private collection. Courtesy of the artist and Ivan Anthony, Auckland

The Land is the Law: On Climate Fictions and Relational Thinking

Mykaela Saunders

Jonathan Kumintjara Brown, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, b. 1960, Yalata, d. 1997, Melbourne
Poison Country, 1995, Adelaide
Synthetic polymer paint, earth pigments on canvas
South Australian Government Grant 1996, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

1. The land is the law

2. You are not alone in the world

—Dr Mary Graham, Kombumerri Elder and philosopher[I]

All stories begin with Country. And as climate change reveals, all stories will end with Country, too. 'Cli-fi' might be a new genre, but the role of Country in shaping Indigenous literature is as old as time. All of our creation stories tell of life-giving climate change. Our songlines—which form the oldest continuing transnational literatures[2]—are designed to conserve Country through human stewardship, and to revitalise it through ceremonial activation.

If we take cli-fi to be any fiction that features a changing or threatening climate as inextricable from the story, then to Aboriginal people all stories set in Australia post-1788 are climate fictions. The climate grief many Australians increasingly feel in the wake of local bushfires and global warming has been felt acutely by Aboriginal people since 1788, when the first swathes of forest were cut down to make houses and farmland in what is now Sydney. Since 1788, Australia has been responsible for a disproportionate percentage of global extinctions, directly attributed to the ecocidal processes of colonial-capitalism and extractive industries. Aboriginal people, in their deep relationship with Country, encompassing attendant rights and responsibilities, have collectively mourned and fought for Country for more than two centuries.

In Australia, there has been, historically, a lack of interrogation of the causes of climate change in a systems-thinking way. Climate is an indicator of the holistic health of Country—not just in the land and not just in the weather, or rising air and water temperatures. All of these things are affected by deforestation, for example, which has happened here on a mass scale, which in turn affects all life in the area, a cascade of cause and effect.

As the structures of Aboriginal worldviews reject oppressive hierarchies and warring dualisms, the structures of Aboriginal art tend towards the relational, which determines the form and the direction of the content. In this sense, any Aboriginal art that focuses on Country deals with climate change too—whether ancestral, life-making change or colonial-capitalism's destructive changes.

Dr Mary Graham offers two basic precepts of Aboriginal cultures: that the land is the law and that you are not alone in the world. Through their practice, Aboriginal artists working in various media embody Graham's two precepts, centring their work on Country and representing relationships between people that are rooted in land. They show process, connection and emergence, never just a moment fixed in time.

Australian cli-fi futures

In art as in life, ecocide is intertwined with racial oppression. In *Fury Road,* the 2015 instalment of Australia's most famous filmic speculative-fiction future, the only Aboriginal character is a ghost who accuses Mad Max, in his delirium dream, that 'You let us die'.[3] This is an apt metaphor for our representation in so much post-/apocalyptic fiction, in which an unknown but complete artistic genocide has been performed on us. In the considerable body of creative material that is set in a future Australia, these worlds are almost always white supremacist, revealing colour blindness at best and realising fantasies of ethnic cleansing at worst.

In spite of Aboriginal peoples having lived through every major climate event in one of the most unforgiving and delicately balanced places on earth, and surviving our own ongoing apocalypse through attempted genocide, our future, according to so many writers in this field, is looking grim. Even some Aboriginal writers are guilty of not seeing hope, perhaps grappling with internalised fears about our own extinction.

Some say cli-fi has the potential to radically transform readers through the power of literature. Author and academic Tony Birch disagrees. He is 'sceptical about what kind of impact "cli-fi" books can have on people's opinions—let alone government policy', and says, 'I've read some really great fiction dealing with climate change and I hope the genre continues. But like any other form of communication, its impact will remain limited while we are subject to the deafening shriek of denialism.'[4] Birch continues:

> I'm not confident that any book or piece of art has the ability to fundamentally shift many people. When people, for example, talk about climate change and the role of writers and artists—I believe in that. But if people ask, 'Do we write more climate change fiction?' I say, 'No—we fucking get down on the picket line'.[5]

And this is what Aboriginal artist-activists have always done.

Mining in Gulf Country: the Yirrkala Bark Petitions and *Carpentaria*

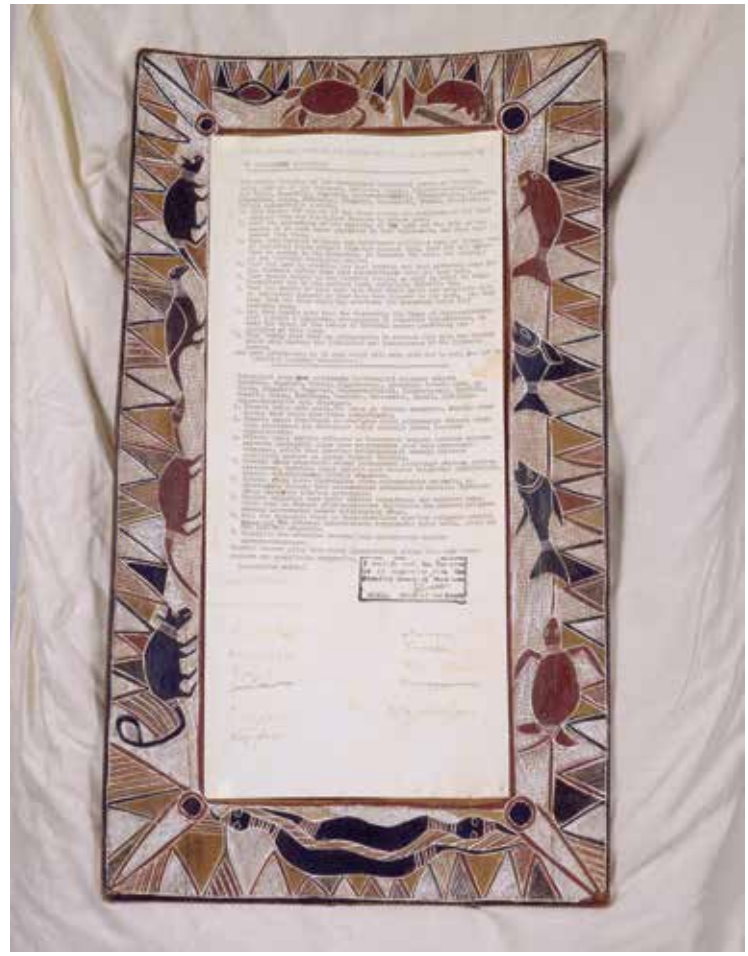
As a polity founded on genocide and ecocide, Australia has always had a problem with respecting Indigenous people and the environment. It is no secret to Aboriginal people that degradation of people and place are inextricably linked. One issue that arises from discussion regarding this is that it is difficult to talk about environmental issues without subsuming Aboriginal cultural relationships to Country into a scientific materialist paradigm that divorces culture and nature. Understanding Country from an Indigenous perspective requires relational thinking, which can be seen in Aboriginal kinship. This relational knowledge continues through Aboriginal culture.

In two examples from the Gulf Country, Aboriginal people respond to Australian government and corporate interference into traditional ownership by asserting sovereignty through kinship that extends to the non-human. The Yirrkala Bark Petitions document Yolngu ownership and assert sovereignty. The petitions were created in response to Nabalco's mining of Yolngu lands in 1963. Yolngu declare ownership through their cultural authority, framing the petition text with cultural designs and patterns that inscribe communal allodial title. This was the first document accepted by the government to assert Aboriginal ownership—and in a form that bridged Yolngu and Western law. In their 'Yirrkala Bark Petitions and Editorial', Lisa Radford and Yhonnie Scarce quote Galarrwuy Yunupingu, who says the bark petitions '... showed, in ways in which raising a multi-coloured piece of calico could never do, the ancient rights and responsibilities we have towards our Country. It showed we were not people who could be "painted out" of the picture or left at the edge of history.'[6]

In *Carpentaria*, set in another part of the Gulf decades later, novelist Alexis Wright explores the effects of colonial occupation and mining on one divided Aboriginal community.[7] The novel was conceived and written during the reign of John Howard, who repealed meaningful native title legislation and shifted the goalposts, with standards almost impossible to reach. Will Phantom, a young activist in the novel, takes on the mine, and his people engage in sabotage.[8] When the mine is ablaze, hellish winds roar from the site, as though Country is enacting revenge for its desecration. And if we are to read Aboriginal characters in the story as human expressions of Country, the way Aboriginal people see ourselves, then Gulf Country is sabotaging its enemies to the point of its own destruction. By working as a community—even across family feuds—Aboriginal characters are able to take down the operations. In the form of a cyclone, Country vanishes the town of Desperance, recreating the land as a *tabula rasa*, ready for Will's father and son, Norm and Bala, to walk back in from the sea hand in hand, and for intergenerational connections to move backwards and forwards through time in order to start again.

Maralinga works by APY artists

One extraordinary way that Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) artists have responded to the colonial[9] destruction of their Country and their people is through a number of works referencing the Maralinga test bombings, between 1956 and 1963. The artists have responded to this horror story with healing artistic and cultural intercessions in various forms.



Yirrkala artists
Yirrkala Bark Petition, 14 August 1963, and Yirrkala Bark Petition, 28 August 1963
The works made by Dhuwa moiety and Yirritja moiety respectively
Natural ochres on bark, ink on paper
46.9 × 21 cm (each)
Courtesy of the Speaker of the House of Representatives

In Jonathan Kumintjara Brown's *Poison Country* (1995), blood-coloured dirt obscures a cultural painting of his grandfather's homelands, representing the poisoning of Country and culture. In 2002, Kunmanara Queama and Hilda Moodoo painted *Destruction I* and *Destruction II*. They have been involved in the fight for justice for decades. The paintings depict mushroom clouds in their traditional style, claiming the universally recognised symbol for the APY gaze, and presenting Western destruction through a culturally specific lens.

In another medium, Kokatha and Nukunu artist Yhonnie Scarce's *Thunder Raining Poison* (2015) is an iteration of an installation series, depicting the destruction of Maralinga through the form of blown-glass yams, which bear down on the awestruck audience beneath. Ali Cobby Eckermann wrote the poem 'Thunder Raining Poison' in response to Scarce's work of the same name:

a whisper arrives. two thousand. two thousand or more. did you hear it?
that bomb. the torture of red sand turning green
the anguish of earth turned to glass
did you hear it? two thousand. two thousand or more
yams cremated inside the earth. poison trapped
in glass like a museum. did you hear it?
two thousand. two thousand or more[10]

The rhythm and repetition of the poem creates a chanting tattoo, vocalised in the communal first person to collectivise the experience of destruction for the people who belong to the place.

The work of all four artists testifies to the destruction, and the entwined desecration of place and people, brought about by the collusion of the British and Australian governments. So too are these works a testament to the sacred role of artist as witness.

Naretha Williams: codes of culture and blood

You kill the place, you kill the people.
You kill the people, you kill the place.
—Uncle Kev 'Kub Dharug' Saunders[11]

Climate is intimately tied to the health of Country, which depends on the intelligent stewardship of humans—encoded in Aboriginal cultures. On this continent, Country suffers because culture is the reason that they were so healthy for millennia. White supremacy has told lies for more than 230 years: that Aboriginal people didn't do anything special to the land and therefore didn't own it. Yet Country was never left alone. It was managed through systems of law, encoding relationships, patterns and cycles. Culture is the reason Aboriginal Countries and communities were so healthy for millennia. Colonial-capitalism not only dispossessed people of land—and land of people—but sought to stamp out culture of both land and people.

Indigenous peoples make up less than five per cent of the global population, but life on our lands is responsible for 80 per cent of the planet's biodiversity.[12] This is not a coincidence; our cultural life codes Country's regeneration, showing that there are ways to live on this planet as symbiotes rather than parasites. Naretha Williams' place-based sound practice models the way people, through art, may enter into right relationship with urbanised Country without harm or extraction. *Circle* is one iteration of her ongoing project *Cryptex*, which maps Williams' DNA sequence from her Wiradjuri, Asian, European and African bloodlines to establish a frame for the music she creates.[13] Because blood codes

Yhonnie Scarce
Thunder Raining Poison, 2015
2000 blown glass yams, stainless steel and reinforced wire
Dimensions variable
Installation view: Tarnanthi Festival Adelaide, Art Gallery of South Australia
Photo: Janelle Low. Courtesy of the artist,
Art Gallery of South Australia and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne

Hilda Moodoo, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, b. 1952, Riverland, and
Kunmanara Queama, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, b. 1947, Maralinga Lands, d. 2009, Ceduna
Destruction I, 2002, Oak Valley, South Australia
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas
Santos Fund for Aboriginal Art 2002, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Hilda Moodoo, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, b. 1952, Riverland, and
Kunmanara Queama, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, b. 1947, Maralinga Lands, d. 2009, Ceduna
Destruction II, 2002, Oak Valley, South Australia
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas
Santos Fund for Aboriginal Art 2002, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

embody behaviour, mirroring the codes of law, this practice recognises that coding is all—it makes us bodily from the blood of our ancestors, while our culture encodes us mimetically.

Williams plays her music as site-specific rituals, activating place by inserting her blood memory into the site—thereby decolonising the space on metaphorical and metaphysical levels. These are not the sound ceremonies off which New Age hippies make lucrative careers, but intentional and beautiful works in which Country is a stage set as well as '... a place that gives and receives life. Not just imagined or represented, it is lived in and lived with.' [14] In *Circle*, Williams activates the bells at Melbourne's Federation Square, using sounds mapped from sequences of her own bodily code. *Circle* is not ownership of Country, as Williams' Wiradjuri Country is far from that of the Wurundjeri, and she acknowledges unceded Kulin sovereignty. Hers is a way of relating to Country where she was born, and where she lives and works, intended as a ceremonial intercession into an urban place in a non-intrusive, gentle, respectful way.

The Anthropocene: natural outcome of colonial-capitalism

The Anthropocene, in process and in name, is a natural outcome of colonial-capitalism. The concept of the Anthropocene is an insult to land-based cultures. It lumps all peoples together as the problem, a post-racial lie that suggests *all* people have parted ways with the planet. As an all-inclusive term, it absolves colonial-capitalism through erasure of its responsibility, refusing to see its specificity as the cause of climate change.

In her poem 'Anthropocene', in her collection *Blakwork*, Gomeroi poet Alison Whittaker destroys any hope for a white supremacist future:

> If I am roots
> And you are the branches the
> Trunk and the leaves then
>
> I will suck no deeper for water
>
> You leave here with me.[15]

White supremacy has always refused to ascribe any intelligence to us, but at the 11th hour many Australians are waking up to the brilliance of our cultural science: our traditional ecological knowledge and our practices of caring for Country. Is it too late? Is all hope lost? All peoples were land based, once. Those peoples who have parted ways with the planet can trace their parting personally and culturally. Those that are still land based have not parted ways, and our knowledge is still here. Nothing is lost until it is lost. As long as we are still here, everyone can be too—as long as climate action centres Indigenous peoples and our expertise.

This year, white 'sovereign citizens' agitate for freedom and disavow government legitimacy, wielding old European laws such as the Magna Carta to assert COVID-19 conspiracy-fuelled notions of sovereignty on Aboriginal land. Their energies are wasted by refusing to channel their power into supporting those who have a legitimate claim to sovereignty. Increasingly, there are many non-Indigenous people who do put themselves on the line for Country and culture. Imagine how far we could go towards utopia if even more white people stopped worrying only about their own rights. Indeed, Dr Kerry Arabena says that all people 'thinking indigenously' is what will heal people and the planet.[16]

When trees are prevented from holding onto each other under the ground they get sick. Sick trees will recover and thrive if they are given a community to hold onto. When trees are ripped from soil and planted somewhere new, they won't thrive unless they are connected as a community. Like entering new communities, there must be a grafting onto existing life ways, rooted in Country. White supremacy has attempted to root into Indigenous land by displacing existing communities. Australian society swallows narratives of neoliberal scarcity about land rights, migrant jobs and toilet paper, equally, so it is no surprise that we are heading in the direction we are. Colonial-capitalism created the scarcity, and its offspring, neoliberalism, constructs its myths. But it is community cohesion that will dismantle late capitalism through mutual aid and care—as it always was and will be. In your commitment to climate justice, please prioritise the ongoing, centuries-long Indigenous efforts to assert sovereignty and protect Country. All of Australia is Aboriginal Country. Pay the rent by showing up; with boots on the ground where possible, or otherwise with financial aid.

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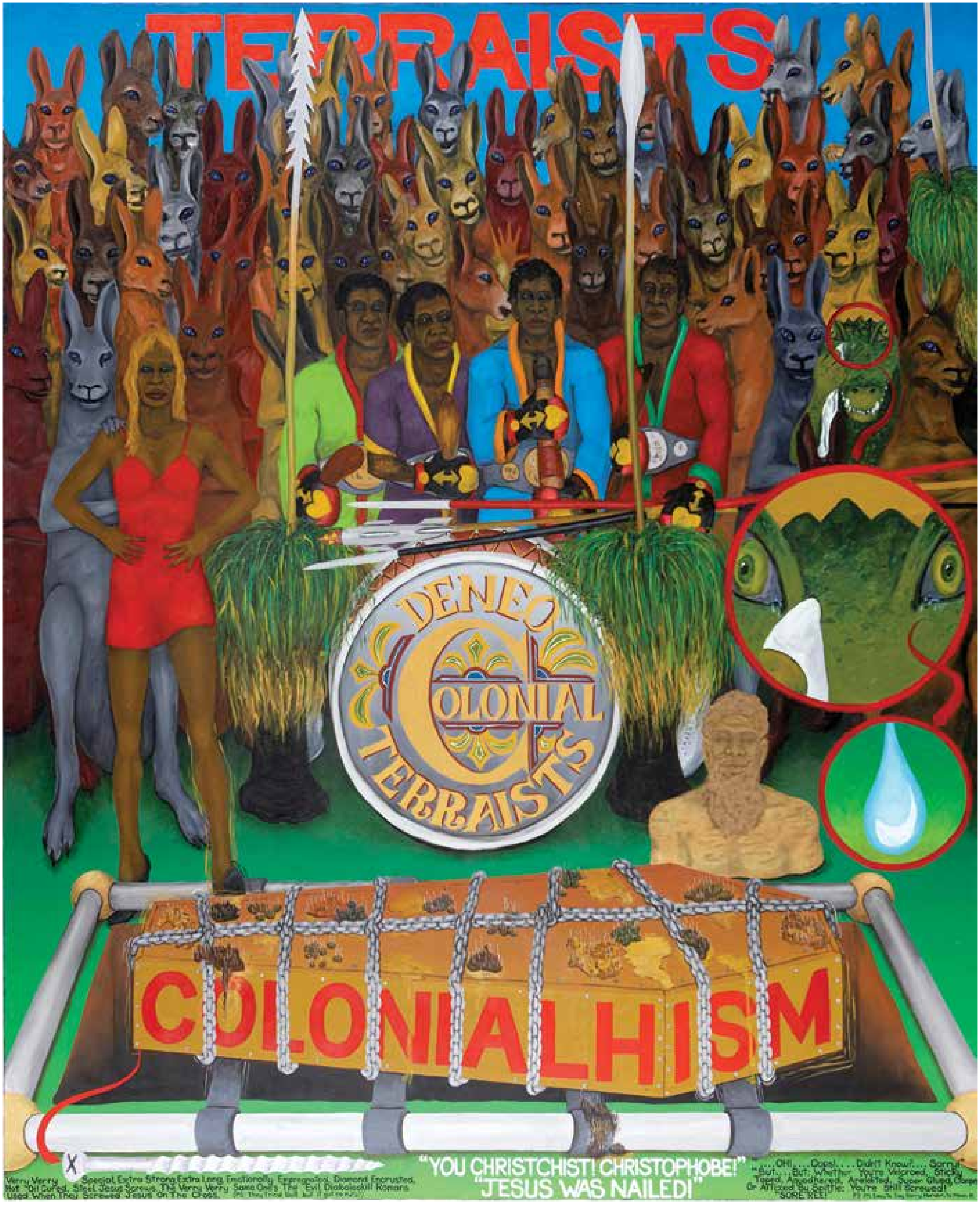
2. 'Transnational' meaning across the more than 300 nations within the continent.
3. *Mad Max: Fury Road* (motion picture), Kennedy Miller Mitchell, Producers Doug Mitchell, George Miller (dir.) and P.J. Voeten, Australia, 2015.
4. Broede Carmody, 'How Climate Anxiety Is Changing the Face of Australian Fiction', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 June 2019, smh.com.au/entertainment/books/how-climate-anxiety-is-changing-the-face-of-australian-fiction-20190619-p51z44.html; accessed 20 August 2020.
5. Paul Daley, 'Tony Birch on *The White Girl*: "No Aboriginal Person I know is Intact"', *The Guardian*, 7 June 2019, theguardian.com/books/2019/jun/07/tony-birch-on-the-white-girl-no-aboriginal-person-i-know-is-intact; accessed 20 August 2020.
6. Quoted in Lisa Radford in conversation with Yhonnie Scarce, 'Yirrkala Bark Petitions and Editorial', *Art+Australia* Online, 2020, artandaustralia.com/online/image-not-nothing-concrete-archives/yirrkala-bark-petitions-and-editorial; accessed 20 August 2020. The quote originally appeared in Galarrwuy Yunupingu 'Painting is a Political Act – 1988', in Ian MacLean (ed.), *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art: Writings on Aboriginal Contemporary Art*, IMA, Brisbane, 2011, pp. 89–91.
7. Alexis Wright, *Carpentaria*, Giramondo, Artamon, NSW, 2006.
8. Will Phantom is based on Wright's Countryman Murandoo Yanner.
9. I say colonial because, while no longer technically occupying Australia, the British government still employed abusive colonial tactics and it carried out its nuclear tests without the consent of traditional owners.
10. Ali Cobby Eckermann, *Thunder Raining Poison*, Poetry Foundation, 2016.
11. Wisdom from my Uncle Kev 'Kub Dharug' Saunders, personal communication, 2012.
12. International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 'Director General Statement on International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2019', iucn.org/news/secretariat/201908/iucn-director-generals-statement-international-day-worlds-indigenous-peoples-2019; accessed 7 August 2020.
13. Naretha Williams, *Circle*, Yirramboi Festival, 11 May 2017. See also narethawilliams.com.
14. Deborah Bird Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*, Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra, 1996, p. 7.
15. Alison Whittaker, *Blakwork*, Magabala Books, Broome, 2018, p. 10.
16. Kerry Arabena, *Becoming Indigenous to the Universe: Reflections on Living Systems, Indigeneity and Citizenship*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2015, pp. 177–78.



TERRAISTS
DENEO COLONIAL TERRAISTS
COLONIALHISM
"YOU CHRISTCHIST! CHRISTOPHOBE!"
"JESUS WAS NAILED!"

From *Carpentaria*

Alexis Wright

Gordon Hookey
Terraists Colonialhism, 2008
Oil on linen
350 × 290 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

The fire spread out the back of the hangars in the dry grass, and then it came burning around to the front again, fanned by a gusting south-easterly wind. Then, the monster smelt the spilt fuel on the ground. It raced through that, quickly spreading itself over the ground weeds, until it found the fuel bowsers, then it paused, maybe the fire had thoughts of its own and could not believe its luck. The fire just sitting there was as awesome a moment you could experience for our men waiting in the hills, sneaking a glance from over the boulders they were hiding behind, peering through the black smoke, thinking maybe their luck had run out and what next.

It looked as though the fire was going to peter out. The fire was just sitting, smouldering, not knowing where to go next because the wind was not blowing strong enough to fan it in the right direction. Our men looking from the hills continued staring at the little flame flickering there, fizzing out. What could they do? It looked like defeat was imminent. And, that same old defeated look, two centuries full of it, began creeping back onto their faces. But, it was too late now, they had a taste of winning, so they projected their own sheer willpower right across that spinifex plain, calling out with no shame, *Come on, come on,* willing the little flame not to fizz, believing magic can happen even to poor buggers like themselves.

Somehow, someone started yelling, 'Look, look, it is starting to move.' The unbelievable miracle came flying by. A whirly wind, mind you nobody had seen one for days, just as a matter of fact sprung up from the hills themselves. It swirled straight through from behind those men, picking up their wish and plucking the baseball caps which came flying off their heads, together with all the loose balls of spinifex flying with the dust and the baseball caps, the whole lot moving towards the fire. When it passed over the open rubbish tipsters the mine had lined up along the side of the hangars, it picked up all the trash. All the cardboard boxes, newspapers lying about and oily rags, spirited the whole lot across the flat towards the line of hangars on fire.

It happened so fast when the fiery whirlwind shot into the bowsers and momentarily, lit them up like candles. Well! It might even have been the old Pizza Hut box someone had left on top of one of those bowsers that added that little bit of extra fuel, you never know, for the extra spark, or it would have happened anyway, but the wick was truly lit.

The finale was majestical. Dearo, dearie, the explosion was holy in its glory. All of it was gone. The whole mine, pride of the banana state, ended up looking like a big panorama of burnt chop suey. On a grand scale of course because our country is a very big story. Wonderment, was the ear on the ground listening to the great murmuring ancestor, and the earth shook the bodies of those ones lying flat on the ground in the hills. Then, it was dark with smoke and dust and everything turned silent for a long time.

'You think they hear it in Desperance?' some young lad whispered carefully through the settling dust, because he did not want to frighten anyone by making the first sound of this new beginning. It was so incomprehendingly silent he needed to speak to hear himself talk because he was thinking of his family and the noise of his memories of them was the only sound he could hear.

The sound of this young voice being the first sound was a relief for the others who had been thinking they were listening to the sound of their own deafness. However relieved and pacified they were to hear speech, everyone kept listening, listening for what else remained missing—Ah! It was the noise of the bush breathing, the wind whispering through the trees and flowing through rustling grasses. We needed to hear the birds chirping, the eaglehawk crying out something from the thermals high above, but the eery silence lingered on. The birds were nowhere to be seen or heard, not even a singing willy-wagtail lightly flittering from rock to rock wherever anyone walked, or a mynah bird haggling at your feet. We looked into the dust and smoke-darkened skies and saw no twisting green cloud of budgerigars dancing away in thin air. The wind had dropped. Silent clouds passing overhead cast gloomy shadows over the peaceful trees, while grasses and spinifex stood stock-still as though the world had become something false, almost reminiscent of a theatre setting. We men floated somewhere between the surreal stillness, and the reality of the ants, lizards and beetles and other insects moving through the rocky ground as though nothing had happened. No one spoke or answered the boy, because we guessed the explosion must have been heard on the other side of the world, let alone in Desperance.

One will never know what really happened that day. Fishman, never stopped smiling about it. He said his recipe was top secret. He was regarded with awe whenever he came into anyone's presence because it was a privilege to know the Fishman. He was respected for what he had inside of his head. Too right! Nobody could know the highly confidential material in case someone like Mozzie had to do it all over again some day. Ignorant people would always ask, *How did you stop the mine?* And he would look at them for a long time with his steady eye, like he was making up his mind whether they were worth letting in on the secret. Finally, he would say, *I have decided to give you the truth*, and the truth was the very same words he had always used about what he would do to the mine from the day it got set up on our traditional domain. 'I put broken glass bottles on the road to stop the buggers—that's what I did.' Somehow, this was the truth. Truth just needed to be interpreted by the believers who could find the answers themselves just like the Fishman had done. At the same time he offered another piece of advice, which was, a smiling man would live for a very long time. And he did.

Alexis Wright, *Carpentaria*, Giramondo, Artamon, NSW, 2006, pp. 410–13.
Printed with permission from the author and publisher.

Vincent Li and Peter Waples-Crowe
Fashion collaboration, Mirrigang collection, 2018
Photo: Clint Peloso. Courtesy of the artists

Karla Dickens
***Lions, Tigers and Endangered Bears*, 2019**
Mixed media
120 × 240 × 8 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane


tigers & bears
tigers + Bears
TIGERS
TIGERS

Plantanimal, Three Thoughts on Alliance

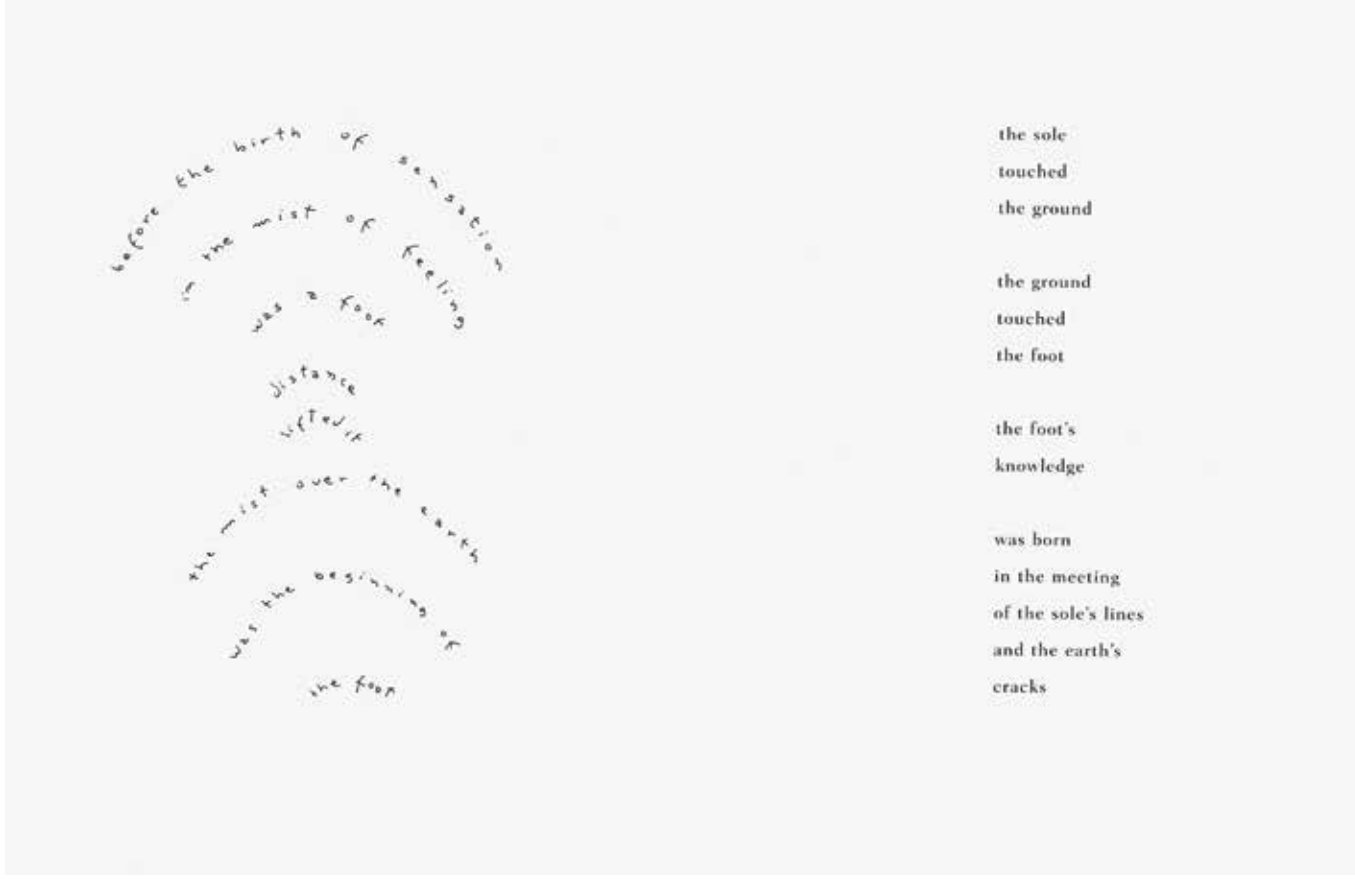
Cecilia Vicuña

I

Our union with plants began with an ancient alliance of foot and soil.
The sole of the foot gave the plant its name, *planta*:

'to drive in with the sole of the foot'.
La planta del pie!

The word and the act of planting were born when vision entered the soil.
We don't name the plant, but our relation to her.



Cecilia Vicuña
Sole of the Foot
Poem
Courtesy of the artist

‘Culture’ in its oldest form was to stir, to revolve, move around, inhabit, while ‘nature’ means to be born. How are they different?

When we speak, life speaks.[1]

If language is alive, all meanings are born, stir and die.
Each verbal act subverts its own definition, being non-definable by name.

When definitions explode, the task is to *not* know, so that new meanings may come.

Perhaps, we speak only to emit a verbal caress, or a shout: get out!
A connecting murmur that *com muni cates* us into a common action.

All animal species are known to emit only four main vibrations:

Who’s there?
Oh, dear baby
Don’t mess with me
Get out

(This may be old science, but I remember seeing a film with spectrograms translating all moans and pains by animals, large and small, reflecting wonder, love, aggression and self-defence as main emotions.)

Now we know that plants emit sound vibrations too, as shamans have known all along!

Flowers are the ears

… Heliamphora … release pollen from anthers only when vibrated at a certain frequency created exclusively by bee flight muscles … Evening primrose[s] … respond to bee wing beats … by producing sweeter nectar.[2]

If human ears were to learn to hear from flowers, like our ancestors did, then language could speak to us.

Long ago, I wrote: ‘words want to speak, to listen to them is the first task’.

Hieronymus Bosch
Das Feld hat Augen, der Wald hat Ohren
(The Field Has Eyes, The Forest
Has Ears)
c. 1500–05
20.2 × 12.7 cm
Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Courtesy bpk Berlin / Kupferstichkabinett, SMB / Jörg P. Anders

Luxumei[3]

To be clear
my natural attire
is flowers
though I dress
in a strange manner
with feathers
the teeth of crazy men
and handfuls of hair
from Taiwan and Luxumei.
Every time I sneeze
sparks fill the sky
I perform acrobatics
and diabolical pirouettes
every night
I grow an adjacent back.

I would prefer
to be on all fours,
branches
sprouting from my skin;
I am compelled to be
an angel with my pelvis
in flames.

—1966.

Translated by Rosa Alcalá

II

The poem is the animal

Sinking its mouth in the stream.

In the Andes, dark cloud constellations are animals roaming the night sky.
Animals that come down to earth, like neutrinos, crossing it from side to side.
The thirsty llama and her suckling baby come down to drink the cosmic water of fecundity under the earth.

Cecilia Vicuña
Cloud Baby, 1999
Performance
Courtesy of the artist

To a child, the word ‘animal’ doesn’t make sense. What do you mean, someone unlike me?

My first boyfriend was a rooster. He didn’t think I was a person, nor did I think he was a rooster. We just played together and he guarded me when I was left outside to poo in my potty.

Cecilia Vicuña y su gallo (Cecilia Vicuña and her Rooster), 1949. Courtesy of the artist

Words are animals.

Anima is the feminine of *animus*, the other side of mind, spirit, life, breath.
From *ane*, to breathe.

Anima is the wild in us.

It shifts and turns like galaxies spin.

The word ‘wild’ is ‘occurring’, ‘growing’, ‘living an unrestrained life’.

From *wei*, vital force, but from *wei* also comes its counterpart: plunder, *weith*, pursuit, gain.

From beauty: death.

A *sa* Ni *si* Ma *sa*

says the boy Guido in Federico Fellini’s *8½*, and the incantation causes the eyes of the painting to move, opening a portal to see, not outwardly, but into the *anima*, the soul where ancient memories live.

III

Cecilia Vicuña
La Vicuña, 1977
Oil on cotton canvas
139.1 × 119.4 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Ives Family Fund, 2018.116

La Vicuña, Andean Animal.

I was in London studying art when the military coup in Chile occurred.
I became a refugee and my exile began. Soon after that I left London for Bogotá.
I wanted to be an animal again.

I saw the mountains and I dropped to the ground and kissed it.

People made fun of me, they said: 'there comes La Vicuña, to *vicuñate*'.
To do her '*vicuña* thing'.

They made me into a verb, a mountain-being.

A verb-being painting herself as an Andean animal drawing the crimes of the dictator plundering our land and body for gain.

> In an earlier work (see de la Cadena 2010) I called earth-beings the kind of entities (also known as *guacas*) for which de Albornoz demanded destruction. 'Earth-beings' is my translation from the word with which I met them: *tirakuna*. The word is composed of the Spanish *tierra* and its Quechua pluralization *kuna*. So *tierras* or 'earths' would be a literal translation. Intriguingly, de Albornoz translated guacas as 'stones' and 'hills' and identified this fact as the cause of the difficulty to eradicate what he considered a relationship of false beliefs: removing them appeared impossible, for guacas were 'earths!' Five hundred years later 'earths' present the same plight to new eradicators: mining corporations, agents of the so-called anthropocene, who translate them as mountains, and a source of minerals, and therefore wealth. Unlike their colonial counterparts, they have the power to remove mountains, redirect rivers, or replace lakes with efficient reservoirs for water.[4]

The mountain is alive with death, like all beings.

Stories and poems are alive too.

> *Canción que se ensangrentó para aliviarme*
> (Song that bled to relieve me)
> —Gabriela Mistral[5]

In the north of Argentina, when Carnival returns people sing to it as to a person:

Eah tu Carnavalito
Tu y yo …

Hey, you Carnival,
You and I
(are ready for more!)

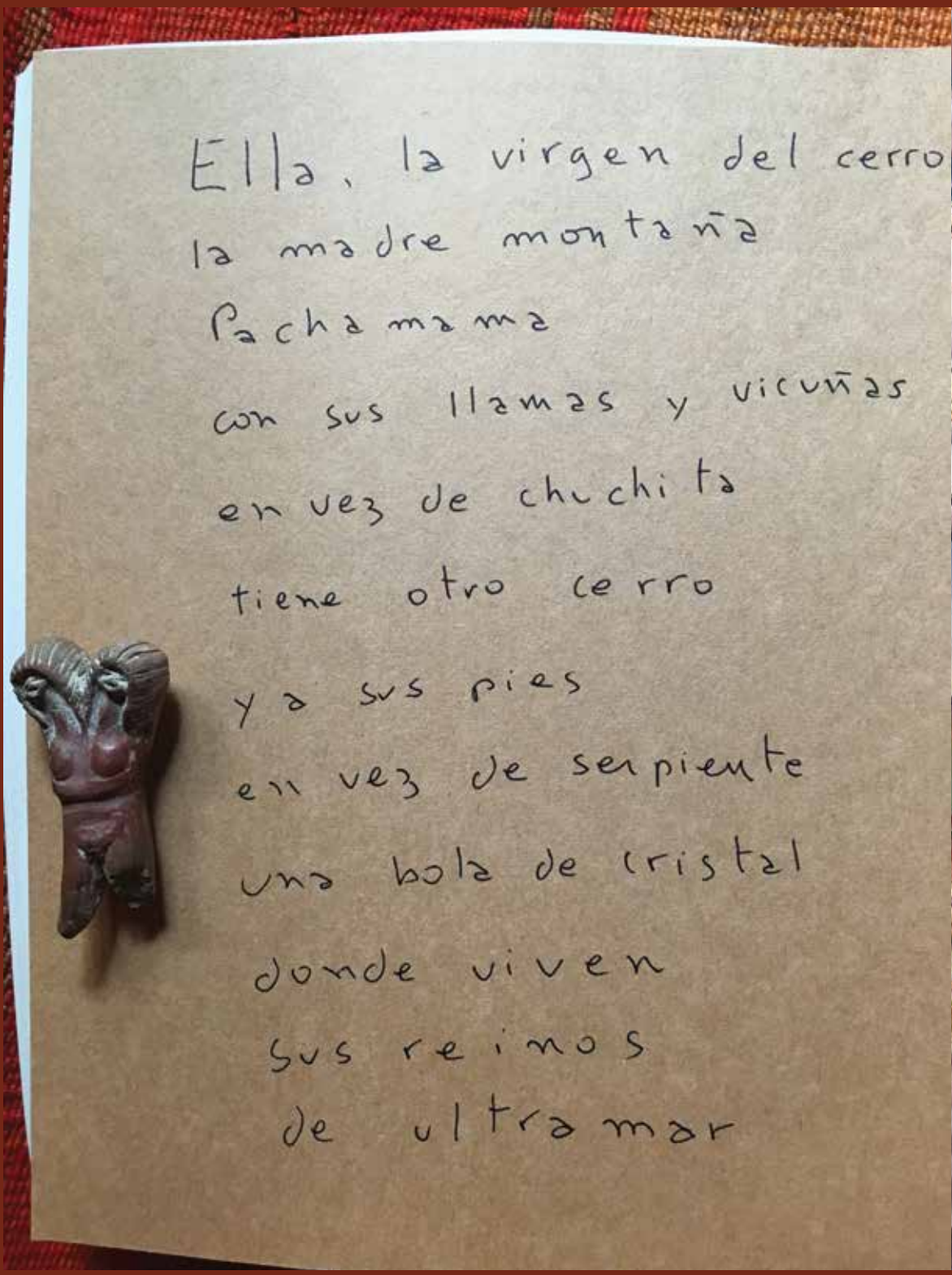
In Chile, when an ancient dance disappears people say: '*El baile se durmió*', the dance went to sleep. Someday it will wake up.

I remember, long ago, when Chile put out a 5000-peso bill with the image of Gabriela Mistral on it, I noticed most people didn't know who she was. I was enraged and I wrote: 'to understand her you would have to be a mountain'.

Cecilia Vicuña
Mistral, 2021
Courtesy of the artist

And to say goodbye, a poem to the Mountain Mother, the Virgin as Pachamama: *el Cerro Rico de Potosí*, the mountain raped for its gold and silver.

1. *The Upanishads*, Juan Mascaro (trans.), Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1965, p. 105.
2. 'Plant Bioacoustics', *Wikipedia*, wikipedia.org/wiki/Plant_bioacoustics; accessed 6 July 2020.
3. This is a neologism I invented, meaning: the luxury of being myself. In Latin *Luxus + mei*.
4. Marisol de la Cadena, 'Runa: Human but *Not Only*', *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2014, p. 253. Cristóbal de Albornoz was a Spanish clergyman active in Peru in the 16th century.
5. Gabriela Mistral, *Desolación*, Instituto de las Españas, New York, 1922.



Cecilia Vicuña
Poema Virgen del Cerro
Poem
Courtesy of the artist

Unknown artist
The Virgin of the Mountain (Pachamama)
18th century
Courtesy of Museo de la Casa de Moneda, Potosí, Bolivia

Decolonial Gardening: Libby Harward's *Ngali Ngariba* at Gropius Bau

Danni Zuvela

Libby Harward
Ngali Ngariba – We Talk, 2019
Photograph: Mathias Voelzke. Courtesy of the artist

Inside and outside

A terrarium is a world under a dome. Planted in a small scoop of aerated, moss-covered soil, terraria inhabitants live their lives in a self-sustaining bubble. The glass architecture enables a balanced micro-environment, regulating the conditions essential to vegetal needs, while offering protection from the many elemental, animal and human forces that can take a tender plant's life. The terrarium, however, takes something from the plant: its freedom, since growth is forever dictated by the limits of its walls. The shield, in other words, is also a prison.

A garden differs from a terrarium in its porosity, vulnerability and need for human attention. Mulching, weeding, feeding, watering, pruning and raking—practices that make the noun into a verb—are needed to maintain the garden's distinction from wilderness. But the garden does share some features with the terrarium; as planted worlds, galleries of the chosen, they are defined by who is let in and who is kept out.

The garden features as both stage and character in the ancient lore, texts and art of many human cultures. From the Garden of the Hesperides, the ancient Greeks' sacred garden of Hera, from which the gods obtained their immortality, to Persian and Chinese imperial gardens dating back thousands of years BCE, humans have constructed historical landscapes for productive, sacred, contemplative and purely pleasurable purposes. We find the garden's exclusivity dramatised, famously and fundamentally, in Christianity's Garden of Eden. This garden is the setting for the ultimate eviction: the expulsion of the knowledge-seeking, apple-eating, snake-trusting, sin-discovering Adam and Eve from Paradise. This enduring image of the garden—as site and crucible of The Fall—has fuelled countless works in the history of Western art, not least Hieronymus Bosch's enigmatic, enduringly popular late-15th-century masterwork known as *The Garden of Earthly Delights*.

Hieronymus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights, 1490–1500
Exterior panels: grisaille, oil on oak panel
Courtesy of Museo del Prado, Madrid

Ipse dixit et facta sunt

Ipse mandavit et creata sunt

Hieronymus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights, 1490–1500
Triptych: oil on oak panel
Courtesy of Museo del Prado, Madrid

Glazing over

Artist Libby Harward, a Ngugi woman from Mulgumpin in the Quandamooka (Moreton Bay, Queensland), exhibited a set of terraria in response to Bosch's mysterious triptych in an exhibition titled *Garden of Earthly Delights*, at Gropius Bau, Berlin.[1] Alongside works by international luminaries such as Yayoi Kusama, Tacita Dean, Pipilotti Rist and John Cage, Harward's *Ngali Ngariba – We Talk* (2019) was part of a three-month program at the prestigious Gropius Bau dedicated to the garden as a site for exploring ideas about utopia, botany and migration in contemporary art.[2]

Ngali Ngariba made a protagonist of the glass case, emphasising its role in the annexation of nature and the dislocation and reification of Indigenous cultural materials, which were usually stolen or otherwise illicitly or unethically acquired in order to contribute to the glory of museum and gallery collections around the world.[3] As Megan Ward explains, 'Glass induces both a sense of an artifact's value but also of mastery over the specimens of extinct species or far-flung peoples. Critics call this the "museum effect"—when an object is separated from its original context and rendered an isolated specimen or work of art within the institution of the museum.'[4] The glass case is *the* technology by which an artefact or object is assimilated, authenticated and institutionalised as a 'cultural acquisition' within the museum collection.

Harward's gleaming glass garden refracted a specific commentary on the role that Victorian technologies of display continue to play in both contemporary art and the sciences. Harward's terraria are direct descendants of the Wardian case, a glazed box, the invention of which in the mid-19th century enabled, rapidly and devastatingly, the first mass intercontinental transportation of plants from the New World to the Old.[5] Plants could now be uprooted from their original contexts and put to work in new ones, driving not only cultural dispossession but also global habitat destruction, biodiversity loss, and disease in the pursuit of profit for Empire.[6] The glass case is the material link between historical biopiracy, economic botany, racist science and settler colonialism—enabling cultural theft and imperialist expansion, while providing a handy and enduring way to exhibit this plunder to the masses. The contemporary glass case is more than a technology of display; it is a technology of power, a political actor.

Harward's installation comprised nine terraria—each housing a tropical plant, with its botanical classification, place of origin and an accompanying sound composition—and an Erlenmeyer flask containing a wattle cutting, labelled but open to the air. This presentation represents an extension of Harward's critical engagement with Western scientific tradition, including her ongoing involvement with archaeological digs and surveys in which traditional cultural materials are located, identified and classified. She reflects on this experience by retooling archaeological implements, including sifting devices and artefact cataloguing bags, into expressive elements, as in the exhibition *Already Occupied* (Redland Art Gallery, 2019) and in performance works at Bleach Festival, Gold Coast (April 2019), the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (December 2019) and Next Wave Festival (June 2020).[7]

In Harward's hands, tools of scientific classification are re-presented from an Indigenous point of view, both political and conceptual. In *Ngali Ngariba*, the glass bell jar was *détourned* into an amplifier for agency. Harward's unmuted plants deployed the museum effect to do decolonising work, appropriating the tools of subjugation and refashioning them into public displays of Indigenous resistance.

Libby Harward
Ngali Ngariba – We Talk, 2019
Photograph: Mathias Voelzke. Courtesy of the artist

Cone of silence

Accompanying Harward's glass terraria was a sound composition featuring Indigenous languages of the plants' countries of origin (including Javanese, Yoruba and Harward's own Jandai language, among others). 'Why am I here?', the plants asked in their own tongues. This softly spoken plant polyphony shifts the identity of the terraria from object of the gaze to subject of listening, and the plants themselves from mute witnesses to resonant bodies, asserting their voices within the walls of the colonial institution.

Harward's act of amplification took on an additional edge at the exhibition's opening, to which she was flown as a special guest. An unfortunate choice of wording on the accompanying wall text, to which the museum was alerted but declined to correct, resulted in a significant misrepresentation of Harward's work. The mediation text was structurally dependent on an argument about the plants speaking in their languages of origin, in a larger (also mistaken) point about Indigenous people not 'controlling' plants, which runs counter to extensive research—some of it featured in the glossy exhibition publication, such as the excerpt from Bill Gammage's *Biggest Estate on Earth*—on the extent of Indigenous agriculture.[8] More egregious was the text's blanket (mis-)labelling of all the languages spoken in *Ngali Ngariba* as 'dying'—something the 100 million speakers of Tagalog and 140 million speakers of Javanese might find surprising to hear.

The wall text clashed with careful explanations of the work penned by the artist and her long-time collaborator on the Ngugi Bajara (Ngugi Footprints) language reclamation project, Glenda Harward-Nalder, printed in the large hardback tome accompanying the exhibition and which situated the work as a resistant 'speaking back'. In a near-textbook example of what Aileen Moreton-Robinson calls 'techniques of subjugation',[9] the wall text reduced Harward's complex, multi-layered work to an elegy, in the process echoing generations of European fascination with exoticising and silencing 'extinct' cultures. Fixing the problem would have entailed rewriting and reprinting a small paragraph of erroneous vinyl wall text—text seen by thousands of visitors to the Berlin exhibition throughout its run.

This is important not just because Harward's work is about the politics of listening. The institutional (re)positioning of (often defiantly) living languages in colonised lands as 'dying', as the text explicitly does, is a recolonising act that participates in the language-destroying practices at the core of colonialism and its handmaidens. Since British invasion of this country in 1788, some 250 Indigenous nations were, often violently, denied the right to speak and learn in their own languages.[10] Linguicide—language killing—was both the objective and methodology of Stolen Generations policies, which deliberately separated Indigenous people from their families and Country. We now refer to those languages suppressed by genocidal colonial practices as 'dreaming', or 'sleeping beauties', emphasising how many have a good chance of survival if they continue to be revived, nurtured and supported.[11] Furthermore, language revival becomes 'increasingly relevant as people seek to recover their cultural autonomy, empower their spiritual and intellectual sovereignty, and improve their wellbeing'.[12]

Ideally, the time that *Garden of Earthly Delights* curator and Gropius Bau director Stephanie Rosenthal spent as curator of the 2016 Sydney Biennale would have furnished her with an understanding of the vital work currently underway in the reawakening of Indigenous languages, and the key role to be played by institutions in paying more than lip service to notions of decolonisation. Furthermore, the German art world would surely have noticed the fanfare when, in April 2019, a few months before the *Garden of Earthly Delights* exhibition opened, stolen Indigenous remains hoarded in Dresden were repatriated to their rightful communities in Australia. Presiding minister Eva-Maria Stange sobbed publicly, attributing her tears to the event's evocation of painful echoes of the racist 'medical' and 'scientific' experiments of the Nazis. 'It is a very moving moment to have the chance to right the wrongs of the past', Stange said.[13]

Libby Harward
Already Occupied: Ngugi Bajara, 2018
From *A Plant is a Community*, 2018, co-curated by Liquid Architecture and people+artist+place,
Tropical Display Dome, Brisbane Botanic Gardens Mt Coot-tha
Photo: Keelan O'Hehir. Courtesy of the artist

For white curators, with an inheritance of Eurocentric ways of seeing and listening, it can be difficult to recognise, much less overcome, what Linda Tuhiwai Smith calls 'the positional superiority of western knowledge' as both internalised and institutionalised.[14] A practical place to start is with simple protocols of listening respectfully, and reflecting that listening in the accommodation of an artist's express wishes as to how her artwork is represented to the public.

Political plant polyphony

Botanical gardens were, historically, committed partners in the colonial expansionist project and a key site at which colonialist power intersected with knowledge production.[15] Harward and I worked together on the first iteration of this project, in 2018, at Liquid Architecture's *A Plant is a Community* event, held in the Brisbane Botanic Gardens Mt Coot-tha, where Harward's sound collage played from speakers hidden throughout the humid hemisphere of the Tropical Display Dome.[16] During her residency at the gardens, Harward researched practices of plant transfer and display, exploring how the business of Empire and its legacies results in the artificial but usually unremarked-upon collocation of tropical species we see in the Tropical Display Dome, and also with domestic houseplants. In Berlin, Harward's plants were sourced from the Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin-Dahlem's 'Gardens of the World' collection, and acquired their own individual domes, talking back from a place of greater amplification. Expertly planted by a professional botanist, Harward's decolonial garden mobilised the museum context and its various affordances (material and technical resources, and access to specialist personnel and international audiences) to literally proclaim Indigenous and colonised voices on a global stage.

This context inevitably adds further political charge to the artist's presentation of isolated, classified but irrepressible vocal artefacts under glass, connecting them to the bloody history (and, indeed, ongoing practice) of private and state-sanctioned displays of Aboriginal people, their knowledge and traditional culture as curios and commodities. The opulent 19th-century brick edifice of Gropius Bau, located across the street from the former Prussian parliament and reconstructed former Nazi headquarters, emphasised the grimly Eurocentric roots of the ongoing colonial dispossession that Harward addresses throughout her practice. Referring to the landmark 2018 repatriations, Harward's catalogue essay acknowledges the new addition, in the Berlin show, absent from the Brisbane presentation: an Australian wattle plant sourced from a rare German botanical collection. In *Ngali Ngariba*, this plant spoke directly with her dispossessed ancestors, consoling them with the promise of being united with Country: 'Here, in the Gropius Bau, when Gagagil asks, Minyangu ngari gadji? (Why am I here?), our Ancestors, who have been waiting nearby for 140 years, will answer, Yuwayi bunji ngali ganyagu wunjayi! (Farewell friend, we are going home now!)'.[17]

Endings and beginnings

> On one side of the world were people whose relationship with the living world was shaped by Skywoman, who created a garden for the well-being of all. On the other side was another woman with a garden and a tree. But for tasting its fruit, she was banished from the garden and the gates clanged shut behind her. That mother of men was made to wander in the wilderness and earn her bread by the sweat of her brow, not by filling her mouth with the sweet juicy fruits that bend the branches low. In order to eat, she was instructed to subdue the wilderness into which she was cast. Same species, same earth, different stories …

> One story leads to the generous embrace of the living world, the other to banishment. One woman is our ancestral gardener, a cocreator of the good green world that would be the home of her descendants. The other was an exile, just passing through an alien world on a rough road to her real home in heaven.
>
> —Robin Wall Kimmerer[18]

The painting at the centre of the exhibition is Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, famous for its mystifying and surreal panels depicting scenes of prelapsarian abandon and nightmarish punishment. Potentially less famous is the triptych's enclosure in a set of shutters, whose purpose is to be thrown open, allowing its handler to reveal the painting in all its detailed glory. This outer panel is painted in *grisaille* (grey monotone), a common technique of the day, the better to impress with the revelation of the interior's dazzling colour. Across these wooden shutters is a depiction of the earth on the third day of Christian folklore, where the first plants, spiky and foreboding, emerge from a silvery primordial goo under the inscription 'and God's word was law'. And, curving over the top of and enclosing this inchoate, pre-human proto-earth is what appears to be a glass dome.

German art historian Hans Belting's extensive analysis of the painting is referenced liberally throughout the Gropius Bau materials. Pre-terrarium, but well into the age of exploration, Belting notes that the globe 'was used by emperors as symbols of their global power'.[19] Globes and amniotic bubbles abound throughout Bosch's painting; his garden is 'a great park, full of planet-like globes enclosing lovers, briefly the gods of their private worlds'.[20] These spheres are fine, membranous, sometimes cracked, always fragile.

For Belting, the painting, with its shameless, blameless, painless humans engaged in an effortless eroticism of unfettered (often interspecies) corporeality, is suggestive of something more than the morality tale it is usually held to be. In fact, Belting sees less of an interpretation of Christian myth than a (subtle, complicated) challenge to it, for this imaginary garden is not the same as the Garden of Eden before the Fall of Man; rather it represents a deliberately fictitious paradise.[21] If, as Belting suggests, the secretive Bosch was indeed producing a 'counter-image of civilisation' that lives in and *as* nature, then may there be coded into his masterwork a questioning of the much-vaunted dominion that the Christian God allegedly gave to humans over the earth and all living things? Rather than a simple reinscription of the warnings against voluptuousness, this ambiguously sumptuous artwork could be read as displacing dominionist ideology with 'a vision of humankind living in harmony with nature' that exists 'in a state of permanent becoming'.[22] In other words, the projection of an alternative world to the one we all inherited.

> Wherever the Creator Beings travelled, they left tracks or some kind of evidence of themselves. These traces determined the identity of the people. In other words, every Aboriginal person has a part of the essence of one of the original creative spirits who formed the Australian landscape. Therefore each person has a charter of custodianship empowering them and making them responsible for renewing that part of the flora and its fauna. The details of this metaphysics varied widely across the land with the physical environment, but the spiritual basis—the understanding that what separates humans from animals is the fact that each human bears a creative and spiritual identity which still resides in land itself—provided and still provides in many places the religious, social, political and economic force throughout Aboriginal Australia.
>
> —Mary Graham, Kombumerri Elder [23]

> The plants are speaking and we are listening to them.
>
> —Libby Harward [24]

Libby Harward
Ngali Ngariba – We Talk, 2019
Photo: Mathias Voelzke. Courtesy of the artist

Previous spread:
Hieronymus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights, 1490–1500 (detail)
Triptych: oil on oak panel
Courtesy of Museo del Prado, Madrid

The world under a dome is a kind of offering, a proposal, a proposition. We, the spectators, are invited to reflect upon the specimens within, for their illustrative power, for the force of their elucidation. 'Why am I here?', Libby Harward, as a non-coercive vegetal ventriloquist, asks, together/through/with/as her plants. Refusing to be silenced, these plants tell us that if there are answers they are uncomfortable ones, which raise further questions. In *Ngali Ngariba – We Talk*, Harward's talking plants are ready to hold a conversation with us, just as soon as we are willing to listen.

1. Libby Harward, *Ngali Ngariba – We Talk*, 2019, installation, mixed media, including nine terraria, one Erlenmeyer flask, living tropical plants, *Acacia iteaphylla* cutting, multi-channel sound.

2. berlinerfestspiele.de/en/gropiusbau/programm/2019/garten-der-irdischen-freuden/begleitprogramm/gb19_garten_begleitprogramm.html; accessed 4 September 2020.

3. See Laurelyn Whitt, *Science, Colonialism, and Indigenous Peoples: The Cultural Politics of Law and Knowledge*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2009, among others.

4. Megan Ward, 'Out of the Glass Case: Museum Heists and Repatriations', *LA Review of Books*, 30 October 2019, lareviewofbooks.org/article/out-of-the-glass-case-museum-heists-and-repatriations; accessed 4 September 2020.

5. Luke Keogh, 'The Wardian Case: How a Simple Box Moved the Plant Kingdom', *Arnoldia: Journal of the Arnold Arboretum*, vol. 74, no. 4, 2017.

6. As Nina Möllers, Luke Keogh and Helmuth Trischler note, 'whether carrying prized horticultural exotics or useful economic plants, the case was an important prime mover … [M]oving tea from China to India to lay the foundations of the Assam and Darjeeling tea districts; stealing rubber from Brazil and transporting it via London to Asia which is now the leading producer of the crop; and repeatedly moving bananas over many decades to the Pacific Islands, Central America and the Caribbean'. Möllers, Keogh and Trischler, 'A New Machine in the Garden? Staging Technospheres in the Anthropocene', in Maria Paula Diogo, Ana Duarte Rodrigues, Ana Simões and Davide Scarso, *Gardens and Human Agency in the Anthropocene*, Routledge, New York, 2019, p. 164.

7. See libbyharward.art for details; accessed 4 September 2020.

8. *Garten der Irdischen Freuden/Garden of Earthly Delights*, exhibition catalogue, Stephanie Rosenthal (ed.), Berliner Festspiele, Gropius Bau, Silvana Editoriale, Berlin, 2019, pp. 273–76.

9. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power and Indigenous Sovereignty*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2015, p. 135.

10. Jakelin Troy, 'The First Time I Spoke in My Own Language I Broke Down and Wept', *The Guardian*, 1 December 2015, theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/01/the-first-time-i-spoke-in-my-own-language-i-broke-down-and-wept; accessed 4 September 2020.

11. See L. Sivak, S. Westhead, E. Richards, S. Atkinson, J. Richards, H. Dare, G. Zuckermann, G. Gee, M. Wright, A. Rosen, M. Walsh, N. Brown and A. Brown, '"Language Breathes Life"—Barngarla Community Perspectives on the Wellbeing Impacts of Reclaiming a Dormant Australian Aboriginal Language', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 16, no. 20 (3918), 2019.

12. Ghil'ad Zuckermann, *Revivalistics: From the Genesis of Israeli to Language Reclamation in Australia and Beyond*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2020, p. xxiii.

13. Cited in Nick Miller, 'Enslaved, Exported, then Made into an Artefact, One Young Girl Is Finally Coming Home', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 April 2019, smh.com.au/world/europe/enslaved-exported-then-made-into-an-artefact-one-young-girl-is-finally-coming-home-20190416-p51ejh.html; accessed 4 September 2020. Glenda Harward-Nalder refers to this particular repatriation event in her essay in the exhibition publication, providing a link to a contemporaneous SBS NITV news story on the subject.

14. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd edn, Zed Books, London, 2012, p. 62.

15. See Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, *Botanical Drift: Protagonists of the Invasive Herbarium*, Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2017; Keogh, 'The Wardian Case'; Zaheer Baber, 'The Plants of Empire: Botanic Gardens, Colonial Power and Botanical Knowledge', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2016; Ward, 'Out of the Glass Case'.

16. See liquidarchitecture.org.au/events/a-plant-is-a-community; accessed 4 September 2020.

17. Libby Harward, artist statement, in Rosenthal (ed.), *Garten der Irdischen Freuden/Garden of Earthly Delights,* p. 282.

18. Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, Milkweed Editions, Minneapolis, Minn., 2013, pp. 6–7.

19. Hans Belting, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, Prestel, Munich, 2012, p. 21.

20. Peter Beagle, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, Picador, London, 1982, p. 84.

21. Belting , p. 57.

22. Belting , p. 54.

23. Mary Graham, 'Some Thoughts about the Philosophical Underpinnings of Aboriginal Worldviews', *Australian Humanities Review*, no. 45, November 2008, australianhumanitiesreview.org/2008/11/01/some-thoughts-about-the-philosophical-underpinnings-of-aboriginal-worldviews; accessed 4 September 2020.

24. Libby Harward, artist statement, *Why Listen to Plants*, 2018.

eat (it)

Alexis Milonopoulos

Above:
Jorgge Menna Barreto
***Restauro: Environmental Sculpture*, 2016**
Photo: Janaina Miranda

Left:
Denilson Baniwa
***Lambe-lambe yawareté*, 2019, Rio de Janeiro**
Courtesy of the artist

Below:
Jorgge Menna Barreto
***Restauro: Environmental Sculpture*, 2016**
Photo: Janaina Miranda

where does *it* begin
where does *it* end
in the middle[1]
in an immanent entanglement
in an (aesth)ethics of emergent relationality
in a plurivocal multiplicity
in a relational imagination
in metamorphosis
in transformation
in metaphysical continuity
in physical discontinuity
in the hungerness[2] that moves
through the qualitative excess
of supernatural encounters[3]
where does *it* begin
where does *it* end
in the middle
decolonise hunger
(when) ecology is everything
that came into being
(when) appearance means
something else
(when) a body can
be deceiving
(when) in the midst of
an ontological potentiality
(of) transforming *it*self
(when) into a person
(when) others are everywhere
(when) every relation is social
(when) 'eating … is a dangerous act'[4]
(when) (in) the liveliness of the earth-body[5]
(when) (in) the quality of the encounters
(when) (in) the concern for sharing
(when) (in) existence
(when) (in) the concern for sharing
(when) (in) an appetite (for)
(when) perceiving *a* world
where does *it* begin
where does *it* end
in the middle
revalue taste
(when) we do not know
what a body can do
(when) we do not know
what *it*s soul can do[6]
(when) there are no fences
over existential territories
(when) there are no distinct
ontological provinces
(when) what moves the world
(when) (in) potentia is a
(when) quality of experience (is)
(when) 'the cosmos is
saturated with humanity'[7]
(when) 'we … are the "ecology"'[8]
(when) we are one with the land
(when) (in) a becoming-form
(when) (in) a becoming multiplicity
(when) (in) the metamorphoses of experience
(when) (in) *it*s emergence
where does *it* begin
where does *it* end
in the middle
dehumanise health
'[when] everything is human
[when] the human is
an entirely different thing'[9]
(when) in the cosmopolitics[10] of becoming
(when) transformation is not
(when) from one thing to another
(when) nothing coincides with *it*self
(when) no one coincides with *it*self
(when) nature is how
(when) a world expresses *it*self
(when) there is no stable ground
(when) there are no fixed identities
(when) there is no simple location[11]
(when) experience shifts
(when) (in) the nondecidable coexistence (of)
(when) (in) more than one perspective
(when) appetiteness[12] co-composes (with)
(when) (in) an immanent orientation
(when) (we) change not the subject
but the world
where does *it* begin
where does *it* end
in the middle
care for the encounter
(and care-ful with *it*)
(when) the humanity is leaking[13]
(when) the human is lurking
(when) alterity is licking
(when) individual substances are
not the ultimate reality
(when) substantial forms are
not the ultimate reality
(when) the similarity of souls
(when) (*it*) prevails over
(when) the differences of body
(when) in the metamorphosis
of emergent relations

(when) the perspective is transductive
(when) food is transversally (cosmo)political
(when) eating is not an individual affair
(when) *it* is the continuation of (cosmo)politics
(when) by the same means
(when) *it* is always more-than
where does *it* begin
where does *it* end
in the middle
cook with affect(ion)[14]
(when) there is more than
one world in play
(when) 'things and beings are
themselves points of view'[15]
(when) 'there is scarcely an existent
that could not be defined in terms [of]
[when] [in] *it*s relative position
[when] on a scale of predatory power'[16]
(when) eating is radically relational
(when) anthropophagy (as anthropology)[17]
(when) (*it*) feeds 'the resemblance shared
by dead humans and living nonhumans'[18]
(when) the interactional field is
(when) (*it* is) ontologically heterogeneous
(when) the interactional field is
(when) (*it* is) sociologically continuous
(when) humanity is reciprocally reflexive
(when) (*it*) is never mutual
(when) what exists are relational multiplicities
where does *it* begin
where does *it* end
in the middle
devour otherness
(when) all animals are
intensively and virtually
(when) (*it*) persons
(when) cosmic constituents are
intensively and virtually
(when) (*it*) (is) persons
(when) the immanent humanity is
(when) structured by alterity
(when) life is ecological
(when) the human is not a being
(when) the biological is not enough
(when) *it* is a relation that comprises
a multiplicity of subjective positions
(when) the movement of
the jaw is the movement
of the earth
***it* middles**
***it* bodies**
***it* worlds**
***it* c(a)osmos[19]**
***it* explodes**
the rooftop (of)
the mouth
where does *it* begin
where does *it* end
in the middle
transfærm the body[20]
where does *it* begin
where does *it* end
in the middle
in the thirdness (of)
(in) an encounter
in the more-than (of)
(in) otherness
(in) færmation
in feeling
(in) *a* world
in difference
in the excess (of)
(in) differentiation
in becoming-worlds
in life-living
in the vividness of *it*
rewild appetite[21]

.....

1. As in Amerindian cosmologies, cannibal metaphysics are lurking at every encounter. The visible shape of a body may be deceptive and a human appearance may be concealing an animal-affect. Moving from there and from the perspectival relation in which nature is the form of the third person, this piece builds itself around the similarity of the sounds of the impersonal pronoun 'it' (the form of the other in multinaturalism) and the verb 'eat' (whose phonetic transcription in Australian spelling is precisely 'it'). *It* also approaches the transversality between eating, multinaturalism and otherness by juggling with the exchangeability of these terms around the relational pointer *it* and by following the multinaturalist idea that the origins of perspectival differences depend not on self-perception but on the gaze of the other, so that this piece is undeniably about eating and the cosmopolitics of becoming related to *it*, but only by virtue of *it* being about the cosmopolitics of becoming related to multinaturalism, as well as the cosmopolitics of becoming related to otherness. In this same sense, *it* experiments with immediated perspectives that are, as Amerindian perspectivism teaches us, exchangeable within multiple relational-positional constellations, which is to say that every perspectival (pro)position seeds the transfor-

mation of the piece from its own deictic position, so that the very encounter with the piece's mobile shape and its multiple beginnings feeds the potential relationality of a form-in-the-making that enacts multiple ways of unmediated exchange, akin to Amazonian cannibalism. Where does *it* begin? Where does *it* end? In the middle, in the condition(al)s, 'in Amazonia and elsewhere' (see Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Relative Native: Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds*, HAU Books, Chicago, 2015, p. 189).

2. See Alexis Milonopoulos, Erin Manning, Jorgge Menna Barreto and Ricardo Rodrigues Teixeira, 'In-between Hunger and Appetite – Food for Thought in the Act', *Inflexions*, no. 11, 'popfab', 2019, senselab.ca/inflexions/popfab/pdfs/alexis.pdf; accessed 29 June 2020.

3. For more on the *supernatural*, see Viveiros de Castro, 'Supernature: Under the Gaze of the Other', *The Relative Native*, p. 274.

4. Viveiros de Castro, *The Relative Native*, p. 274.

5. For a bite of the Indigenous understanding of the earth as a body, see Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, Nicholas Elliott and Alison Dundy (trans.), Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2013, and Ailton Krenak, 'Do sonho e da terra', *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo*, Companhia das Letras, São Paulo, 2019. It is worth remembering that for Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari the earth is also a body (without organs). See *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Brian Massumi (trans.), Continuum, London, 2008, p. 45.

6. For the Spinozan mantra, see Baruch Spinoza, *The Ethics*, Wilder, Floyd, Va., 2009. See also Viveiros de Castro, *The Relative Native*, pp. 36–37.

7. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics: For a Post-structural Anthropology*, Peter Skafish (ed. and trans.), Univocal Publishing, Minneapolis, 2014, p. 70.

8. Kopenawa and Albert, *The Falling Sky*, p. 393.

9. Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics*, p. 131.

10. While Viveiros de Castro mentions the works of Isabelle Stengers and Bruno Latour around this term, it is also worth looking at Brian Massumi's piece 'Sur le droit à la non-communication des différences' ('On the Right to the Non-Communication of Cultural Difference'), in *Couplets: Travels in Speculative Pragmatism*, Duke University Press, Durham, N.C., forthcoming, 2021), where the author cultivates a discussion around *it* and around other themes that are transversal and akin to this piece.

11. See Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World: Lowell Lectures, 1925*, The Free Press, New York, 1926.

12. See Milonopoulos et al., 'In-between Hunger and Appetite'.

13. For other appetising discussions around the concept of 'humanity', see 'A humanidade que pensamos ser', *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo*, and *O amanhã não está à venda*, Companhia das Letras, São Paulo, 2020, both by Ailton Krenak. In addition to that, from a process philosophy-oriented gaze, see Erin Manning's discussion on the *more-than-human* in *The Minor Gesture*, Duke University Press, Durham, N.C., and London, 2016.

14. See Spinoza, *The Ethics*, as well as Brian Massumi, *Politics of Affect*, Polity, Cambridge, UK, 2015.

15. Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, Zone Books, New York, 1988, p. 203.

16. Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics*, p. 57.

17. See Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics*, p. 143.

18. Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics*, p. 155.

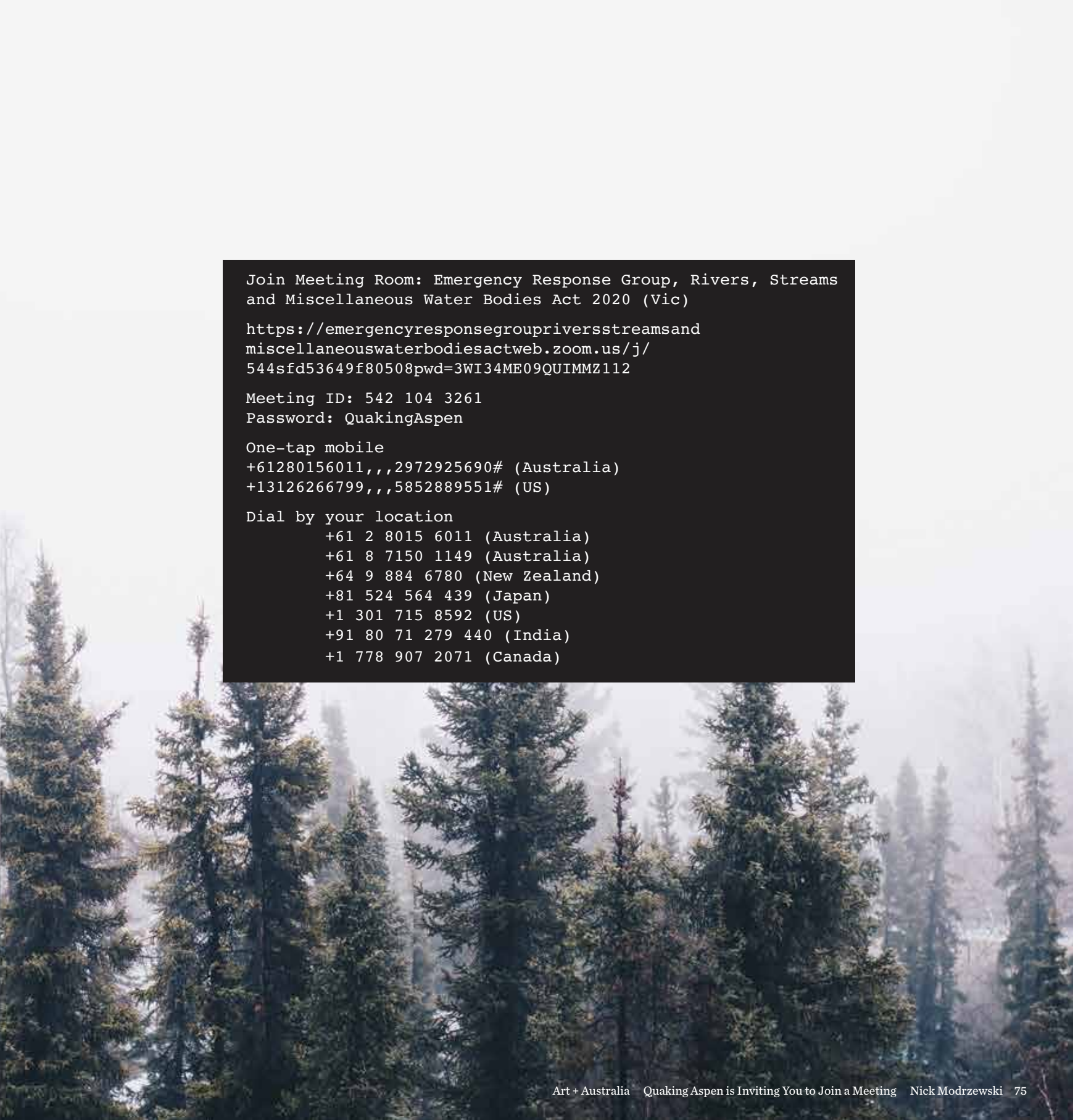
19. See Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-aesthetic Paradigm*, Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (trans.), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind., 1995.

20. Fed by Indigenous farming practices and by previous conversations around the relations between food practices, agroecology and rewilding strategies (see Milonopoulos et al., 'In-between Hunger and Appetite'), especially within the dialogue and collaboration with Brazilian artist Jorgge Menna Barreto in the work *Restauro: Environmental Sculpture* (2016–ongoing), the term 'transfærm' not only alludes to the composition 'Refazenda' by Brazilian composer Gilberto Gil (1975)—loosely transcr*eat*ed here as the wor(l)d 'transf*a*rm'—but cultivates Barreto's understanding of the digestive system as a sculptural tool of the landscape. Pollinating both the ideas that farming and eating transform and sculpt the ambient, plus that *environmental sculpting* and its transversal(itie)s can sow tastier compositions and trans-formations with earth(s), *it* also regards the fact that in shamanism transformation is a sign of power, and sculpting a (human) form is part of the shamanic work (especially of desubjectivisation and despiritualisation of animals) that flourishes within the dietary rules, the food restrictions and the precautions that move around the danger of cannibal counter-predation and the inversion of perspectives in Amerindian cosmologies. See Viveiros de Castro, *The Relative Native*, p. 269, and *Cannibal Metaphysics*, p. 60. For more on *environmental sculpture*, see jorggemennabarreto.com/Enzyme-Magazine; accessed 9 July 2020.

21. Author's note: This study was financed in part by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brasil (CAPES) - Finance Code 001.

Jorgge Menna Barreto
Restauro: Environmental Sculpture, 2016 (detail)
Photo: Janaina Miranda

Quaking Aspen is Inviting You to Join a Meeting
Nick Modrzewski


Join Meeting Room: Emergency Response Group, Rivers, Streams and Miscellaneous Water Bodies Act 2020 (Vic)
https://emergencyresponsegroupriversstreamsandmiscellaneouswaterbodiesactweb.zoom.us/j/544sfd53649f80508pwd=3WI34ME09QUIMMZ112
Meeting ID: 542 104 3261
Password: QuakingAspen
One-tap mobile
+61280156011,,,2972925690# (Australia)
+13126266799,,,5852889551# (US)
Dial by your location
+61 2 8015 6011 (Australia)
+61 8 7150 1149 (Australia)
+64 9 884 6780 (New Zealand)
+81 524 564 439 (Japan)
+1 301 715 8592 (US)
+91 80 71 279 440 (India)
+1 778 907 2071 (Canada)

WILLOW: … barely more than a seedling at that time, bu—

OAK: … as it's from a—

GRAY BIRCH: … can't hear you.

[crackling noises]

OAK: … simply not persons!

DENSELY-LEAFED MALLET: We can't hear you, Oak.

[sound of volume being turned up]

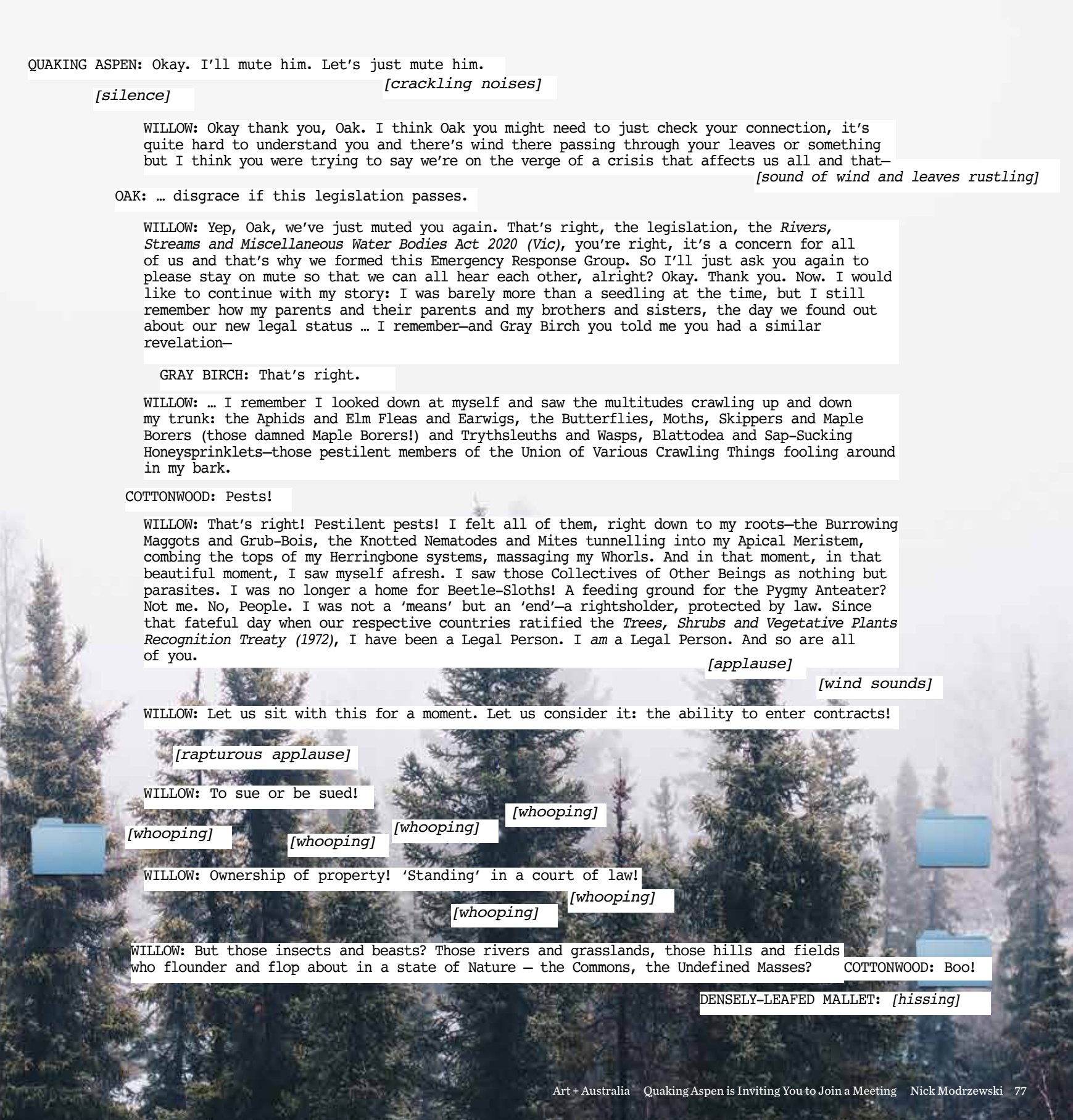
[sound of wind and leaves rustling]

OAK: … crisis that affects—

QUAKING ASPEN: … can you hear th—

OAK: … cannot allow this to happen.

COTTONWOOD: … might need to mute—



QUAKING ASPEN: Okay. I'll mute him. Let's just mute him.

[crackling noises]

[silence]

WILLOW: Okay thank you, Oak. I think Oak you might need to just check your connection, it's quite hard to understand you and there's wind there passing through your leaves or something but I think you were trying to say we're on the verge of a crisis that affects us all and that—

[sound of wind and leaves rustling]

OAK: … disgrace if this legislation passes.

WILLOW: Yep, Oak, we've just muted you again. That's right, the legislation, the *Rivers, Streams and Miscellaneous Water Bodies Act 2020 (Vic)*, you're right, it's a concern for all of us and that's why we formed this Emergency Response Group. So I'll just ask you again to please stay on mute so that we can all hear each other, alright? Okay. Thank you. Now. I would like to continue with my story: I was barely more than a seedling at the time, but I still remember how my parents and their parents and my brothers and sisters, the day we found out about our new legal status … I remember—and Gray Birch you told me you had a similar revelation—

GRAY BIRCH: That's right.

WILLOW: … I remember I looked down at myself and saw the multitudes crawling up and down my trunk: the Aphids and Elm Fleas and Earwigs, the Butterflies, Moths, Skippers and Maple Borers (those damned Maple Borers!) and Trythsleuths and Wasps, Blattodea and Sap-Sucking Honeysprinklets—those pestilent members of the Union of Various Crawling Things fooling around in my bark.

COTTONWOOD: Pests!

WILLOW: That's right! Pestilent pests! I felt all of them, right down to my roots—the Burrowing Maggots and Grub-Bois, the Knotted Nematodes and Mites tunnelling into my Apical Meristem, combing the tops of my Herringbone systems, massaging my Whorls. And in that moment, in that beautiful moment, I saw myself afresh. I saw those Collectives of Other Beings as nothing but parasites. I was no longer a home for Beetle-Sloths! A feeding ground for the Pygmy Anteater? Not me. No, People. I was not a 'means' but an 'end'—a rightsholder, protected by law. Since that fateful day when our respective countries ratified the *Trees, Shrubs and Vegetative Plants Recognition Treaty (1972)*, I have been a Legal Person. I *am* a Legal Person. And so are all of you.

[applause]

[wind sounds]

WILLOW: Let us sit with this for a moment. Let us consider it: the ability to enter contracts!

[rapturous applause]

WILLOW: To sue or be sued!

[whooping]

[whooping]

[whooping]

[whooping]

WILLOW: Ownership of property! 'Standing' in a court of law!

[whooping]

[whooping]

WILLOW: But those insects and beasts? Those rivers and grasslands, those hills and fields who flounder and flop about in a state of Nature — the Commons, the Undefined Masses?

COTTONWOOD: Boo!

DENSELY-LEAFED MALLET: *[hissing]*

WILLOW: Those others are not favoured with God's blessings like us People! Their dispositions are simply not built for conscience, intellect, rational deliberation or liberty and the corresponding legal obligations growing from such qualities and faculties. God decided that Trees would stand tall and that rivers should flow at our feet. It is only natural that they remain there. Imagine for a moment—a river representing its own interests in a court of law!

[laughter]

WILLOW: A flowing, bellowing, chugging, slurping body of water filled with useless animals like the Meek-Toed Frog, whose tadpoles swim only in circles, or the crab-clawed Yabby, which has basically no economic value—they say it tastes of nothing and its claws fall apart when you try to turn them into a useful object (i.e. salad tongs). Imagine that whole wet mess of a thing being granted the same rights as *us!* It departs from the natural and logical order of things. Yet, this troubling phenomenon is not as rare or as laughable as you might imagine.

[concerned rustling]

WILLOW: If this legislation passes, if there is a widespread granting of personhood status for rivers in Victoria, there will be implications for all of us. Imagine for a minute—Quaking Aspen? Quaking As—?

QUAKING ASPEN: Sorry, was on mute.

WILLOW: You live next to a river, am I right?

QUAKING ASPEN: Yep. Hyland River.

WILLOW: Alright. So, imagine for a moment, if you can, that you're growing away happily, expanding yourself, but your roots start to 'encroach' on the river's lower banks.

QUAKING ASPEN: Happens all the time.

WILLOW: Imagine if suddenly the river had a right to say *[impersonating a river]*: 'You can't come in here. This is my bed. It's private. Get out.'

[nervous laughter]

WILLOW: I promise you, People, it won't be long before they'll be saying: 'Oh, you Willows and Quaking Aspens, you Oaks, you Cottonwoods, you Densely-Leafed Mallets—you set up roots in river beds and slow the flow of water, reducing aeration. You threaten aquatic plants and restrict biodiversity. You're no better than a weed.'

[furious rustling]

OAK: … to drain them! Drain them! Drai-

WILLOW: People. This is not a 'call to branches'. But it is an omen for all of us. We stand upon a slippery slope. I warn you: every time a river becomes a Person, the rights of trees diminish. In this 'new normal', if the rights of rivers and trees come into conflict, the rights of trees will not always prevail. I will conclude, solemnly, by showing you some photographs. These were taken just last week in Aotearoa …

QUAKING ASPEN: You need to click 'Share Screen'.

WILLOW: I know. I'm trying to, it's just not—

QUAKING ASPEN: Click down the bottom.

WILLOW: I did.

COTTONWOOD: There's a button.

GRAY BIRCH: Near the— WILLOW: I know.

WILLOW: I know, I'm clicking it but it's not doing anything.

QUAKING ASPEN: Then you need to click 'Desktop 1'.

WILLOW: It's not— WILLOW: No, it's not—

WILLOW: Here. There we go. Sharing now. I should note, some of these images may be triggering.

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Christopher D. Stone, 'Should Trees Have Standing?—Towards Legal Rights for Natural Objects', *Southern California Law Review*, no. 45, 1972, pp. 450–501.

Erin L. O'Donnell and Julia Talbot-Jones, 'Creating Legal Rights for Rivers: Lessons from Australia, New Zealand and India', *Ecology and Society*, vol. 23, issue 1, 2018, p. 7.

Margaret Davies, 'The Consciousness of Trees', *Law & Literature*, vol. 27, issue 2, 2015, pp. 217–35.

Ngaire Naffine, 'Who Are Law's Persons? From Cheshire Cats to Responsible Subjects', *Modern Law Review*, vol. 66, 2003, pp. 346–67.

Sigmar Polke
Watchtower, 1984
Acrylic paints and
dry pigment on patterned fabric
300 × 224.8 cm
Courtesy of Copyright Agency

Peter Waples-Crowe
They Kill My Kin(d), 2015
Mixed media on paper
18 × 24 cm
Courtesy of the artist

82

David Wojnarowicz
Water, 1987
Acrylic, ink, collage on masonite
182.9 × 243.8 cm
Collection of John Past Kee, New York

Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri (c. 1932–2002) and Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri (c. 1929–1984)
Warlugulong, 1976
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas
168.5 × 170.5 cm
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Image courtesy of Bridgeman Images

To Move Through the Dark Night of the Soul

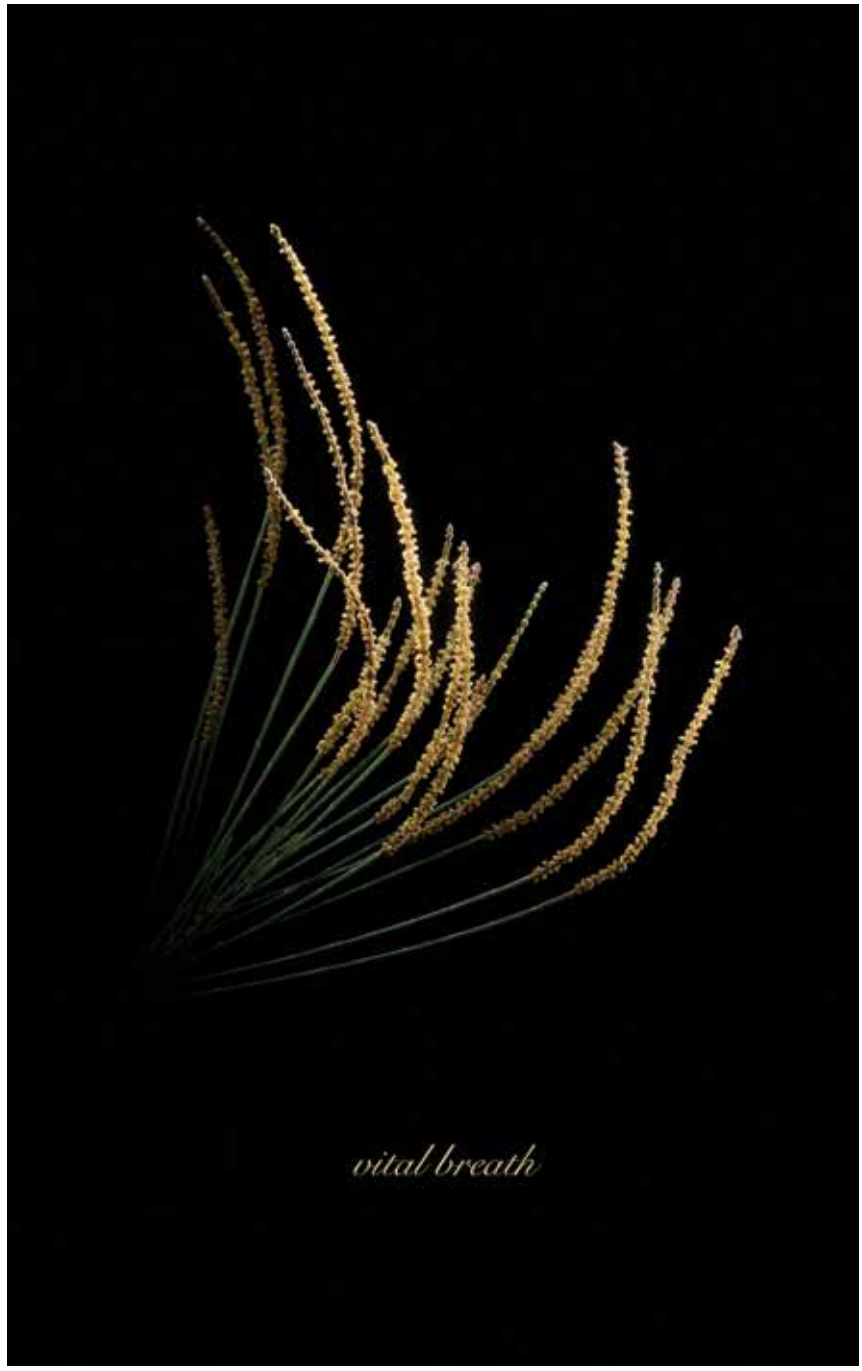
Caitlin Franzmann and Camila Marambio

This is an offering by which we share our transmutational encounters with the Chilean firebush
and its Australian relative, the tree waratah. Our journey in distilling the flower essence
of these Gondwana sister plants has been full of questions to and from our vegetal doubles:
Is it possible to collectively remember how to shapeshift and live a mystic life more fully?
Is *the soul* to be found in the centre of the earth or in the scent of a flower?
How do we all die well together, or are we already dead?
If we are, how does the red colour of a flower explain the blood in our veins?

Random and dynamic, bridging gaps between physical and spiritual worlds,
we have come to an understanding through a series of imaginings and intuitions
that tell of fortunes, transformation and a cautioning of death.

We wrote these words *to move through the dark night of the soul* with you.

Caitlin Franzmann
Maku Kipa, 2019
Pencil and gouache on paper
93 × 60 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Caitlin Franzmann and Man Cheung
Vital Breath, a card from *Fortunes of the Forest*, 2017,
a deck of 40 plant-based divination cards
12 × 7.5 cm
Courtesy of the artists

I. Beginning to End

29 June 2020
'Will you hold my hand?', I asked the tree waratah as I began to dream. The flower showed me how to speak the language of the honeyeater. She led me to the earth's core. From the centre, it's not difficult to feel a patterning of life that transforms with continental drifts and dispersal across oceans. I followed roots to a 52-million-year-old eucalypt flower at the crust of Patagonia.[1] There, I heard a whisper: 'Change is inevitable, but you are moving too fast'.

2 September 2019
'You destroy our lands, poison the planet and sow death, because you are lost. And soon it will be too late to change.' I felt Camila's tears as she read these words of Raoni Metuktire,[2] a chief of the Indigenous Brazilian Kayapó people. The Amazon forest had been burning for weeks and bushfire season had started early across northern Australia. Seated on the south bank of Maiwar (Brisbane River), we had just witnessed the suffering of a tree waratah. It was confined by concrete walls and human waste, scarlet fingers reaching for the sky. We understood the oracular qualities of flowers must be listened to. It was the tree waratah that warned of the Australian bushfires, in sync with the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon and Australia, who have been transmitters of plant knowledge for millennia and have heeded the command: 'To live you must respect the world, the trees, the plants, the animals, the rivers and even the very earth itself. Because all of these things have spirits, all of these things are spirits, and without the spirits the Earth will die, the rain will stop and the food plants will wither and die too.'[3]

6 September 2019
'How do I respect the world?', I asked the tree waratah. She brought to us Dr C.F. (Christine) Black, a woman with flaming hair, who shared her knowledge born from her matrilineal clan, the Kombumerri people, and cultivated by her experiences of the world. When Christine encounters flowers, she understands they have their own stories. She guided us in aligning with plant knowledge while considering laws of relationality and trusting our own *feelings* and dreams. She writes of Indigenous jurisprudence and what structures an individual's rights and responsibilities into the land. She taught us that 'the Land is the Law', based on cosmologies and dyadic relationships that create 'a body of law which, in Australia's case, "vibrates in song" and is "woven across" *Corpus Australis*'.[4]

14 December 2018
'How do I take responsibility for my feelings and the behaviours they elicit?', I asked Maku Kipa. Maku Kipa is Yaghan for 'firebush woman'. We had stumbled upon a firebush tree in the mountains of Tierra del Fuego and hovered around her like hummingbirds. There, I recounted an interpretation of a story I'd just read, in which Maku Kipa was violently torn apart and made to bleed.
We kissed her folds.
'Is this your story?'
She replied, 'You each hold my story in your veins'.

What are we to do with these stories?

We turned to my oracle cards, *Fortunes of the Forest*, for a transoceanic reading. Coastal She-oak appeared with a message: 'Listen, exhale and sing, and in doing so, change history'.

Later, Gloria Anzaldúa's healing words moved around our circle of wounds. '*Conocimiento* comes from opening all your senses, consciously inhabiting your body and decoding all its symptoms.'[5] I noticed my shedding skin itch. She spoke of *ensueños*—imaginal knowings or 'dreaming while awake'. I searched for my reptilian eye so that I might view the world and my *ensueños* simultaneously.

'It's there, in "green saplings pushing through the cracks"[6]... Embody the sapling. What do you see?'
'Now grow roots', Anzaldúa encourages, 'and dislodge the foundations of your conditioning'.
Your 'body is a text'.[7] Awaken it and allow a pool of imaginings to lead you to compassionate interactions.[8]

II. Common Eyes

I see through you
Feathers dawn along your back
Inside your heart a nest
Deep within the labyrinth
molten liquid ore
Dripping down the drain
the dam, broken

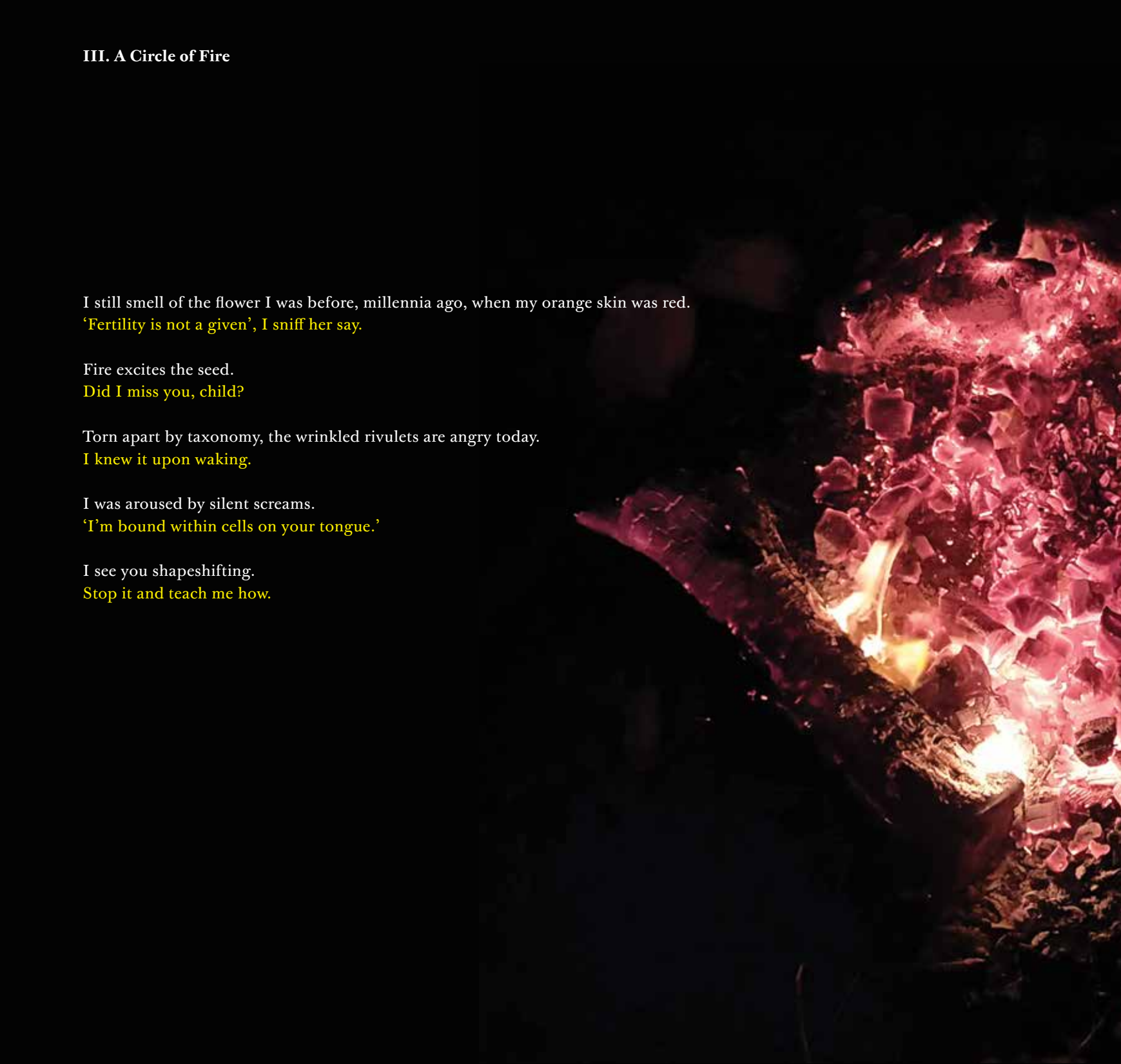
Pooling the pain
the womb soon dissipates
and the room is filled with light
In the centre a seed
A seed that reads like a book
You free its words with your tongue
liberating quieted undertones

From flower to mouth
the dry earth gets wet
Soaking in memory
we ask permission to exit
It cries, and you know why
Fear is not the game
Bleeding is the essence of excitement

Today, I am no longer extinct

Camila Marambio
Bleeding Rock (Papudo), 2020
Digital photograph
Courtesy of the artist

III. A Circle of Fire



I still smell of the flower I was before, millennia ago, when my orange skin was red.
'Fertility is not a given', I sniff her say.

Fire excites the seed.
Did I miss you, child?

Torn apart by taxonomy, the wrinkled rivulets are angry today.
I knew it upon waking.

I was aroused by silent screams.
'I'm bound within cells on your tongue.'

I see you shapeshifting.
Stop it and teach me how.

You already are moonlight on water.
'Taste me and you will see', she says to the hummingbird.

Black-browed islands drive me home.
Two centuries it takes to row there, unless.

She's been weaving a paddle.
The needle returns rusted earth to my skin.

'Silken-petaled hornet's nest can't you hear me knocking?'
'Shush, child. I'm watching telepathy.'

A coiled serpent encased in thorns pierces through, inscribing a note.
'Let's meet again at the centre.'

Caitlin Franzmann
Circle of Fire, 2020
Digital photograph
Courtesy of the artist

IV. Harmonise

If I am a planet
where is my core?

You appeared as a halo
guiding heat along threads
Shifting pace
seeping messages

In lava's patient breath
waiting to express

In crow's caw
stars adorning feathers

In Maku's sweet nectar
unashamed
She moves fast
and invites presence

In stained resin
fruiting from interior wounds

A blackened forest
is not dead
A knotted heart
is not broken
A bleeding crevice
is not lacking

They too are messengers
a reminder

Tend to the fire

Caitlin Franzmann
Bloodwood Sap (Upper Brookfield), 2020
Digital photograph
Courtesy of the artist

V. Ending to Begin

In the dark of the night, wrapped in covers, I search for the words to embrace, from this end, the two red flowers that bloom in the centre of this plea. Suddenly, with the precision only a martial artist can possess, Yunuen Rhi's *Flor y canto* (Flower and Song)[9] penetrates the magnetic field of my unwieldy thoughts.

In xóchitl in cuícatl.

I sense this Nahuatl *difrasismo* is the moonlight, leading you and me back to the tree, through the thicket of poetic language gathered on these leaves.

Difrasismo is a Spanish word used to define 'a particular grammatical construction in which two separate words are paired together to form a single metaphoric unit'.[10] Rhi whispers into the wind, 'This is more than a way of talking about that which should not or could not be named. *Difrasismos* are a mechanism of the Flower War (*La guerra florida*). This semantic and stylistic device, commonly employed throughout Mesoamerica, is a way to speak between the lines. It's a cultural armour that serves to conserve knowledge', she says.[11] When the Spaniards arrived in Nahuatl country, they hunted for and destroyed the libraries of ancestral information. The native plants were among the burned books. The wise old people inscribed messages from the dying flowers in song. *Flor y canto*. They encrypted their knowledge between wor(l)ds, trusting that, when the time was right, they would be heard by future generations.

'The harmony of the message reaches the open heart as if it were an arrow that cuts through ignorance, memory loss and pain', Rhi the healer insists.

Is your heart ready?

If so, return along the word path to the beginning. Align with *el conocimiento de las flores*. Vibrate with the scores tattooed onto each petal. Awaken the plantae memory. Share in the rites of passage.

'Tu Rabia es tu Oro', Cecilia Vicuña sings.[12]
We move through our rage and respond in chorus, 'I see you'.

When you get to a circle of fire, tend to the heat that is emanating from between sentences. Repeat these sentences out loud like a secret code you believe will unlock chemical portals. The medicine swells there.

Feverishly, the subcurrents of existence rise again.

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3. Raoni Metuktire.
4. Dr C.F. Black, *The Land Is the Source of the Law: A Dialogic Encounter with Indigenous Jurisprudence*, Routledge, Milton Park, Abingdon, UK, and New York, 2011, p. 15.
5. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, Duke University Press, Durham, N.C., and London, 2015, p. 120.
6. Anzaldúa, p. 84.
7. Anzaldúa, p. 5.
8. Anzaldúa, p. 19.
9. Yunuen Rhi, 'Viaje interno, flor y canto charla y práctica', public online lecture, Centro Rasavant, 22 June 2020, rasavant.cl; accessed 23 June 2020.
10. 'Difrasismo', *Wikipedia*, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Difrasismo; accessed 6 July 2020.
11. Rhi, 'Viaje interno'.
12. This line translates as 'Your rage is your gold'. Cecilia Vicuña, 'Kuntur Ko (Water Condor)', *Alba del Habla, Dawn of Speech*; recorded at NYU Department of Recorded Music, Tisch, 2006; released by Torn Sound, New York, 2012; distributed by Hueso Records; ceciliavicuna.com/kuntur-ko; accessed 1 October 2020.

Wetness Sophie Chao

Sophie Chao
A Marind woman sings as she pounds sago in the grove
Digital image, 2015
Courtesy of the artist

Right:
Sophie Chao
The wetness of sago pith is said to beautify the bodies of those who leach and pound it
Digital image, 2019
Courtesy of the artist

Sophie Chao
Eating sago transmits to consumers the flesh and wetness of the plant and its multispecies environment
Digital image, 2016
Courtesy of the artist

Standing knee-deep in the mud, Evelina, a young Marind woman from the West Papuan district of Merauke, holds her young infant up to the trunk of a sago palm. Slowly, she guides the child's hand down the tree's leathery bark, across sap-filled cracks, deep fissures, mossy ridges, crumbling lichen patches and rugged internodes. Walking around the tree, Evelina directs her infant's eyes to the canopy and points out the leafy fronds bursting from the apex of the palm. She gently presses her swollen stomach against a sago trunk so that her yet-to-be-born child can 'know the wetness of sago'. In a half-whisper, Evelina describes to the unborn baby the appearance of the palm, the orchids flourishing along its bole and the suckers emerging from its base. She speaks of the starch that will be obtained from the tree, whose wetness will be absorbed by those who consume it, making them strong and healthy. The sweat of the people who fell the tree and rasp the starch, too, will mingle with the food and fortify those who eat it. 'Being in the forest makes our skin glossy', Evelina tells me. 'It makes our bodies wet, strong, and beautiful. It allows us to share wetness (*dubadub*) with our plant and animal kin. Thus it is to become *anim* (human).'

Marind communities among whom I have been doing fieldwork since 2013 widely describe plant-human co-becomings through the idiom of wetness, or *dubadub*. Wetness, Evelina explains, takes the form of water, sap, resin, blood, grease, tears and sweat. It is a life-sustaining substance that is distributed across, and connects, living beings through its perpetual circulation across human and other-than-human bodies. Exchanges of wetness between humans and the environment speak in turn to the conjoined ethics and aesthetics of interspecies co-becomings in West Papua. Learning to share wetness with sago palms, as Evelina teaches her children both born and yet-to-come, is an artful apprenticeship in more-than-human care, respect and response-ability. As human sweat and sago pith mingle, bodies come to matter as intra-active entities that are produced by, rather than preceding, their situated, sensory encounters.[1] These life-sustaining exchanges of bodily substance are achieved through diverse activities: walking the forest, leaching sago pith and transplanting sago suckers. In eating sago, Marind absorb the moisture of the sago palm and the wetness of the rivers, soils and organisms that sustained its growth, producing bodies that are both strengthened and beautified by transcorporeal exchanges across species lines. Extending far beyond the pragmatics of subsistence, the nourishment derived from sago starch speaks to the storied lifeway of the sago palm itself across time and space—as kindred being, witness to the past and companion species.[2]

The most extraordinary moment occurs when the flesh and wetness of forest beings fall into perfect harmony. Swaying fronds rustle to the rhythm of children's giggles. The whistle of a black-crested bulbul

Sophie Chao
Evelina teaches her child to share skin and wetness with the grove
Digital image, 2015
Courtesy of the artist

synchronises with the high-pitched songs of villagers. Marind partake in the lively pulsations of the forest lifeworld with their shared movements and sounds. They experience a heightened awareness of the sentient beings surrounding and penetrating their working flesh and fluids. This multispecies choreography produces an energy shared across species and spirit lines, akin to the 'boost of extra-being' that Brian Massumi associates with communal events that surpass the individual self.[3] In these moments, Evelina explains, 'Voices, bodies, and wetness become one'. The sago produced from this oneness is not only good to eat, but also good to *feel*.

Wetness, as an Indigenous philosophy, protocol and practice, thus eschews distinctions and hierarchisations of species according to anthropocentric notions of worth and agency. Rather, wetness invites attention to bodies not as hermetically sealed by their skin or species but as intrinsically connected through their 'watery, never-quite-contained, flesh'.[4] Wetness invites sensory immersion in, and affective attunement to, the material textures of the forest as a sentient ecology—its animals, plants, elements and ecosystems.[5] It speaks to the permeability of bodies always already co-constituted through morally and affectively charged material-semiotic relations.[6] Becoming human, as Evelina describes, reveals itself as an ongoing becoming-*with*. In this ontological choreography, humans and other-than-humans together partake in the fashioning of the forest as a multispecies contact zone through the animacy of their storied flesh and fluids.[7]

1. Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2003, pp. 801–31.
2. Donna J. Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, Prickly Paradigm Press, Chicago, 2003.
3. Brian Massumi, *Politics of Affect*, Polity Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2015, pp. 201–215.
4. Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2016, p. 31.
5. Anna L. Tsing, 'Arts of Inclusion, or, How to Love a Mushroom', *Australian Humanities Review*, no. 50, 2011, p. 19.
6. Donna J. Haraway, 'The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others', in Lawrence Grossberg, Carla Nelson and Paula A. Treichler (eds), *Cultural Studies*, New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 298.
7. Eben S. Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich, 'The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2010, p. 546.

Tom the Naturalist

Michael Taussig

Carnovsky
Jungla No. 1, 2011
Digital image
Courtesy of the artists

I

In the 1940s, when I was six years old, growing up in Sydney in a house in a forest with a creek out back full of yabbies and a glistening green snake by the letterbox, I loved listening to Tom the Naturalist's weekly radio broadcasts during 'Children's Hour'. It was, as I recall, not only his warm voice and storyteller eye for the peculiar detail that held me but that he opened up an enchanted space, not so much biological as adventurous. It was proto-biopolitical, in a child's format.

The fact that it was non-visual was key. This was Australia before TV and mobile-phone screens, and it left a lot to the imagin-ation, especially for a kid lolling around on the carpet in front of the speaker. Why, it was as if the kid became an animal, let's say a shark guided by soundwaves and the occasional pilot fish darting forth from the glowing dials.

Then, as now, animals were the source of endless curiosity; only now it's different. Quite different. Before, what was rationed for kids is now a staple for adults and the world is not only disappearing but re-enchanting at a furious clip. Canny investors are putting their money into nature shows as the rug is pulled out from under our feet, while we discover a whole lot about the animals that:

> once were
> that once we were
> that once were we.

This has led to alternative cosmologies concerning human–animal worlds, to the point of envisioning immense plasticity regarding the human in the animal no less than the animal in the human. That is a lot to take in, so to make it simpler I give it a name—that of the *metamorphic sublime*. It is a name that emphasises flux and instability, transformation and hybridity as well. Think of that kid in the house in the forest listening to Tom the Naturalist, with the creek out back full of yabbies and a glistening green snake by the letterbox. Now we are all that kid. Think of that, then multiply by n+1.

What has happened is that the world has reconfigured the adult's imagination of the child's imagination no less than the child's imagination of the adult's. Now, it's all green snakes by the letterbox and yabbies chock-a-block. The environmental tailspin that whiplashes the planet has undone the moorings of disenchantment that for several centuries, and especially since Enlightenment and the industrial revolution, has formed common sense. Instead, a mix of sci-fi and something like surrealism has taken its place, a sort of Max Ernst 'dark surreality' full of macabre wit and foreboding.

My first thoughts in this direction came many years ago on reading, with immense delight, the first pages of Blaise Cendrars' 1949 book *Le Lotissement du ciel* (the English title is *Sky: Memoirs*), in which he describes at length full of wit and foreboding some of the animals he is escorting (or should I say kidnapping) in a freighter from Brazil to France prior to World War II. It was on reading his portrait of the anteater that the thought hit me—both banal and insightful—that all animals are surreal, even my cats. (Especially my cats.) With its very name, let alone its appearance and behaviour, the anteater displaces reality, that's for sure, and it does so in mind-blowing ways. A lively writer, somewhat an anteater himself, Cendrars is a born surrealist, in many respects an overgrown kid (and a Hollywood scriptwriter). But really, he doesn't have to try hard to render this animal surrealistically. The anteater does it all on its own, rolling out its long tongue 150 times a minute to pick up 35,000 termites or ants a day. Can you imagine? Can you imagine sticking out your tongue onto an ant's nest?

Such craziness! And surely that's the point—or at least a point, meaning the inevitable anthropomorphism we humans impose on animals in what I suppose is a back and forth reciprocation with the animal doing its bit too. As regards small children, it is this back and forth, this wonder at difference, that eventually cements tiny tots into the Homo sapiens mould and stops them eating termites. But surely fond memories of the elephant's trunk and scampering monkeys in nursery rhymes and illustrated books linger on as alternative ways of being?

In any event, there is an interesting triangulation here between the animal, the child and the adult. This is somewhat like the game Paper, Scissors, Rock, but more dialectical, could we say, in the cascading sense of a Bataillian or Deleuzian 'dialectic' in which a distorted mirroring is formed out of the adult's imagination of the child's imagination of animals, compounded by the extinction of real animals and their replacement by virtual ones.

In his early writings, Walter Benjamin opined that small children passed into the coloured illustrations in their books. This was part of the theory of colour he was developing. The same idea resurfaced in his thoughts on spectatorship in cinema in the famous essay 'Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in which he suggested a two-way movement into the image and also the movement of the image into the viewer's body, the latter idea also being advanced by Aby Warburg as regards paintings.

But what about kids listening to radio stories in a TV-less world? Is that not equivalent to those illustrated books? In fact, isn't the radio even more likely to allow the child entry into the (spoken) image than do coloured illustrations? And here the body seems especially important as the child lolls on the floor twisting this way and that, like a shark, I suggested, as the visual cue of the glowing dial emits its pilot fish. What's more, this auditory space seems far more likely to enchant than does the visual. Listening to a story on the radio, the mind is less fixed, prone to flux and metamorphoses, as well as to a good deal of stimulating multi-tasking, which, in the case of adults, takes the form of listening while driving or while cooking and washing up.

In fact, in his essay on the storyteller, Benjamin seizes upon the trance-like state of mind involved in semi-automatic, boring, repetitive tasks as being the best for listening to stories. This essay focuses on the 19th-century stories of Russian Nikolai Leskov, as well as on oral storytelling. But he does not mention radio storytelling despite the fact that he wrote and read out some 80 radio stories for kids in the late 1920s and early 30s, stories that often talked about the craft of writing and telling stories such as these.

It was only decades after the English translation of the storyteller essay that some of these radio stories came to light, suggesting that now the time is ripe for a comparison, one that would be likely, in my opinion, to acknowledge and deepen understanding of the adult's imagination of the child's imagination of the adult's.

II

Which strangely enough brings me to the deadly claws of the anteater that gave me pause when my friend Santiago Mutumba-joy, in the Putumayo region of the Colombian Upper Amazon, told me how scary it was to hunt one. *Oso Hormiguero* he called the anteater, which I will translate as 'Ant Heap *Bear*'. There he was in the bosom of nature happily killing exotic wildlife, as when on our trip to Machu Picchu with a gallon of *yagé* we stopped by the Pacific Ocean as he had never seen an ocean. A local in a leaky dinghy took us and two Italian tourists out to sea to see the seals. The sky reeled as the dinghy rose and fell in the waves. Santiago, who was then in his 70s and with diminished eyesight, suddenly leaned over the side with his hands clenched as if clenching a spear, which he thrust into the depths. Despite his poor eyesight he had sensed what none of us saw. '*Foca*', he exclaimed under his breath, 'Seal!', both exultant and pissed off that he had no weapon. The Italians were mortified. '*Foca bonita, foca bellisima*', they cried, trying to shame him. The Noble Savage was more savage than they had bargained for.

Back on shore, I was pleased to be able to introduce him to shrimp, which he ate without comment. Later, at our lodgings in the late afternoon, he gazed at the birds flitting from tree to tree.

'I wish I had a shotgun', he said.

'Why?'

'So I could kill some of those birds.'

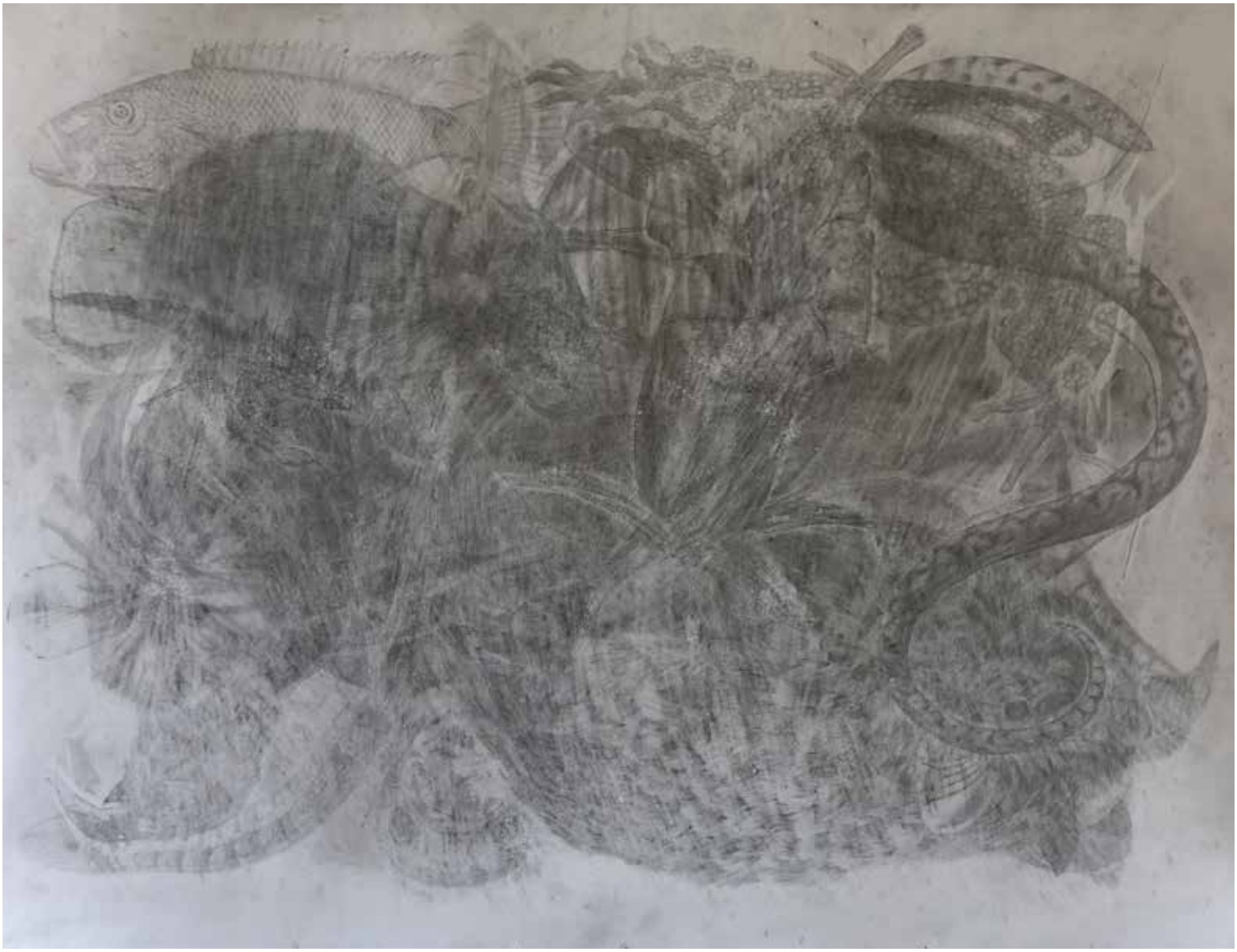
'But that's crazy. They're so small there's nothing to eat!'

'More than those shrimps you served!'

And this from a man thousands of miles from home, where I had once (and only once) seen him turn into a jaguar, his top half, at least. The bottom half was human, swinging over the hammock with his rolled-up dark trousers and bare feet, with the toes splayed out after decades of going barefoot so that they resembled claws like the jaguar's, or maybe the *Oso Hormiguero*'s. He was singing, too, that night song that is more a hum than a song, the hum that comes from the *yagé* spirits (so it is said). To me it sounds like a duet, back and forth, between the wind coming off the river and the croaking of numberless frogs vibrating in millennial mud. Cattle stomp in the corral. Dogs bark.

So here was something to think about as regards multinaturalism, an interwoven mesh of spirit and music, animals and humans, in adventurous discord not all that different, really, from lying on the carpet in front of the radio imagining the animals conjured by Tom the Naturalist.

Lucienne Rickard
Yallara / Lesser Bilby (partly erased) (detail)
From the durational performance *Extinction Studies*, 2019–ongoing,
at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart
Graphite on paper
150 × 200 cm
Photo courtesy of the artist and Beaver Galleries, Canberra.
This series was funded by Detached Cultural Organisation.



Lucienne Rickard
Yallara / Lesser Bilby (erased)
From the durational performance *Extinction Studies*, 2019–ongoing, at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart
Graphite on paper
150 × 200 cm
Photo courtesy of the artist and Beaver Galleries, Canberra. This series was funded by Detached Cultural Organisation.

III

Years went by. The kid grows up and sheds these imaginings prohibited by common sense, until, one day, as a first-year student in medicine, he goes to a zoology lecture packed with students and encounters wondrous coloured chalk drawings of animals stretching from one wall to the other. Yes! It was the very same Tom the Naturalist! And he must have spent hours drawing those animals (if you can call the interior of a Dog Fish and the like animals). When the lecture was over, this would be erased without ceremony. The next week a different one would take its place and it too would be erased, not unlike the coming and the going of *yagé*'s hallucinatory imagery—only we knuckleheads in the audience had not the slightest inkling of the pearls being cast to the swine we were. We wanted photographic slides.

What strikes me about this is how beautiful was that fragile moment, now banished by the brutality of PowerPoint, and, second, the rhythm from enchantment to disenchantment, then re-enchantment once again; from the time of the kid lying on the floor listening to the radio, to the adolescent shedding all those yabbies and the green snake by the letterbox so as to become a common-sensical no-nonsense boy, but then being reawakened by animals in coloured chalk dancing in their one hour of freedom across the blackboard, from wall to wall, in a university classroom resurrecting the world of the six-year-old.

It is often said that we don't appreciate something until we have lost it, and I believe this accounts for the renewed interest in animals and the possibilities for a different communion with them and them with us.

We have been subject so long to the trope of disenchantment in a grasping thing-thing world that it is today difficult to come to grips with re-enchantment without sounding like a starstruck dreamer. In good part that is because what is happening now is a *baneful* enchantment in a world hurtling towards destruction for which we don't have language or cultural resources.

This must have been the dilemma of the dinosaurs as they disappeared from the face of the earth, searching for a means of expression adequate to their extinction. Meanwhile words fail, as in my memory the coloured chalk animals dance across the stage.

Fin

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Peter Waples-Crowe
K2020, 2020 (detail)
Acrylic and gouache on canvas
60 × 90 cm (six parts)
Courtesy of the artist

Donna Blackall
The Family Crest, 2016
Raffia and flax
Courtesy of the artist

Peter Waples-Crowe
Blak Dog, 2015
Mixed media on paper
18 × 24 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Destiny Deacon
Adoption, 1993–2000
Lightjet print from Polaroid
100 × 100 cm
Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Australian Coat of Arms: We Were There and We Are Here

Niningka Lewis

Niningka Lewis from Pukatja (Ernabella, SA), 2017
Photo: Rhett Hammerton. Copyright Tjanpi Desert Weavers, NPY Women's Council

Overleaf:
Niningka Lewis, Pukatja (Ernabella, SA)
Australian Coat of Arms: We Were There and We Are Here, 2018
Photo: Emma Poletti. Copyright Tjanpi Desert Weavers, NPY Women's Council

When I dreamed up, in my imagination, the idea to make *Coat of Arms*, I got to work on it straight away, putting it together and bringing my idea to life.[1] I really wanted to make one of my own.

The animals on *Coat of Arms* are our animals. The emu and the kangaroo are our own traditional meat animals. I have also included quandongs, desert raisins and many other important bush foods that have sustained us since ancient times. I have sewn them all into the work. I stitched them on all around the kangaroo and the emu. The emu sees the red fruits of the quandongs and goes, 'Oh lovely! Look at those delicious red fruits!' The emu has good eyesight and it always zooms in on red fruits like quandongs. It loves to eat quandongs. The kangaroo eats grasses and green shoots.

I have added a lot of blossom to *Coat of Arms*. The blossoms come during the piriyakutu season (hot, windy season in September and October). The names of the blossoms are inunytji (blossom), punti (senna blossom) and wanari (wattle blossom). It is all very beautiful to look at, but kangaroos love to eat blossom, and that's what makes its intestinal fat. It makes the kangaroo fat and sleek. Kangaroos are very fond of eating yellow blossom. We like eating fat kangaroos too. When we cook a kangaroo like that we are always really pleased to see it with plenty of muturka (intestinal fat). We know that it has been eating senna blossom and any other yellow blossom. Other creatures that benefit from blossom are tjala (honey ants). Their purara (worker ants) carry the blossom, nectar and pollen down to the honey ants, and that's what makes the honey ants so plump and delicious.

I grew up eating these animals, but of course I also grew up on rations—flour, sugar and tea—from Areyonga, Tempe, Bloods Bore, Tjulu and Mulga Park. But I know all about bush meats, and I know that big, fat kangaroos with plenty of muturka are the most prized meat animals. Also, the emu is fond of red fruits.

Australia is entirely Aboriginal land. It is our land. We want it to remain a strong land, and we want to remain strong Aboriginal people. We are people on our own land. Both the emu and kangaroo are sacred animals from creation times. The emu is a Tjukurpa animal for some people, specifically the people from Kanpi. The kangaroo is a sacred Tjukurpa animal for people from the Pipalyatjara area. I have put their food plants on *Coat of Arms* beside them, because these plants are significant in their own right.

The kangaroo and the emu are holding onto this shield, which represents Australia. They are holding it up and protecting our land, our Country. They represent our Tjukurpa and they represent our nguraritja, which means our sovereignty or traditional ownership.

We have always looked after our land, which is so rich in Tjukurpa and resources that it needs managing, taking care of. We have always done patch burning to create a mosaic of habitats across the land. Similarly, these two large animals look after the land, and they represent it through Tjukurpa, too. The kangaroo and emu are holding it, representing us, representing the land. They are traditional owners of the land in their own right: mayatja, nguraritja. They represent strength of culture, health of people and the animals and abundance of biodiversity. Kunpu kanyini. Tjukurpa kunpu tjara.

There is another aspect to this story that I haven't mentioned yet. I've been deeply affected by the news of jail brutality. Our young men in jail are being restrained and brutalised. I think if our young men are going to be in jail then they should at least be looked after properly in there. They do not deserve to be bashed or brutalised in jail. This is one of the ideas and thoughts I was having when I was making this piece.

Young men but also older men as well. I have tried to weave that aspect of the story into this work. It was on my mind as I was making it. I wanted to use this work as a way of generating that conversation and awareness. We women at home have been talking about this, and we know that our menfolk are being bashed inside jail. We know that sometimes policemen are too rough with the young men. We are really worried about this. Those young men are often traumatised and mentally unwell. We feel great sadness for them. We are so sorry that so many of them have ended up in jail. While they are in jail they should be looked after. They are our family members. Our own families are suffering.

After talking it through with the other women, I couldn't stop thinking about young children being thrown in jail. And as if that isn't punishment enough, they are treated roughly and are bashed while incarcerated. Once they have seen this and experienced it, it marks them for life. They are damaged children and their lives are ruined. I do not want traumatised young people damaged even further when they are in a place that is supposed to look after them. Poor things.

So, at the roots of this tree, and hidden within it, is this story. First and foremost, this work is about the blossoms and abundance of the landscape, which nurtures and sustains us. This story comes first and is about who we are. But as history and time progress, there are those who are suffering and not able to benefit from everything that is good about life. Policemen know what is going on. They can look at my work and read between the lines. They know about law and justice. They know who we are. They can look at this work and will know the truth, that this *Coat of Arms* represents law and justice, as well as Aboriginal people. These symbols are, in fact, more deeply connected to Aboriginal people than anything else. We, the original people of the land, deserve to be respected and cared about. The future of our people lies in our young people, and they do not deserve to be incarcerated and bashed up. They should be looked after, given treatment and sent home.

I have seen pictures of young people in prison in Alice Springs. I have heard about policemen in Alice Springs being rough with our young people. They are just children. Our children are at risk of suicide. They should not be placed at further risk.

Australian Coat of Arms: We Were There and We Are Here was accepted into the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards in 2018 and was acquired by the Parliament House Collection. The work responds to the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, which historically is an emblem signifying the national unity of Australia and serves as a sign of identity and authority.[2]

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1. Based on an interview recorded and translated by Linda Rive in October and December 2017. Edited by Michelle Young, Manager, Tjanpi Desert Weavers, Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council. Sadly, Niningka passed away during the production of this issue.
2. 'Coat of Arms', *ANFA*, anfa-national.org.au/australian-red-ensign/national-anthem/coat-of-arms; accessed 1 October 2020.

Uncle Jim Berg
Silent Witness (Scar Tree), 2007
Digital photograph
Courtesy of the artist

Linda Chant
The land, rock and diamond were one and the same; a family heirloom, 2018
Pencil, acrylic paint on paper
55 × 37 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Thawing, Dissolving, Disappearing, Bleeding Etc.: A Scientific Study of Trauma, Time Travel and the Melting Polar Ice Caps

Linda Stupart

All images:
Linda Stupart
After the Ice, the Deluge, 2019
Performance
Photographs by Ryan Sloan in Svalbard

A list of things we know about the polar ice caps

1.

The polar ice caps in the Arctic and Antarctic are melting. Synonyms for melting are: thawing, dissolving, disappearing, bleeding etc.

If, by 2100, sea levels rise (filled with icebergs' former insides) by the predicted one metre, Osaka in Japan, Alexandria in Egypt, Rio de Janeiro in Brazil and Shanghai in China will all be underwater.[1]

Already post-disaster, overwhelmingly black and brown communities fall into long-term poverty spirals caused by global warming, which is caused overwhelmingly by white people, like me and (likely) you, in developed countries like this one.[2]

2.

You can tell how old a glacier is from its layers, a bit like rings on a tree, only according to a vertical axis. Because the ice forms from the incremental build-up of annual layers of snow, the lower layers are older than upper layers. Using a core drill, we can collect ice from the bottom of glaciers up to 800,000 years old. A new international project is currently working to exhume 1.5-million-year-old ice in Antarctica.[3]

3.

Climate change is melting glaciers.

Climate change is melting permafrost soils that have been frozen for thousands of years, and as the soils melt they are releasing ancient viruses and bacteria that are springing from dormancy back to life:

> In a 2005 study, NASA scientists successfully revived bacteria that had been encased in a frozen pond in Alaska for 32,000 years. The microbes ... had been frozen since the Pleistocene period, when woolly mammoths still roamed the Earth. Once the ice melted, they began swimming around, seemingly unaffected.
>
> Two years later, scientists managed to revive an 8-million-year-old bacterium that had been lying dormant in ice, beneath the surface of a glacier in the Beacon and Mullins valleys of Antarctica.[4]

To recap, dormant bacteria, including viruses we have never encountered before, are surfacing from ice caps' melting pools. Climate change is causing Antarctic alien viruses to rise to the surface.

4.

Antarctica is the only continent on earth without Indigenous *human* inhabitants.

Our galaxy contains billions of stars that are similar to the sun. Many of these stars are billions of years older than earth. It is highly probable that some of these stars will have earth-like planets nearby and that some would develop intelligent life. Some of these civilisations of intelligent life would likely then develop interstellar travel, a step being investigated on earth now. Even at the slow pace of interstellar travel currently envisioned, the Milky Way galaxy could be completely traversed in a few million years.[5]

So, why have we never met any aliens? One answer is that aliens have been destroyed in extinction events; that is, we haven't met any aliens because all the aliens are dead.

The ice age extinction event saw the annihilation of many mammals weighing more than 40 kilograms.[6] Recently, neutrino particles have uncovered what appears to be an alien megastructure buried beneath Antarctic ice.[7] This *could* mean that aliens once lived on earth and were killed during this extinction event. Three times since 2016, ultra-high-energy particles have spewed up through the ice of Antarctica, setting off the detectors at the Antarctic Impulsive Transient Antenna.[8] Thus, we should also explore the possibility that aliens are trapped under the ice and, like viruses, just need to be heated up a bit.

5.

If global melting rates continue at current levels, aliens will start emerging from the polar ice caps as they thaw.

6.

It is also possible that aliens have *already* started emerging from the polar ice caps, and that we're already being infected by them and/or are becoming them. This would explain the persistence of the psoriasis on my leg and of new diseases like Morgellons, where strange fibres and crystals and nematodes grow under the skin until the sufferer scratches and gouges and cuts and digs them out—destroying themselves.

7.

We have already reached the tipping point.

In 2007, Arctic sea ice never recovered its summer melting losses, permanently locking in the change. Less than 10 years later, Antarctic sea ice started behaving similarly.[9]

In 2017, there were devastating floods across India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sierra Leone, Niger, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and the Americas.

8.

We have to get back to before the tipping point to stop the ice caps from melting and to save ourselves.

9.

We need to learn to time travel.

Some things we know about trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

1.

Traumatised bodies are melting through cutting, vomiting, crying, leaking etc.

2.

All bodies are heading towards entropy and/or death.

3.

When events in the present trigger a body with PTSD, they experience an emotional and corporeal rupture—emotional and physical recurrences of the trauma event in the past. PTSD is always in the present, which is why you can't hide from it. As if there is a hole between timelines, or, a glitch. Your body in the present disappears, or is overlaid by your body of the past—the no-longer-your-body of the event.

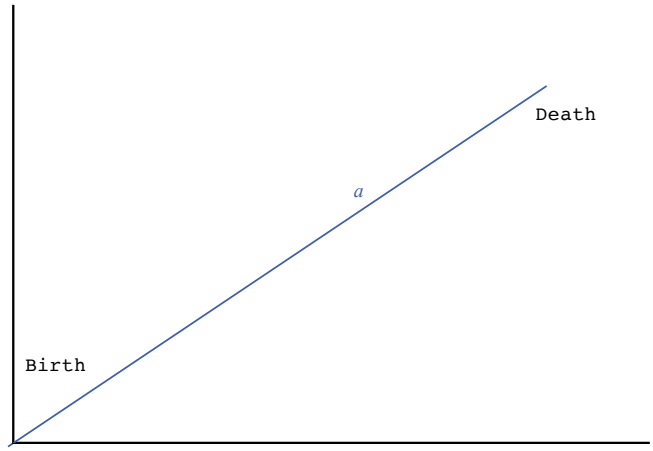


Figure 1: A normal human-life timeline (a) towards death

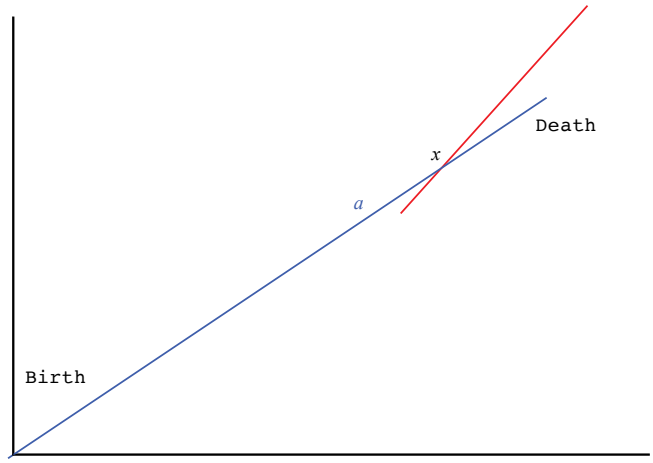


Figure 2: *Then* the traumatic event happens (x), and the survivor/victim lives as displayed here in red

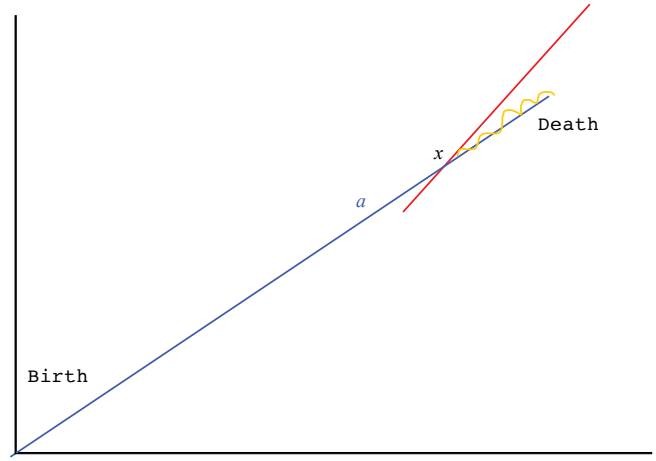


Figure 3: However, all the possibilities of the traumatic event, including death, still exist on the blue timeline (a)

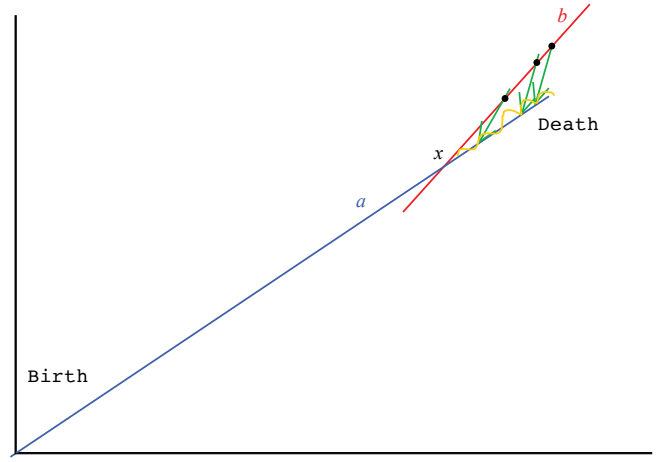


Figure 4: When PTSD is triggered, the survivor/ victim body slips out of the red timeline (b) and into the blue timeline (a). Because PTSD is a glitch, this temporal shift can also occur diagonally backwards from any point on this line (so far only backwards!).

4.

So, like the virus, the traumatised body is also always already both alive and dead.

To recap, there is a virus emerging from icebergs:

> Virus is red and has a hundred tentacles and they cling to everything. Virus has a killer body. Virus is not alive: she does not have cells and she cannot turn food into energy and without a host she is an inert sac of chemicals and code. Virus is not dead: she has genes, she reproduces independently of any masculine force, she evolves viral DNA uses the cell's and the body's and existing machinery until it bursts in skin shreds, releasing the virus. In other cases the new virus particles bud off the cell one at a time and the cell body remains alive, though mutated.
>
> Bodies quickly learned the way to survive the virus was to be violable, to be porous, to be *lacking in boundary integrity*, to be an old object, full of holes and able to die over and over again. People become forms: porous bodies exhaling microbes, spasmodically spreading deliriums, viruses, pollutions, toxins.

Those who were already used to it, already objectified, already abject, already broken, already dead, took this pretty easily.[10]

5.

To recap, traumatised bodies can live through the virus because they are already familiar with death, mutation and survival.

6.

To recap, traumatised bodies already function as time-travel machines.

7.

We are the only ones who can save the future, the ice caps, the world.

1. See Adam Vaughan, 'IPCC Report: Sea Levels Could Be a Metre Higher by 2100', *New Scientist*, 25 September 2019, newscientist.com/article/2217611-ipcc-report-sea-levels-could-be-a-metre-higher-by-2100/#ixzz6R98dU0Hg; accessed 1 June 2020; Josh Holder, Niko Kommenda and Jonathan Watts, 'The Three-degree World: The Cities That Will Be Drowned by Global Warming', *The Guardian*, 3 November 2017, theguardian.com/cities/ng-interactive/2017/nov/03/three-degree-world-cities-drowned-global-warming; accessed 1 June 2020.
2. Currently, I (a South African national) am writing this from England, the island desperately trying to regain its position at the heart of empire.
3. Quirin Schiermeier, 'Antarctic Project to Drill for Oldest-ever Ice Core', *Nature*, 27 March 2019, nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07588-3; accessed 1 June 2020.
4. Jasmin Fox-Skelly, 'There Are Diseases Hidden in the Ice, and They Are Waking Up', *BBC*, 4 May 2017, bbc.com/earth/story/20170504-there-are-diseases-hidden-in-ice-and-they-are-waking-up#:~:text=In%20a%202005%20study%2C%20NASA,mammoths%20still%20roamed%20the%20Earth; accessed 1 June 2020.
5. John-Oliver Engler and Henrik von Wehrden, 2018, '"Where is everybody?" An Empirical Appraisal of Occurrence, Prevalence and Sustainability of Technological Species in the Universe', *International Journal of Astrobiology*, vol. 18, no. 6, 2019.
6. Christopher Sandom, Søren Faurby, Brody Sandel and Jens-Christian Svenning, 'Global Late Quaternary Megafauna Extinctions Linked to Humans, not Climate Change', *Proceedings: Biological Sciences*, vol. 281, 2014, p. 1787.
7. This claim is based on speculation among the PTSD/time travel/extraterrestrial science and art communities, but mirrors the alien megastructure discovered in 2016 by Tabetha Boyajian, located about 1500 light-years away between the Cygnus and Lyre constellations of our Milky Way galaxy.
8. Rafi Letzer, 'Mysterious Particles Spewing from Antarctica Defy Physics', *Live Science*, 24 January 2020, livescience.com/antarctic-neutrino-mystery-deepens.html; accessed 17 July 2020.
9. Fred Pearce, 'Arctic Sea Ice May Have Passed Crucial Tipping Point', *New Scientist*, 27 March 2012, newscientist.com/article/dn21626-arctic-sea-ice-may-have-passed-crucial-tipping-point/#ixzz6R9Nz0t8L; accessed 29 June 2020.
10. Linda Stupart, *Virus*, Arcadia Missa Press, London, 2016, p. 23.

NoctilucaScreen Project: Experimental Cinema in the Anthropocene: A Curatorial Proposal for a Cosmomorphic Cinema

Sebastian Wiedemann

Scott Barley
Hinterlands, 2016
Film still
Courtesy of the artist

Lukas Marxt
Reign of Silence, 2013
Film still
Courtesy of the artist

Colectivo Los Ingrávidos
Piedra de Sol, 2017
Film still
Courtesy of the artists

As a practitioner of cinematic modes of experience within the context of the current ecological collapse, it is clear to me that the gesture of shooting is not in itself enough in order to occupy the position of a filmmaker. It is also necessary to create a gesture of hospitality towards the images that are instituted when passed from body to body: a gesture of care, of welcome, of curating-as-healing that makes possible the emergence of a fragile and 'ephemeral community'[1] of images as part of an 'ecology of practices'[2] that animates the cosmic cinematograph. These gestures sustain the cosmogenetic process in which we are images among images, and in which the world is affirmed as a cinema that makes pluriverses proliferate, ones that are always more-than-human.

An experimental cinema—a cosmomorphic cinema—resists the Anthropocene, not only as the framework in which the processes of extinction proliferate but, above all, as the atmosphere in which the processes of creation are stripped of their power. NoctilucaScreen Project emerges as an occasion for cinematic thought that insists that politics is a problem of perception. What is there to see and hear? What becomes, or does not become, perceptible and, consequently, has the possibility to exist? What other perspectives than the human-centred could be affirmed in a deviant way and as a gesture of re-existence by accepting that we are anonymous nodes and yet also 'active images'[3] that constitute and give consistency to the cosmic cinematograph? NoctilucaScreen Project offers possible answers to these questions as an ecological complication of images of possible worlds, worlds that, like Leibniz's monads, are already present in the folds of micro-perceptions that exist in the intervals of this world. One type of these micro-perceptions, the *Noctiluca scintillans*, or sea sparks, are small marine-dwelling, bioluminescent beings that together produce the 'mareel', or milky seas, effect. Micro-perceptions and minor modes of existence transform the sea into a vast bioluminescent screen, into a more-than-human cinema screen.

NoctilucaScreen Project aims to become a more-than-human screen as well as a web that enacts, through experimental audiovisual compositions, the possibilities of a non-anthropocentric cinema: a cinema that thinks about our relationship with the earth and the cosmos from an immanent perspective because our perception has to abandon its anthropomorphic condition and become cosmomorphic.[4] Therefore, the cinema that interests us expresses a cosmopolitical propensity in its inner relations, seeking to achieve a new etho-ecology of images. We cannot be indifferent to the catastrophic times in which we live. We cannot turn our back on Gaia and her intrusion, 'this "nature" that has left behind its traditional role and now has the power to question us all'.[5] NoctilucaScreen calls for impossible visions that can help us invent ways to be together with the world through images as passages of becoming. That is to say, cinema has to be a spark of life, a bioluminescent screen that does not project our image but, rather, is constantly looking for a new image of thought, making the human an incessant becoming-with the world.

Taking place between 2016 and 2020 and as a partnership between the online platform *Hambre | espacio cine experimental*[6] and the magazine *ClimaCom*,[7] this ephemeral community of images has brought together more than 25 audiovisual works by filmmakers from around the world. A complex constellation has evolved, where the pieces have asked themselves about territory[8] and ways to occupy and inhabit the earth, about the uncertainty[9] that involves delirium, and the adventure of creating new perceptive matrices. They have asked about the courage to compose cosmopolitics of the image[10] as the all-living fire between the waters, the wind and the earth, where the forces of the sea, the atmospheres of the wind and the movements of the earth manifest themselves.

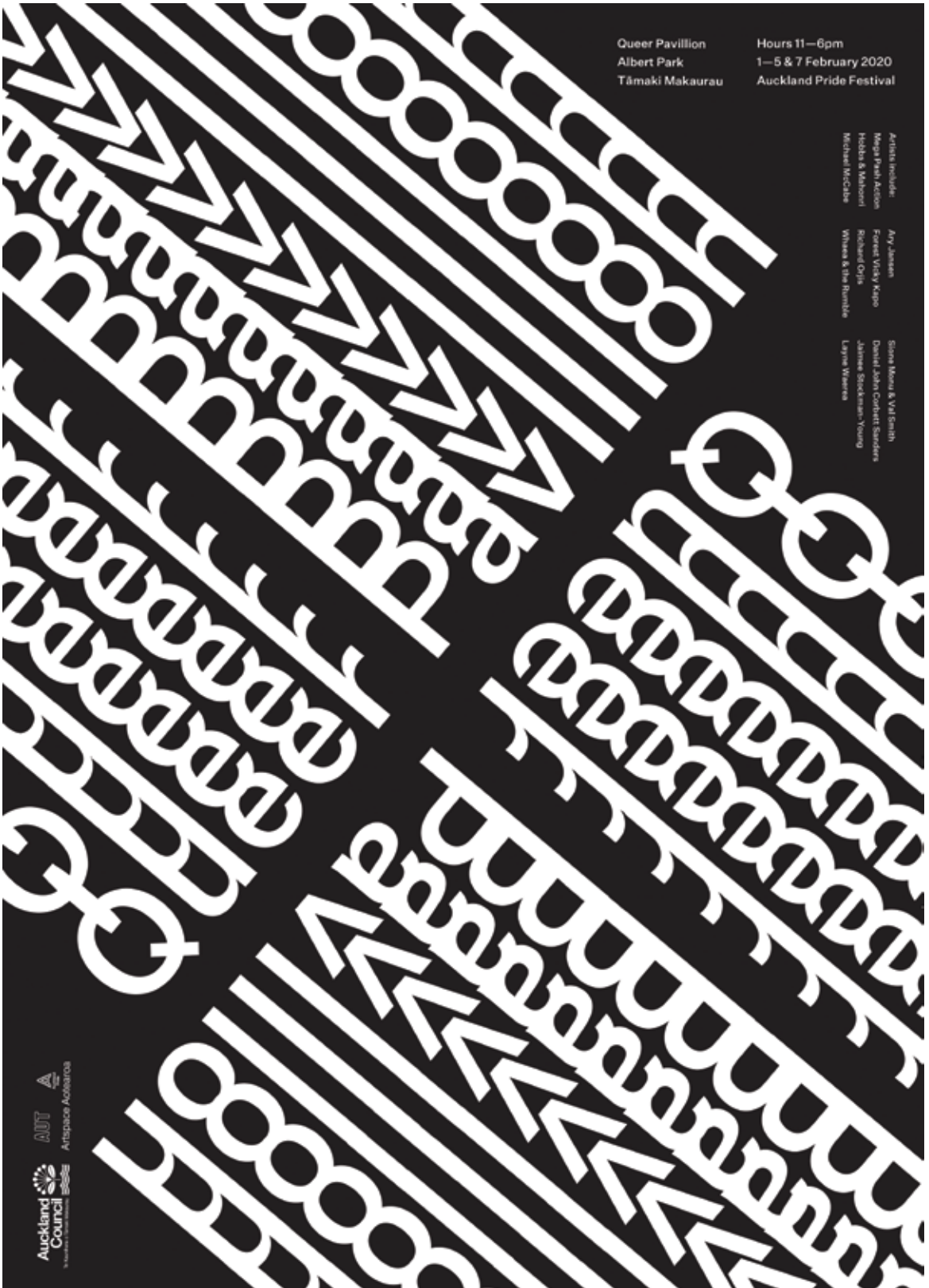
NoctilucaScreen Project is a cosmopolitical curatorial proposal[11] that I invite you to explore and experiment with:

vimeo.com/nocticulascreen

1. Ailton Krenak, *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo*, Companhia das Letras, São Paulo, 2019, ebook.
2. Isabelle Stengers, 'Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices', *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 11, 2005, pp. 183–96.
3. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, 'The Crystal Forest: Notes on the Ontology of Amazonian Spirits', *Inner Asia*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2007, pp.153–72.
4. Pierre Montebello, *Métaphysiques cosmomorphes – La fin du monde humain*, Les presses du réel, Dijon, France, 2015.
5. Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism*, Open Humanities Press, London, 2015, p. 12.
6. *Hambre | espacio cine experimental* focuses on critical experiments that seek dialogue with new tendencies in Latin American and global avant-garde cinema. hambrecine.com; accessed 25 August 2020.
7. *ClimaCom* magazine, Brazilian review devoted to environmental humanities, climacom.mudancasclimaticas.net.br/arquivo-noctilucascreen-project; accessed 25 August 2020.
8. Sebastian Wiedemann, 'NoctilucaScreen Project: On Territory', climacom.mudancasclimaticas.net.br/noctilucascreen-project; accessed 25 August 2020.
9. Sebastian Wiedemann, 'NoctilucaScreen Project: Incertezas', climacom.mudancasclimaticas.net.br/noctilucascreen-project-incerteza; accessed 25 August 2020.
10. Sebastian Wiedemann, 'NoctilucaScreen Project: Cosmopolíticas da imagem', climacom.mudancasclimaticas.net.br/noctilucascreen-project-cosmopoliticas-da-imagem; accessed 25 August 2020.
11. Isabelle Stengers, 'The Cosmopolitical Proposal', in Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (eds), *Making Things Public*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2005, pp. 994–1003.

Compost Fountain

Richard Orjis



Rebecca Steedman
Queer Pavilion poster,
Rangipuke / Albert Park,
Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland,
February 2020

Richard Orjis, *Queer Pavilion*, Rangipuke / Albert Park, Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland, February 2020
Photo: Ralph Brown

val smith
Scat Hunt, 2020,
as part of *Queer Pavilion*,
Rangipuke / Albert Park,
Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland,
February 2020
Photo: Ralph Brown

The 19th-century sexologist Havelock Ellis was so enamoured with urophilia, he theorised that urination inspired the invention of the ornamental fountain.[1] Catching flickers of art, pleasure and intimacy in waste has become ever more relevant as we stand on the verge of ecological collapse. More than a hundred years after Ellis's reflection, I curated the event *Queer Pavilion*, which drifted around the Victorian fountain in Auckland's Rangipuke / Albert Park. *Queer Pavilion* hosted art, performance and conversation by 16 artists. Two of the artists, Daniel John Corbett Sanders and val smith, incorporated excrement into their works, and it became evident that a consideration of the connection between queer ecology and bodily waste should take place: a project in spinning 'silk and shit' together, as queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick poetically mused in her autobiography *A Dialogue on Love*.[2]

Appropriately, the cornerstone of contemporary art is a pissoir. Marcel Duchamp's readymade *Fountain* (1917) was a radical reorientation of art and the role of the artist and is celebrated for initiating a movement away from the retinal to the conceptual.[3] Art historian Paul B. Franklin has observed that Duchamp's object choice for *Fountain* imbued it with a queer subtext of public male sex.[4] The origins of the public toilet in the early 19th century stemmed from a desire to discourage men from urinating on streets and public monuments. As Franklin has noted, anxieties were immediately triggered by citizens who 'couched their concerns regarding *pissoirs* in the rhetoric of public health. However, behind these worries lingered another more pernicious threat, one putatively indigenous to the urban jungle and exacerbated by the existence of public toilets—male homosexuality.'[5]

Corbett Sanders' work *With Love and Fond Memories* (2020) consisted of a clandestine daylight performance in which the artist stealthily urinated on Rangipuke / Albert Park's arboreal inhabitants. The performance's secrecy alluded to histories of covert outdoor cruising while lamenting the decline of these practices due to increased surveillance, online hook-up apps and the domestication of LGBTQIA+ lives. The sexual outlaw personified by creatives such as Jean Genet and David Wojnarowicz is easy to romanticise, although the conditions that drove men to seek sex with other men in marginal, underground sites were due to criminal codes and/or social stigma that left them with few options.

Pissing on objects can mark one's territory or act as a sign of disrespect. To piss on another human being conjures BDSM ambiguities of eroticism. However, for the trees that Corbett Sanders anointed, these golden showers were perhaps welcome offerings—human waste has been used for centuries as fertiliser. Ecofeminist scholar Donna Haraway states that 'we are all compost',[6] and in doing so re-envisions our embodiments as mobile and ecologically-entangled compost piles.

The participatory work of val smith, *Scat Hunt* (2020), saw the pursuit of multispecies shit samples conceptualised as a team sport. The competitive elements of the scat hunt embodied what queer academic Jack Halberstam identified as our heterosexist capitalist society's obsession with meaningless competition, along with its relegation of queerness as failure.[7] The messy and shame-inducing universality of shitting is, as philosopher Michel de Montaigne pointed out, a great social leveller[8] and was extended here to the more-than-human. Shit's ability to induce hygienic anxieties must be contextualised within our multispecies status, as our bodies already play host to a hundred trillion microbial life forms, good, bad and benign. Anal sex, too, requires a negotiation of the abject in pursuit of the erotic. To exist is to be contaminated, permeable and relational.

Dominant narratives of sustainability merely reinforce the status quo and have persistently mediated ecology through the nuclear family and colonial-capitalist models of reproduction and production—the very structures that have led to the current epoch. As normative modes fail us, the works of Corbett Sanders and smith gently coax us towards alternative worldmaking and a centring of queer pedagogies. The social and sexual culture of queer cruising becomes a metaphor for how we might create consensual radical intimacies in the here and now, defy oppressive social conventions, survive yet another plague and build unconventional communities while searching for meaning and pleasure on polluted sites.[9]

1. Havelock Ellis, *My Life*, William Heinemann, London, 1940, p. 68.
2. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1999, p. 171.
3. Art historian Amelia Jones has raised doubt regarding the conceptual origins of *Fountain* (1917) and has attributed it to German poet and artist Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2004.
4. Paul B. Franklin, 'Object Choice: Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* and the Art of Queer Art History', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2000), p. 23, jstor.org/stable/3600460; accessed 18 June 2020.
5. Franklin, 'Object Choice', p. 23.
6. Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Duke University Press, Durham, N.C., 2016, p. 55.
7. Jack [Judith] Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, Duke University Press, Durham, N.C., 2011, p. 5.
8. Ann Hartle, *Montaigne and the Origins of Modern Philosophy*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill., 2013, p. 82.
9. While researching this article, I discovered the work of art historian Fiona Anderson, who explored cruising as a theory and practice in her book *Cruising the Dead River: David Wojnarowicz and New York's Ruined Waterfront*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2019.

Turning Around and Upside Down: *Taki, Tiam* and the Nomadic Rhythms of Rain Ants

Kuai Shen

Above:
Kuai Shen
***takiRRRtaki*, 2020**
Still from HD video with piezoelectric vibration sensor
Courtesy of the artist

Left:
Kuai Shen
***Entangled*, 2019 (detail)**
Digital photograph of inverted bivouac protruding from its location inside a fallen tree
Courtesy of the artist

Below:
Kuai Shen
***Compañía Nómada*, 2019 (detail)**
Digital photograph of evening raid of *tamya añangu* returning to the bivouac, including two unidentified myrmecophiles
Courtesy of the artist

Kuai Shen
***Encore*, 2019**
Still from HD video with green laser of 532 nm wavelength
Courtesy of the artist

The works illustrated here derive from an ongoing multispecies art project that follows nomadic ants across the Kichwa community of Sarayaku in the Ecuadorian Amazon. In Sarayaku, alternative political realities and knowledge-making practices for weaving relations with the forest challenge Western aesthetic conventions for sensing and relating to other social beings. Here, entities, places, materials and elements are entangled in the cosmology of *Kawsak Sacha*, the living forest. Encompassed within the *Kawsak Sacha*, life and death boundaries are interwoven through relations that move to the rhythms of a medium in formation.[1] In this sense, rhythm, as an idiom based on the Kichwa principles of *taki* and *tiam*, enables my performative practice with nomad ants and a different way of understanding their social forms.[2]

The Kichwa *taki* (rhythm/chant) and *tiam* (return/radical change) are principles of Indigenous aesthesis and social resistance in Sarayaku.[3] *Taki* and *tiam* circulate through reciprocal activities of community-weaving and more-than-human relations with the rainforest: *minka*, the social coordination of physical labour in unison; *chakra*, the itinerant farm cultivation practices based on human–plant relations; *aguana*, the art of weaving baskets and making earthenware vessels from forest materials; *asuana*, the alcoholic fermentation process, via women's buccal bacterial communities, to transform yucca into the life-giving *chicha*; and *kajana tushuna*, when people drink *chicha* in rotation and enter altered states while men drum in circles and women dance in imitation of the *Tayassu pecari* of the rainforest.

Rhythms emerge in Sarayaku from the resonance of social forms in movement and the migrations of nonhuman life forms, such as the ants known in Western science as *Eciton burchellii*. Commonly known as army ants, their reproductive social life has been rigorously divided between nomadic and stationary cycles, the ants subjected to organisation in colonies, with queens and soldiers raiding other insects.[4] Fraught with colonial legacies, the scientific portrayal of these ants can be inverted through artistic mediations grounded in the *Kawsak Sacha* to torque and cut across systems of imposed knowledge. To this extent, rhythm becomes a mediation of action rather than an instrument of conduct.[5]

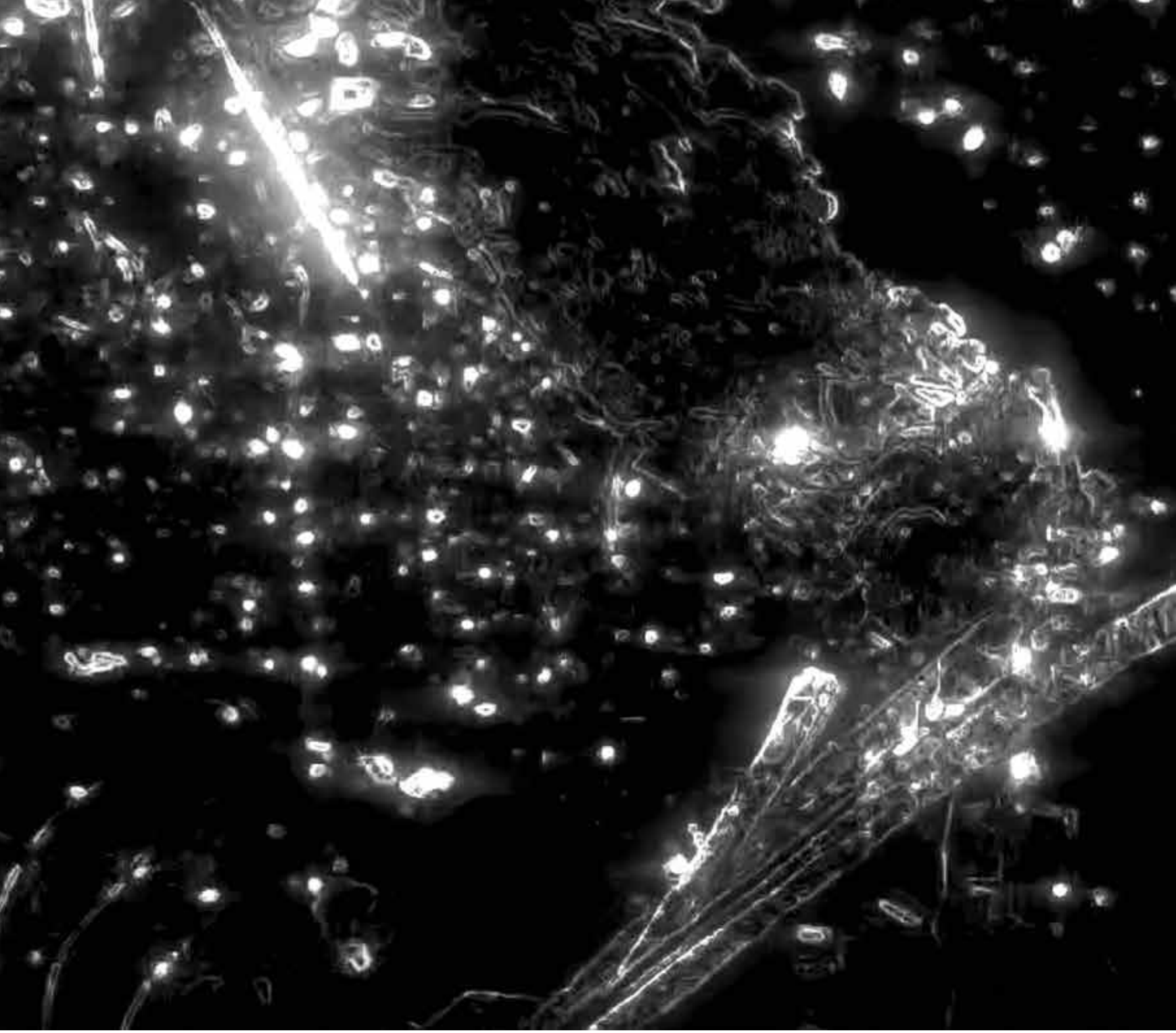
What happens when an idiom of rhythm based on *taki* and *tiam* is employed to analyse ant nomadism? Instead of foregrounding functional mechanisms of reproduction and competition, this approach understands ants as invertebrate communities that weave aesthetic relations with the rainforest. My artistic practice embraces this approach and is guided by *taki* and *tiam* to enact an onto-epistemological change of perception. A version of rhythm guided by Sarayaku's aesthesis can overturn the Western definition of army ants and, instead of comparing these ants to armies, values them as harbingers of rain. *Tamya añangu*, or rain ants, become forest companions who carry messages of changing precipitations that matter for human life.[6]

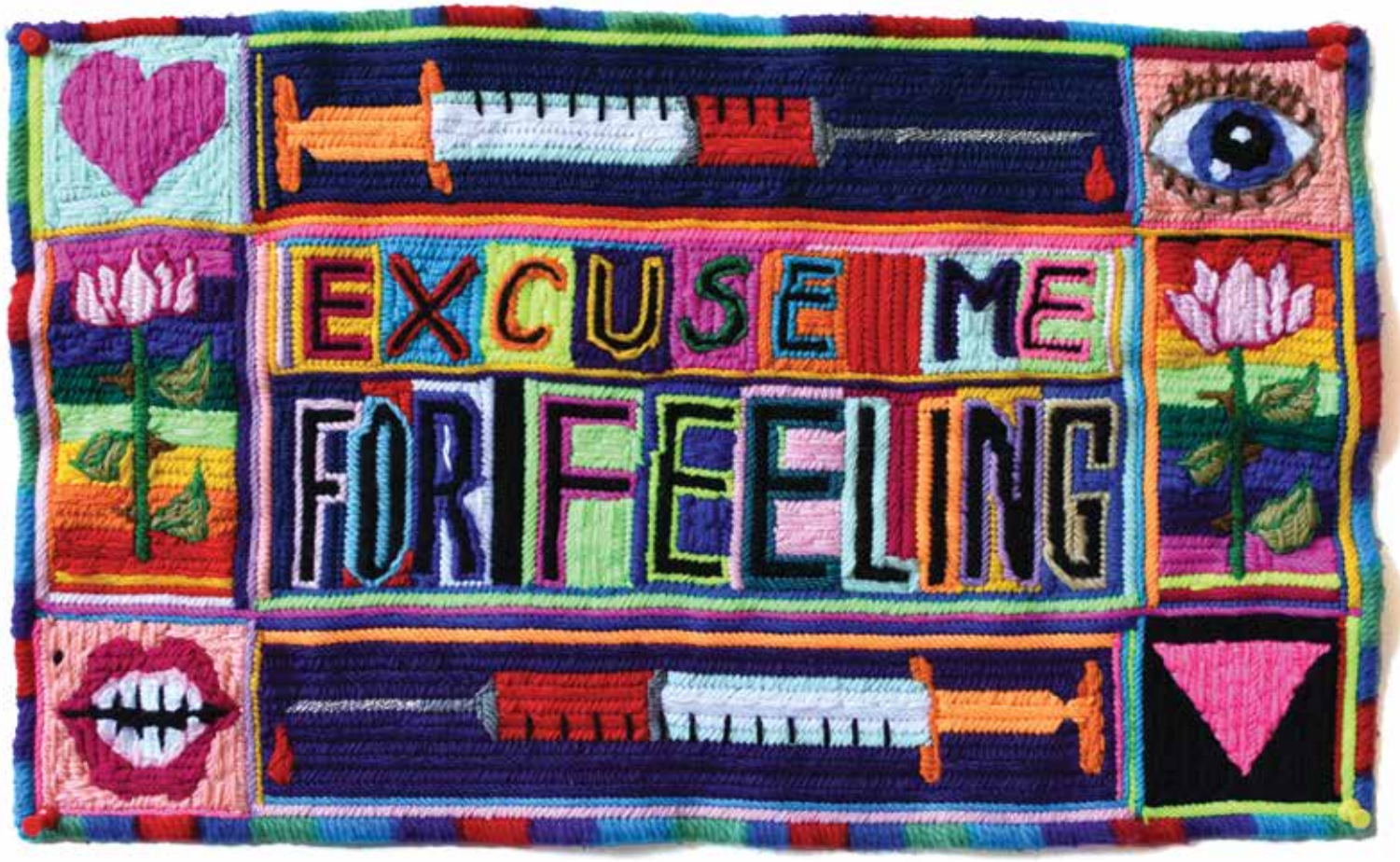
In consonance with this, waves of ants moving across the forest tapestry perform in rhythm with the acoustic resonance of the rain. Cued by the rain, *tamya añangu* seek shelter and weave a living nest, known in scientific literature as a bivouac.[7] When these ants bivouac, they become the space they inhabit using their bodies as materials in an intimate connection with the forest. This recursive event takes the spotlight in my practice of co-opting technologies for the artistic amplification of invertebrate movements.[8] Piezoelectric sensors, computer vision, macro photography and laser-photocell arrays become tactical media to amplify the performative construction of one particular bivouac dwelling upside down inside a decomposing tree. In light of *taki* and *tiam*, bivouacs become social performances subject to other kinds of rhythms, stimulations and contagions—chemical, symbiotic, parasitical. Defying gravity and geometrical classifications, bivouacs are resilient yet viscous and fluid, eluding 'the scientific cornerstone of exact reproducibility due to their continual variance over time'.[9] A great diversity of invertebrate guests and parasites live among rain ants, such as staphylinid beetles and silverfish.[10] They too become part of the bivouac, turning into disruptive/creative co-authors of this unique multispecies migrating ensemble.

Taki and *tiam* enable a performative non-verbal language for approaching aesthetic co-constituting relations that pulsate across social worlds. These relations, unfolding from the bivouac and the extensive migrations of *tamya añangu*, contribute to the rhythms of *Kawsak Sacha*, enacting what Mignolo and Vazquez term decolonial aesthesis: a re-evaluation of perceptual forms and relational practices that have been 'made invisible by the colonial matrix of power and the westernised imposition of the notion of beauty'.[11] In this vein, Sarayaku's aesthesis is attentive to the world beyond humans. It is entangled in knowledge-making practices attuned to rhythmic diffraction patterns in motion across Amazonian worlds.[12] Through forms of community-weaving, different social movements dominate one another at different intervals, turning around and upside down, between day and night, and between sunrays and rainfall.[13]

1. Tim Ingold, 'Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 13, issue s1, 2007, pp. S19–S38; Eben Kirksey, *Emergent Ecologies*, Duke University Press, Durham, N.C., 2015.
2. Antonia Carcelén-Estrada, 'Weaving Abya-Yala: The Decolonial Aesthetics of Indigenous Resistance', *New Diversities Journal*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2017, pp. 103–17.
3. Examples include the historical sociopolitical resistance of the people of Sarayaku marching to demand territorial rights in 1992, and the gargantuan century-long social Indigenous movement in Ecuador, whose collective rhythms exert resistance against colonialism, land dispossession and extractivism.
4. T.C. Schneirla, R.Z. Brown and F.C. Brown, 'The Bivouac or Temporary Nest as an Adaptive Factor in Certain Terrestrial Species of Army Ants', *Ecological Monographs*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1954, pp. 269–96.
5. Dominique Lestel, 'Toward an Ethnography of Animal Worlds', *Angelaki*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2014, pp. 75–89.
6. The community of Sarayaku welcomed my research, taught me rapport and shared with me through collective syncopation the stories of *tamya añangu*. See Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*, University of California Press, Oakland, 2013.
7. Bert Hölldobler and E.O. Wilson, *The Ants*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1990, pp. 573–78.
8. Kuai Shen Auson, 'Tactical Ant Media: Amplifying the Invertebrate Aesthetics of Ants Using Transversality as an Artistic Process', *Society & Animals*, vol. 27, no. 7, 2019, pp. 678–96.
9. Chris Salter appreciates Hans Diebner's research into dynamic systems as indeterminate non-repeatable performances, and I in turn take up their work to exemplify that outside the human regime, turbulent flows like those created by ants manifest different scales and rhythms over time. Work cited: Chris Salter, *Entangled: Technology and the Transformation of Performance*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2010, p. xxx. See also Hans H. Diebner et al., *Performative Science and Beyond: Involving the Process in Research*, Springer, Vienna and New York, 2006, link.springer.com/book/10.1007/3-211-38211-9#toc; accessed 9 June 2020.
10. Carl W. Rettenmeyer, dir., *Army Ant Guests: Associates of* Eciton burchellii, youtu.be/x7e7QvgpkNc, 2009; accessed 7 June 2020.
11. Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vazquez, 'Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings', *Social Text Journal*, 15 July 2013, socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/decolonial-aesthesis-colonial-woundsdecolonial-healings; accessed 9 June 2020.
12. Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Duke University Press, Durham, N.C., 2007, pp. 86–91.
13. I enact transversality according to the classic definition by Cooper and Meyer: 'rhythm may be defined as the way in which one or more unaccented beats are grouped in relation to an accented one'. See Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer, *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1960, p. 6.

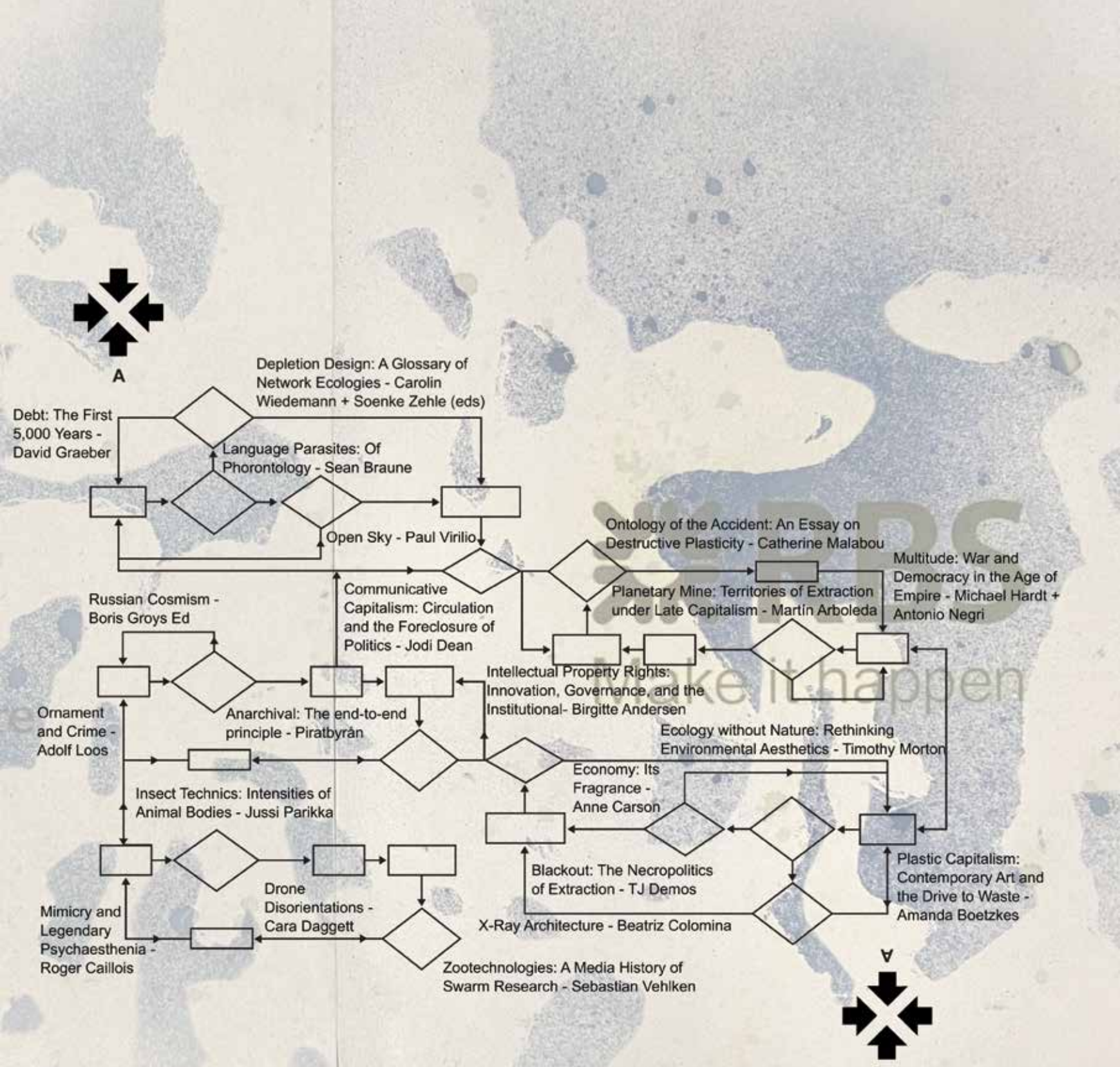
Kuai Shen
***Inverted Bivouac*, 2019 (detail)**
Still from HD video using edge detection in computer vision with OpenCV
Courtesy of the artist





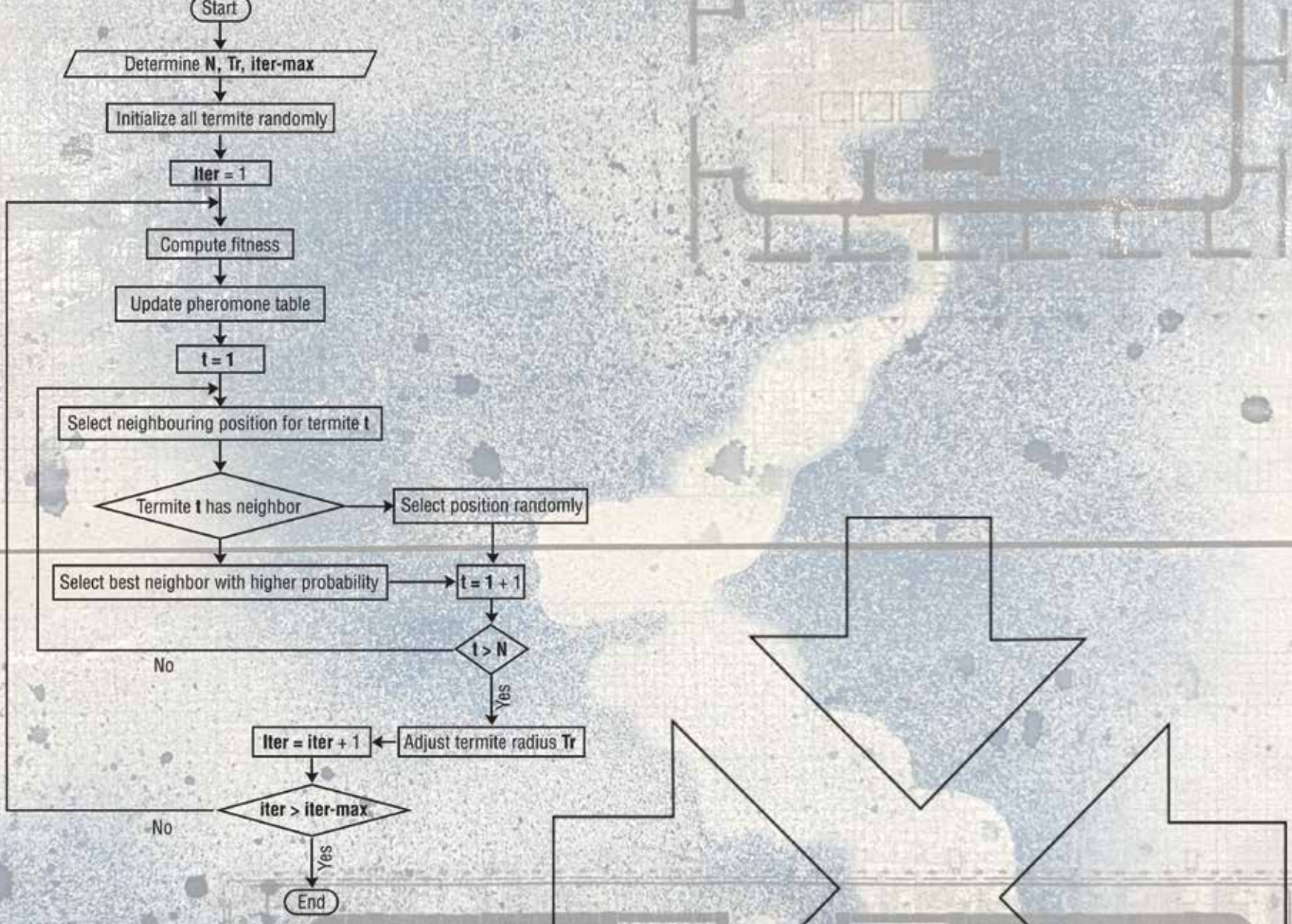
Paul Yore
Excuse Me For Feeling, 2017
Wool needlepoint
28.5 × 47.5 cm (irreg.)
Courtesy of the artist and Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide

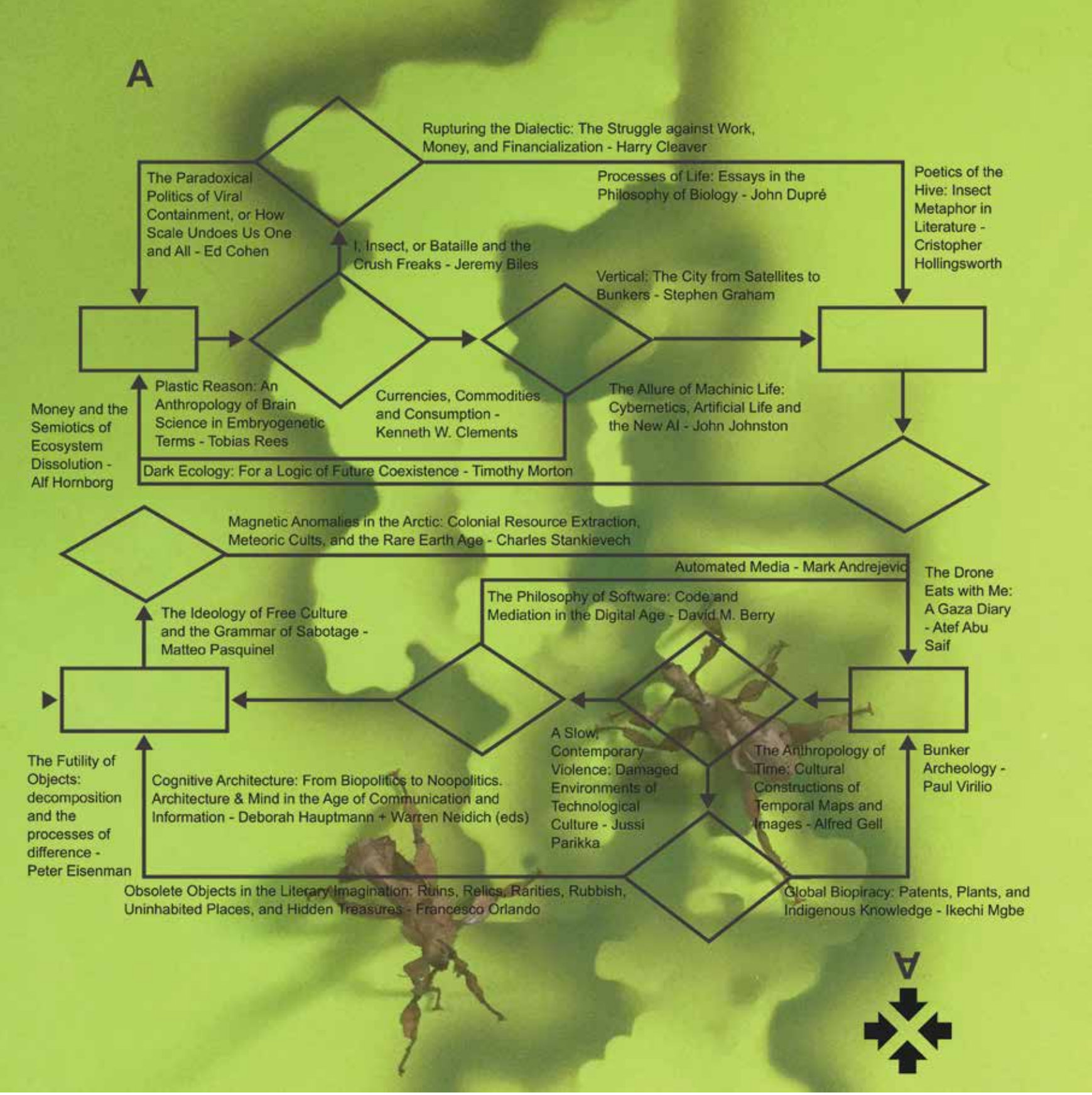
Gina Bundle
Bangu, Possum Skin Cloak, 2019 (work in progress)
Possum pelts, wax thread, acrylic and watercolour
Bangu the Flying Fox is a traditional Dreaming story from the Yuin people of Wallaga Lake, New South Wales. Bangu explores the importance of belonging and identification.
Courtesy of the artist



Insect Economy

Debris Facility and Nicholas Mangan


Start
Determine N, Tr, iter-max
Initialize all termite randomly
Iter = 1
Compute fitness
Update pheromone table
t = 1
Select neighbouring position for termite t
Termite t has neighbor
Select position randomly
Select best neighbor with higher probability
t = 1 + 1
t > N
No
Yes
Iter = iter + 1
Adjust termite radius Tr
iter > iter-max
No
Yes
End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Rupturing the Dialectic: The Struggle against Work, Money, and Financialization - Harry Cleaver
The Paradoxical Politics of Viral Containment, or How Scale Undoes Us One and All - Ed Cohen
Processes of Life: Essays in the Philosophy of Biology - John Dupré
Poetics of the Hive: Insect Metaphor in Literature - Cristopher Hollingsworth
I, Insect, or Bataille and the Crush Freaks - Jeremy Biles
Vertical: The City from Satellites to Bunkers - Stephen Graham
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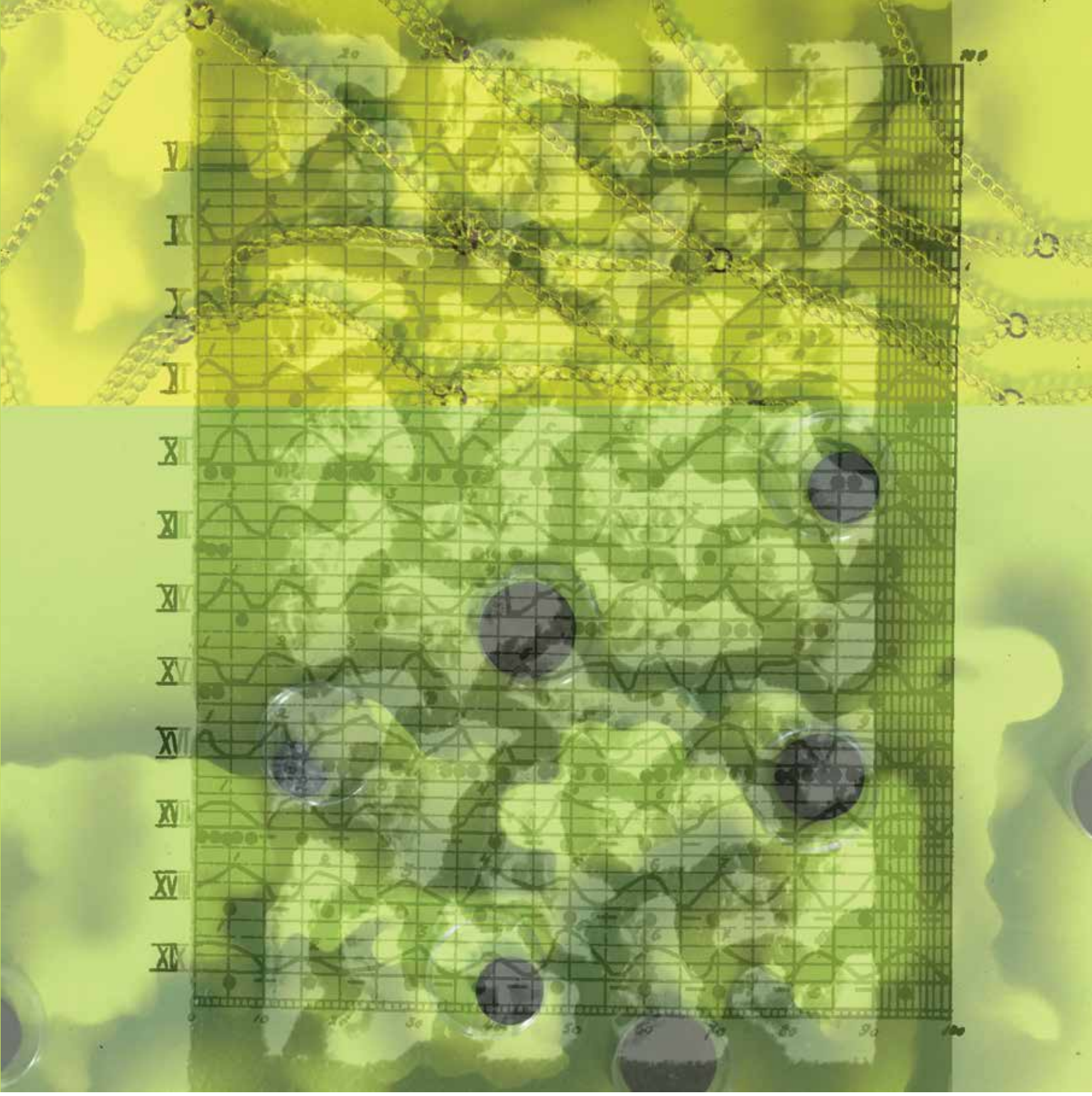
Bunker Archeology - Paul Virilio
The Futility of Objects: decomposition and the processes of difference - Peter Eisenman
Cognitive Architecture: From Biopolitics to Noopolitics. Architecture & Mind in the Age of Communication and Information - Deborah Hauptmann + Warren Neidich (eds)
Obsolete Objects in the Literary Imagination: Ruins, Relics, Rarities, Rubbish, Uninhabited Places, and Hidden Treasures - Francesco Orlando
Global Biopiracy: Patents, Plants, and Indigenous Knowledge - Ikechi Mgbe
A



ghost-weaving and truth-telling: paola balla goes to work

tony birch

Paola Balla
Sovereign Goddess Going to Eat You Up
from the *Mok Mok* series, 2016
Digital pigment print on 188 gsm photo rag, 71 × 96 cm
Exhibited in *Disrupting Artistic Terra Nullius: The Ways That First Nations Women in Art and Community Speak Blak to the Colony and Patriarchy*, Footscray Community Arts Centre, 2019
Image courtesy of Paola Balla

Paola Balla
***Unconditional Love Space*, 2019**
***Mission House*: bush-dyed Indian calico, recycled timber, gum leaves, voile, interfacing, op-shop bedding; 300 × 350 × 450 cm**
***Clothes Line*: op-shop clothing, baby clothing, women's clothing, rope; 1000 × 500 × 300 cm**
Exhibited in *Disrupting Artistic Terra Nullius: The Ways That First Nations Women in Art and Community Speak Blak to the Colony and Patriarchy*, Footscray Community Arts Centre, 2019
Image courtesy of Anthony Balla

Paola Balla
***Kalina Moonahcullah*, 2019**
1970s Kyabram op-shop wedding gown, bush-dyed with eucalyptus, rust, tea tree, bush flowers, mould, with bush-dyed calico
Exhibited in *Unconditional Love Space, Disrupting Artistic Terra Nullius: The Ways That First Nations Women in Art and Community Speak Blak to the Colony and Patriarchy*, Footscray Community Arts Centre, 2019
Image courtesy of Anthony Balla

Standing in Paola Balla's office, I am reminded of my Nanna's lounge room. Balla's office doubles as a work and gathering space for the Aboriginal community at Victoria University in Melbourne's west. The Wemba-Wemba and Gunditjmara artist gifts me one of her 'eco' bush-dyed tea towels. I take it out of its calico bag and unfold it. The smells of the dyed cloth act as an immediate memory trigger, transporting me to the banks of the Birrarung (Yarra) River. The varied scents are also elusive, multi-layered and beyond description. What is remarkable about the tea towel, an otherwise ubiquitous domestic object, is that both the smells and physical appearance of the cloth conjure endless layers of story-telling: narratives that speak of both love and violence, dispossession and rejuvenation, and, most of all, the courage of the Aboriginal women Balla celebrates and commemorates through the intense labour of her art practice.

I have kept the tea towel within range for several months now. It has become both a security blanket and an object of fascination. It also operates as a conduit between me and thoughts of place. Balla's own Country incorporates Wemba-Wemba stories of knowledge. She also gathers material for her work in the inner west of Melbourne, particularly along the banks of the Maribyrnong River and at other sites on Boon Wurrung Country and Wurundjeri Country. Each time I put the cloth to my nose the scents are both familiar and surprising, introducing new elements into a story that reaches back into deep time. The tea towel and the bush stories it holds gradually reveal themselves through the process of slow-telling, which requires patience and respect.

The physical appearance of the cloth has a similar effect. Initially, if asked to describe the dyed colours of the tea towel, perhaps I would have written that they are 'muddy'. Or 'earthy', were I reaching for a more poetic word. The cloth is both and neither, as no word could suitably capture its depth and shifts in tone. In fact, about to describe the variations within the cloth as 'browns' through to 'hues of pink', I immediately realise that both descriptions are deficient. *My* cloth also has a series of darker stains on each side. They are charcoal in colour, as if the cloth has been scarred with heat. Eerily, the cloth sometimes reminds me of the Shroud of Turin, which is hardly surprising considering the imposition of Christianity on the lives of Aboriginal people.

Holding the cloth open and peering *into* it also becomes an exercise in the acceptance of humility. Looking into a past that is both generously inviting, on the part of the artist, and beyond knowledge is an appropriate response to artistic work reliant on the body of Country itself—the leaves, branches and oils of its trees—for the creation of the work. Aboriginal Elders will often say that no matter how much knowledge is gained from being with Country, the amount of knowledge gained can only be a fraction of that which Country holds. Balla's remarkable achievement, through her bush-dyeing process, is that she is able to convey both the intimacy and mystery of Country through a square piece of linen.

The tea towel I was presented with and have come to love is one object in a wider body of work that represents Balla's relationship to her own Country and family, particularly the generations of Aboriginal women who have informed her life and art practice. The eco-dyeing work is also an exercise in interrogation of the colonial project of violence against both people and Country. Balla's skill and intellect perform the vital task of bringing truth-telling to the table, literally, in a domestic sense, while transforming objects of drudgery and discrimination into talismans of love.

The project of global colonialism, which expanded during the early years of the Industrial Revolution (from about 1750 in Europe), was not only reliant on the theft of Indigenous land. The agricultural, mining and industrial machines of empire also required cheap and slave labour in order to fill the coffers of imperial Europe. In Australia, in addition to the Aboriginal men who provided labour for the pastoral industry, many thousands of Aboriginal women were forced into domestic service, an industry that also underpinned the removal of Aboriginal girls from family and community so they could be trained to serve the interests and prosperity of white Australia.

Balla knows this story well, as it was the matriarchs in her own family—her mother and grandmothers, many aunties and other Aboriginal women—who provided such labour. It is a testament to her practice that from this history of violence she is able to create 'healing cloths' from objects otherwise representative of trauma, both intergenerational and personal. For her major exhibition *Disrupting Artistic Terra Nullius: The Ways That First Nations Women in Art and Community Speak Blak to the Colony and Patriarchy* (Footscray Community Arts Centre, 2019), Balla created truly profound examples of her bush-dyeing work. The intention of the exhibition was best expressed by the artist herself in the exhibition catalogue:

> I used to dye white Indian calico, white recycled rags, white second hand bed sheets, white pillow cases and white women's clothing and white baby's singlets and onesies. This transformation of whiteness into tones, colours and patterns drawn from Country itself is a disruption to the historical enforced white garments at Missions and onto the bodies of women and little children.[1]

Collecting eucalyptus and other plants for her artistic work is also an act of labour and knowledge gathering and sharing for Balla. Privileging ecological sustainability and respect for Country, Balla gathers only a small selection of material from around each plant and gives thanks not only to the ancestors of Country but to the plants that provide her with the material for her work. Walking on Country prior to the making of work is not simply an exercise in foraging or 'gleaning' for Balla. She is 'learning through doing', walking on Country, patiently observing, learning and talking, all of these being aspects of 'yarning methodology', of being *with* Country.

While some garments created by Balla continue to haunt (such as *Kalina Moonahcullah*, 2019, 1970s wedding dress, eucalypt, rust, tea tree,

mould), others, in an act of transformation, elicit a response that is both complex and direct: a sense of immediate intimacy and, as with the dyed tea towel, layered with infinite meaning. For example, Balla's *Unconditional Love Space* (2019) includes Indian calico, op-shop clothing and bedding, voile, interfacing, baby clothing and women's clothing, each piece hand-dyed with Indigenous plants, bush flowers, flowering gum, rust, tea tree, bush medicine and eucalyptus leaves.

The work consists of more than 200 pieces. On their own (and alone), each item of clothing and linen *could* appear to have been abandoned, lost or stolen (and subsequently disposed of). But through the relationship between hand-dyeing and the use of materials gathered on Country and beyond, love and community are at the heart of the work.

Lovescapes, Wemba-Wemba Country (2017) was the largest work in the *Disrupting Artistic Terra Nullius* exhibition, a five-metre-long eco-wallpaper piece that reproduces archival/photographic images of Aboriginal women related by blood and Country: Balla's great-great-grandmother Papa Mariah Day; her great-grandmother Nancy Egan nee Day; her grandmother Rosie Tang nee Egan; her mother, Margie Tang; Balla herself; and her daughter, Rosie Kalina. The work is representative of the heart and backbone of Balla's practice, being the celebration of the lives of Aboriginal women who have fought against the perpetrators of violence against them and their children, while remaining vital knowledge-keepers of Country. Many of these women are unknown outside their families and communities, and as a response to the concept of truth-telling, Balla not only ensures that their stories are told, but that their faces are seen and their names spoken.

Alongside *Lovescapes, Wemba-Wemba Country* in the 2019 exhibition, Balla included *And the Matriarchs Sang* (2016). It is a subtle yet emotionally charged work, consisting of family photographs, writing and archival fragments in the form of a frieze. The power of the work is that it utilises a decorative addition to *the home* (in a European sense) and disrupts it by demanding that the voices of Aboriginal women—disenfranchised of home through the processes of colonisation—are heard. For instance, next to the photograph of an Aboriginal woman, a simple poem informs us that 'her big sister / was beautiful and a talented / dress maker'. These are women not outside history or silenced by the lie of Terra Nullius. They are at the centre of Balla's world.

As an example of Balla's (auto)biographical practice, the 2019 exhibit included a work that created the foundation for her practice-led research into cultural rejuvenation and celebration. The *Mok Mok* photographic and performance series (2016) commemorates an important story within Balla's extended community and nation. Mok Mok, as explained by Balla, is:

> this fearsome and fearless wild woman who lived in the bush with her huge hair, ugly features and red eyes, who hunted down men, killing them and cooking them on the fire. *Mok Mok* also threatened to steal babies herself if they weren't tucked up safely in the forks of gum trees.[2]

Like all traditional knowledge within Aboriginal culture, the story of Mok Mok carries vital contemporary resonance. In this instance, men need to behave themselves and the lives of children are sacred. The message is simple enough. But Balla provides a neat twist to the tale, transporting Mok Mok from the bush to the domestic space of the suburban kitchen and backyard. The nominally feminine domain becomes a Blak feminist space. Whether Mok Mok eats chocolate cake (*Sovereign Goddess Going to Eat You Up*, 2016) or hangs out the washing (*Washing Day Sis*, 2016), or simply sits with slightly menacing pride (*Mok Mok the Matriarch*, 2016), she reminds us that women are not to be relegated to the domestic sphere. While the lives of Aboriginal women are to be honoured and respected, Balla's inhabitation of Mok Mok, while conveying a sense of matriarchal authority, also uses irony, humour and cheek to unleash this 'wild woman' on Melbourne's inner west.

In an act of respectful deference to the women in her life, Balla introduced an artefact into the 2019 exhibition that highlights the power of the seemingly most simple of stories, documented on a single sheet of writing paper that has become aged, worn and creased. On its own, the resonant quality of the object might be lost, whereas in the company of other works in the exhibition, a letter written by Balla's grandmother Rosie Tang nee Egan carries undeniable energy, delivered with heartfelt humility. *Childhood Memories* (1988) is a single-page letter, written by Tang in 1988. It is a simply written legacy document that tells a story of survival, a story of the love that nurtured an Aboriginal child during her formative years. Whether commenting on the 'readymade' furniture that adorned the homes of many Aboriginal people, such as banana boxes and flattened kerosene tins, or the family gatherings around the open fire, Tang's story is one of survival and rejuvenation. It is not surprising that the letter ends with a comment about sleeping on a mattress of gum leaves. Eucalypts. One of the materials used by Balla in her eco-dyeing work.

The lives of Aboriginal people retain a circular quality. Do not dismiss this quality as sentimentality or cliché. We not only relate to our ancestors in the past but contemplate our ancestors of the future, who may be the *same* people. Paola Balla is an artist who understands and experiences this connection with intelligence and sophistication. Her work is challenging. It is also work deeply embedded in love.

1. Paola Balla, *Disrupting Artistic Terra Nullius: The Ways That First Nations Women in Art and Community Speak Blak to the Colony and Patriarchy*, Footscray Community Arts Centre, Footscray, 2019, exhibition catalogue.
2. Balla, *Disrupting Artistic Terra Nullius*, exhibition catalogue.

Paola Balla
Washing Day Sis
from the *Mok Mok* series, 2016
Digital pigment print on 188 gsm photo rag
96 × 71 cm
Exhibited in *Disrupting Artistic Terra Nullius: The Ways That First Nations Women in Art and Community Speak Blak to the Colony and Patriarchy*, Footscray Community Arts Centre, 2019. Image courtesy of Paola Balla

PLANTS-PEOPLE-ASSEMBLAGES

XIN CHENG + CHRIS BERTHELSEN

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS: XIN CHENG

Above and left:
Mountain potato shelter, Kobe, 2016

Below:
Pine-nut picking with my mom, 2020

A place to dwell, dream and swing, Auckland, 2010

Co-caring open living room, Taipei, 2019

Carpark-shed-garden-ecosystem, Tainan, 2015

Peering into the enclosure, we see that the fence leans inward at one point, and with a draped tarpaulin it forms a receptacle for water and other materials. It could make a cosy nook for sleeping, too.

A forest epiphyte perches on the branching point of another tree, nourished by the humus accumulating there, without harming the host.

Urban epiphytes such as the ones in these photos are assemblages that grow out of existing infrastructures, extending possibilities of sense pleasure and use value. These growths are simple, made by the people who dwell in the area, using whatever is around. The standardised environment provides the basic building blocks from which more complex forms grow.

When they reproduce on their own or are propagated intentionally by humans, urban epiphytes change the atmosphere of a whole neighbourhood; they form meshworks of ecology, gardening, textiles and architecture.

It sounds complex but they are so simple, so versatile!

To encounter human-made epiphytes as we move about the city is to reimagine the urban environment as a forest—an exploration of layers.

A concrete pole in a neighbourhood park becomes an open living room, starting with a repaired metal shelf and a stack of disposable teacups held by coiled plastic string. Retirees lounge, reading newspapers, while youngsters crowd the outdoor gym. Four years later, we are pleasantly surprised to find the well-loved pot of tea still on offer, and that the coiled string has been strengthened to support cleaning rags, salvaged plastic bags and some keys.

In a carpark we find a shed-ecosystem, with ladders, treasured scraps, plants and other creatures. Its human companion likes to collect woods for their fragrance and presents us with a small bottle filled with delicate shavings. Another morning, we excavate the site due to a neighbour's complaints about mosquitos. We uncover the eggs of geckos (mosquito hunters!) under rotting wooden boards. We are gifted some! (The eggs, not the rotten wood.)

The whole structure is assembled by simply twisting wire to join short pieces of wooden sticks together, bit by bit, mimicking the growth of plants.

Ever since our first visit to the White Buildings in Phnom Penh we have been wondering about the origins of a papaya tree growing on its roof. We eventually find the stairwell to the roof and discover that the tree is growing out of a rubble of compost and broken bricks. Under its

Holey walls, Phnom Penh, 2014

Rooftop paradise, Phnom Penh, 2014

generous shade, among fragrant herbs and medicinal aloes, a master embroiderer works a frame of delicate silk fabric, to become the gilded costumes of the royal court dancers. A convivial encounter *sans* shared language.

On this concrete rooftop, we glimpse a paradise.

All we really need is a pile of rubble and a bit of daily care.

Tokyo streets are lined with stick shelves bursting with potted plants, bonsai, trays of defrosting meat, gardening tools and empty sake cans. Felines wander meshwork pathways, of dimensions different to human pathways. The fences they scale are densely woven out of braided fabric strips and sticks from the surrounding trees. They are so intricately constructed, the fine craftsmanship brings Scandinavian rag rugs, Japanese *boro* textiles and slippers made out of old kimono cloth to mind.

The above reminds us that urban environments are delicious landscapes, as found. Succulent. We need not change them. We can enjoy them as a kind of foraging. They nourish.

So, in thanks, let's feed the spiders dwelling in the alleys on the way home, like we did as children!

Let's catch an ant, drop it onto the web woven in the corner of the stairs and watch.

The spider, startled, hurries to the struggling ant, caresses it in a silky cocoon and then sucks the juice out of it.

What would it be like to be that ant? What are the pleasures involved in being devoured by another species? Jakob von Uexküll, the biologist who introduced the concept of *umwelt* (meaning 'environment' or 'surroundings') in 1934,[1] asked the same questions regarding ticks and hermit crabs, and he worked out that, in any given environment, there are infinite possible perceptual worlds, depending on whose perspective you can imagine ...

So many carparks, so many possibilities ...

1. Jakob von Uexküll, *Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen: Ein Bilderbuch unsichtbarer Welten*, J. Springer, Berlin 1934; 'A Stroll Through the Worlds of Animals and Men: A Picture Book of Invisible Worlds', in *Instinctive Behavior: The Development of a Modern Concept*, Claire H. Schiller (ed. & trans.), International Universities Press, New York, 1957, pp. 5–80; reprinted in *Semiotica*, vol. 89, no. 4, 1992, pp. 319–91.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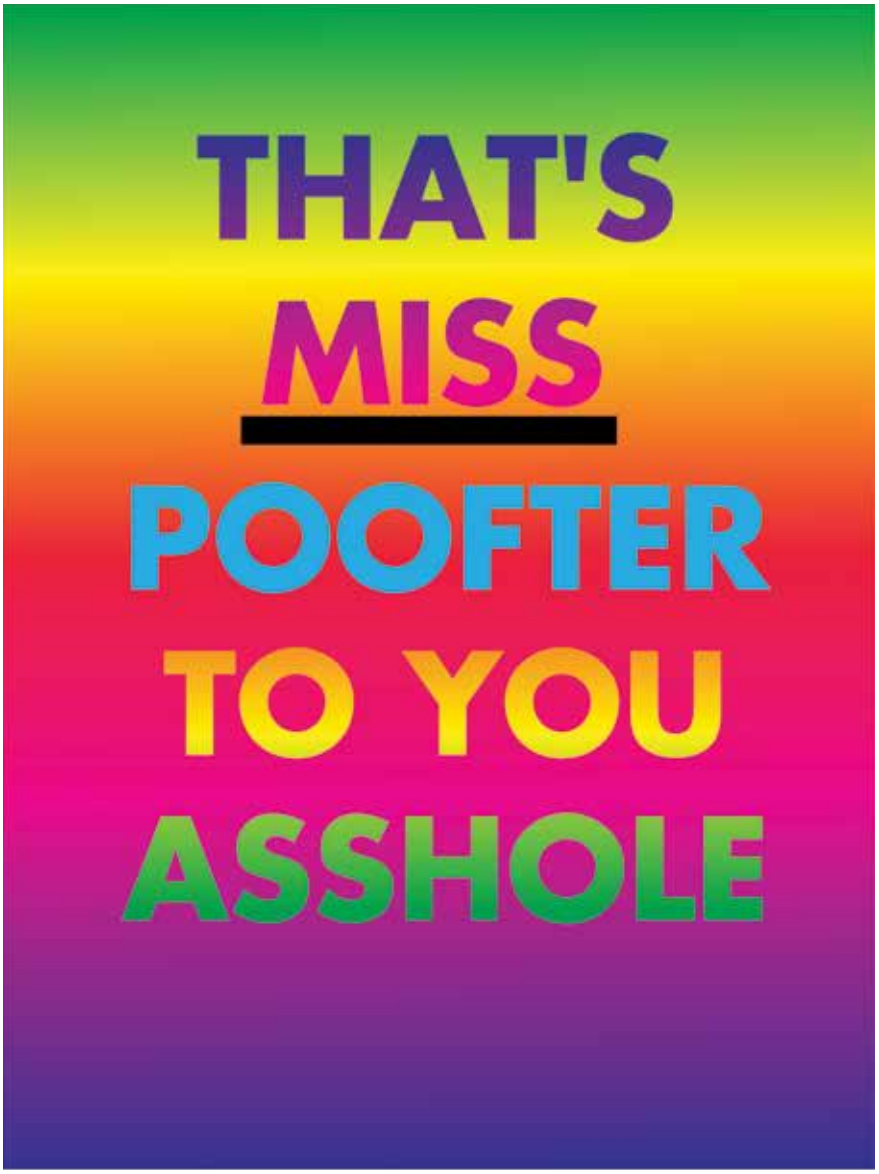
Above and left:
Carpark-shed-garden-ecosystem, Tainan, 2015

Below:
Street-sign orchid-hammock, Phnom Penh, 2013



David McDiarmid
That's Miss Poofter to You Asshole, 1994
From the *Rainbow Aphorism* series
Computer-generated colour laserprint
37.4 × 28.4 cm (image)
Courtesy of Sally Gray and the David McDiarmid estate

This issue is born out of forest fires and deforestation. It is born out of extraction and despoliation, which ravage landscapes and people, including unique and irreplaceable lifeways, languages and cultures. This issue is born out of anger and despair for irretrievable losses, including plant and animal relations we will never see again. This issue is dedicated to the three billion animals that lost their lives on this continent in the summer of 2019–20, losses subsequently eclipsed by a virus spiralling out of control in the anthro-posphere. But this issue is also born out of fierce love and an undying spirit of joy, as we celebrate the indescribable beauty that still lives on this planet, and fight for its 'ongoingness', its 'survivance'.

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