

The 67th
Blake Prize

**CASULA
POWERHOUSE
ARTS CENTRE**

12 MARCH - 22 MAY 2022

CASULA POWERHOUSE ARTS CENTRE

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THE 67TH BLAKE PRIZE

12 March - 22 May 2022

The Blake Prize is a biennial event that engages local and international contemporary artists in conversations on the broader experience of spirituality, religion, and belief. The selected finalists will show their work at The 67th Blake Prize exhibition from 12 March – 22 May 2022.

The majority of this year's finalists come from Australia, representing every state and territory in the nation. Many cultures and religions from across the globe are represented in the works, including Mexico, Japan, Iran, the Philippines, Israel and China. The themes explored within the finalist works include introspective explorations of spirituality, the natural world, xenophobia and racism, gender, Australian identity and COVID-19.

This year's Blake Prize finalists have delivered an incredible range of artworks, from painting, photography, sculpture, installation and digital media works exploring the wider experience of spirituality, religion and belief. The works in this year's exhibition express the huge changes the world has gone through over the last two years, as well as the changing cultural mix of Australia's population, our attitudes towards religion and spirituality, and how our artists interpret, reflect, and question these notions via their work through art.

We would like to acknowledge the Cabrogal Clan of the Darug Nation who are the traditional custodians of the land that now resides within Liverpool City Council's boundaries. We acknowledge that this land was also accessed by peoples of the Dhurawal and Darug Nations.

PRIZES

The Blake Prize

\$35,000

Non-Acquisitive

Established in 1951, The Blake Prize is an open art prize that challenges artists to engage in conversations relating to religion and spirituality. It is open to all faiths, artistic styles, and media.

The Blake Emerging

Artist Prize

\$6,000

Acquisitive

The Blake Emerging Artist Prize is an acquisitive art prize of \$6,000 with the winning artist's entry becoming part of the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre Collection. This prize is open to artists who are within the first 5 years of their practice.

The Blake Established

Artist Residency and

Exhibition

The Blake Established Artist Residency is open to artists who have been practicing for more than 5 years. The prize is a four-week live-in residency which includes:

- Access to Casula Powerhouse's artist studio
- Access to Casula Powerhouse's artist accommodation
- A solo exhibition
- Curatorial guidance towards solo exhibition
- AUD \$1500 materials fee

THE 67TH BLAKE PRIZE

FINALISTS

Last Observances

2-channel HD video

2021

Acknowledgments: My mother, Syeda Azra Waseem. Courtesy the artist and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney.

Produced by Abdullah M. I. Syed, *Last Observances* focuses on the subjects of care, mortality, spirituality, empathy and belonging through intergenerational dialogue. As the artist recently lost his mother, Azra, who passed away suddenly in November 2019, the work shows home recordings of Azra's last days in her old home in Pakistan. Using home video as a medium, recorded with Azra's blessings, Syed connects the past with the present, giving forms of care to visuals and sounds that often remain invisible. A two-channel installation, one screen shows Azra performing various activities from morning to night in her limited mobility, while the other reveals moments when the artist observes and re-enacts his mother's domestic activities. By presenting this work as moving images, Syed implies there is always a layer of spiritual connection that runs between mother and son, a narrative that transcends time and space. The parallel projection of two screens suggests that our lives are inextricably linked and death is essentially a catalyst to life. This truth pushes us to forgive, to love, to remember, and ultimately to heal and pass on to that knowledge, all of which relate to Islamic philosophy of giving Sadaqah Jariyah (ceaseless charity).



Unchained Melody

2020

Curved Toughened Glass, Concrete, Sound Tube SD1 Transducer, Sound

Unchained Melody is an experiential installation comprising a suite of sound works and a speculative therapeutic technology: the Sonic Shower. The Sonic Shower uses a transducer and the resonant body of the curved glass to amplify electronic sound. Developed from my interest in Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) and the use of its relaxing affects for therapeutic purposes in online communities, I consider the potential of ASMR as it translates beyond the digital and into public space.

Mimicking the private and therapeutic space of the domestic shower, the Sonic Shower is a regenerative technology for times of water scarcity. Within the installation, the Sonic Shower plays synthesised sound as a simulacrum of ritual purification and the healing effects of water. Playing through a separate speaker is a series of unreturned voice-mails sent from a recurrent character within my work: the snail. The voice-mails portray a tender relationship impeded by the lack of rain, the only time that snails come out. In this context the shower becomes an unmediated interface between the listener, the snail and the simulation of water; an immersive experience of absence.



Possum cloak for Currowan

2020

Possum skins, ochre, charcoal, resin, plant material, wood and synthetic thread

Without ceremony for the dead, the spirit struggles to rebirth, the living struggle to heal. When our women come together as One through our possum cloak drumming, we connect and gift our ancient heartbeat.

As I travelled through the aftermath of the 'Currowan Fire', smouldering Grandparent trees called out to me: 'gather our ashes to help our dead find their pathway home'. Placing my palm on their trunks and offering my heartbeat possum drumming, painting ochre and charcoal on their blackened bark, singing for them. 'I am sorry, so sorry'.

Stitching nine possums together in the form of an Old Scar Tree while Uncle Jimmy Little's version of 'Bury me deep in love, take me in under your skin, bury me deep in love' ... played in the background and the crimson rosellas sang. We mixed ashes and ochre and scarred the skin in mourning for all the animals, plants, insects and sites.

Although losing my home and business was traumatic, my grief was and is for Country. So cry for our beautiful Country – let your tears fall on Mother Earth heal her scars and fill her rivers.



Lower the Gaze: Manuscript Page from خاتون نامه Khatoon Nama #1

2021

Audio Visual Installation

This work builds on a feminist reading of the gendered and politicised ideas around Muslim women's veiled and unveiled bodies. It revisits and reimagines aspects of their representation including invisibility, hypervisibility (of the veiled women in the age of circulationism and digital surveillance post 9-11), and male gaze. Animated layering of visual and aural aesthetics is created in a narrative painterly style of Persian/Mughal miniature paintings. Artist's naked and veiled body is shown under the trope of pixelation, galvanising subjective agency to reclaim one's own body and its representation. Pixelation is also used as a method to disable gendered viewing of the female body - simultaneously denying satisfaction to the Orientalist viewership intent on consuming veiled Muslim bodies, as well as the wider male gaze accustomed to looking at nude female bodies in art. The slowly moving floriated images and the title of the work are appropriated from the traditions of royally commissioned Mughal manuscripts (e.g. Badshahnama), subverting patriarchal structures of power, and also framing this work within artist's personal migratory geographic history. Lastly, Verse 30 from chapter 24 of Quran is referred to in the sound, shifting the burden of morality from female body onto the male gaze.



Cover me with Moth Wings

2021

Oil on Plywood

‘God is in the detail’ ... a statement attributed to a number of 20th century architects in reference to detailing of buildings.

But surely they meant insects.

Most of these insects come from my father-in-laws insects collection. They are all Australian and some have significance to particular religions

This poem collaborated with the painted insects. It is used with the poets permission.

Cover me in Moth Wings, by Iris Osprey Simpson

cover me in moths wings
let Christmas beetles settle in the hollows of my cheeks
let fruit flies rise like mist with the morning sun
and make great dark clouds, whirling and dancing over the fields
place me on the tongue of a small and singing bird
take me from my green and murmuring home and set me in gold
give me a crown of iridescent green and layers of shifting scales
let me rest among the others in a bright and clamoring row, wings fanned,
legs unfurled
place me at the centre of a fig
set me in amber
look for me at the nuclear end,
watch me crawl from concrete bathrooms and bush hollows and take my
place by a bush burning with cicada song and cricket
cry.



40 Days

2021

Pastel on paper

We have all been in our individual deserts for much more than 40 days and 40 nights since the pandemic started. The shape of our lives have changed considerably. The shape of my body has changed after I had a massive stroke 9 years ago. My work explores all of this drawing up from the subconscious what it means to be at odds with yourself and the world. We have all taken profound spiritual journeys in the last 2 years. The geometry of the figure in my work is ambiguous and he appears to be holding his future close to him.



Electric Dreams

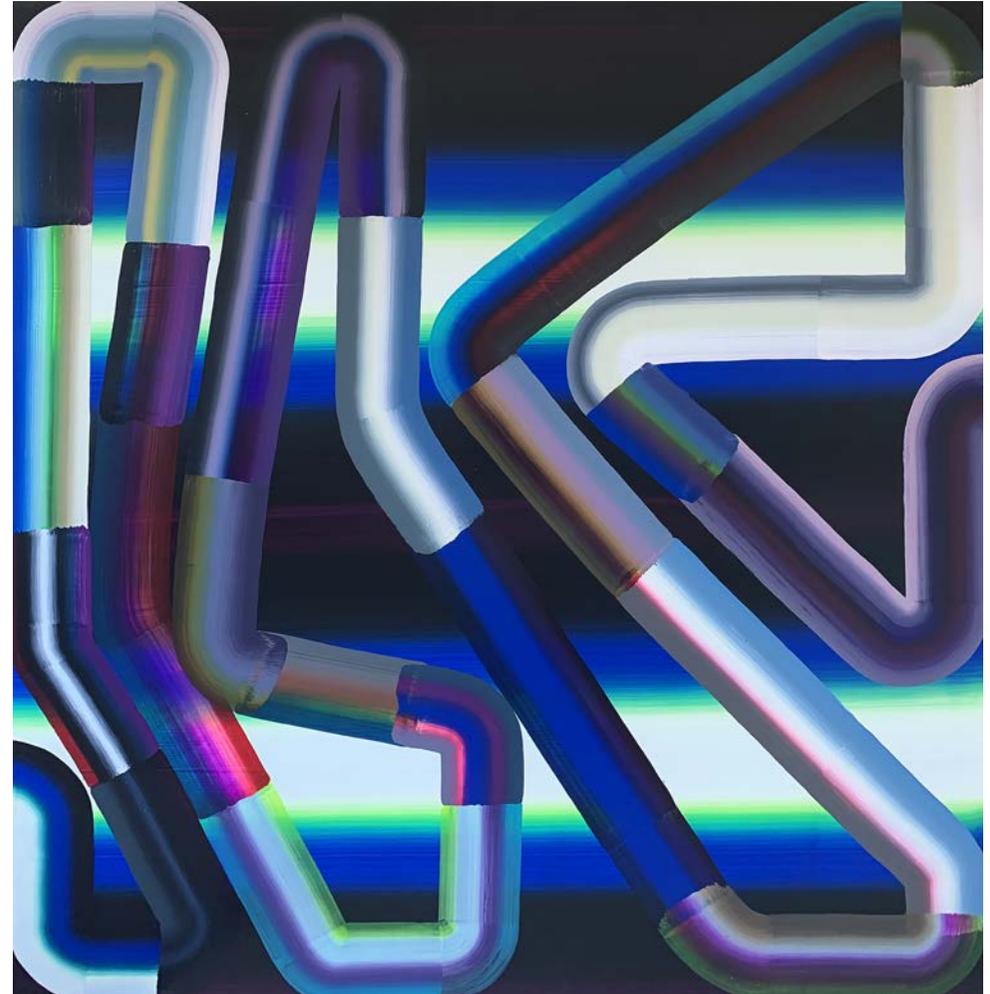
2021

Oil on aluminum

Electric Dreams plays with light and colour as inseparably the same. The act of painting is considered through the history of gestural abstraction. Reduced to a surface and paint applied with a colour loaded brush. There is an implicit physical momentum involved in work; the push/pull, twists, the drag of the brush, the drip, the stop and start.

Electric Dreams explores the surface and traditional constraints of the painting through, at times, bouncing off its edges and returning inwards to explore the interior space of the painting. While at others zooming off the edge in a manner, which implies a broader limitless world that we are only seeing a cropped section of. This implication of a limitless expansive space, continuing beyond the visible realm, highlights our own limited understanding of life. The fragility of life on this planet presents itself to us when confronted with the sublime spectacle that is the natural world and the infinite universe.

Electric Dreams tubular forms navigate and continuing beyond the visible cropped section that contains the work. This continued movement alludes to the unknown nature of the world around us while acknowledging our limited sensory ability to perceive beyond a certain point.

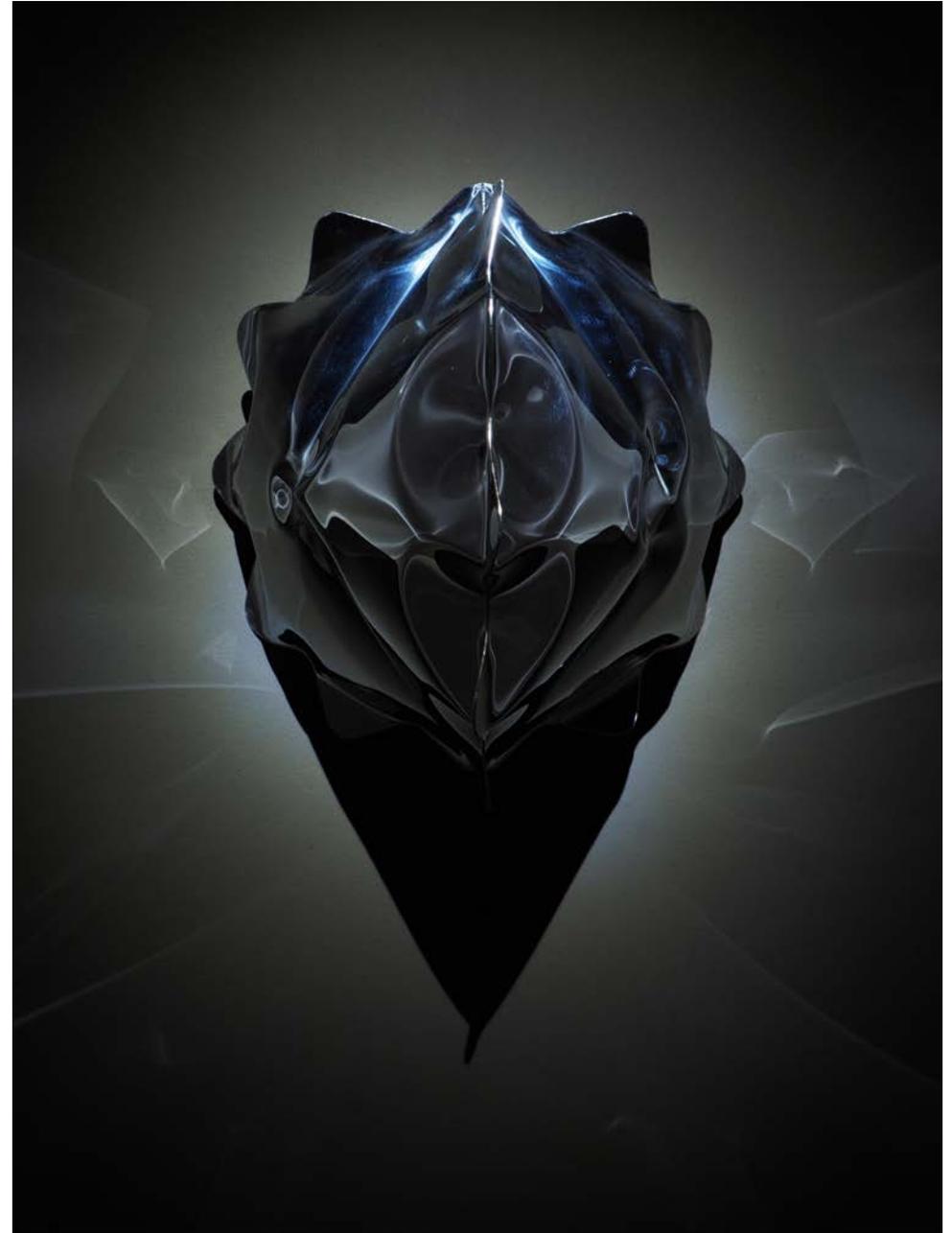


Things are not as they appear (Allusive Object – 3 faced pod)

2021

Welded and mirror-polished inflated stainless steel with accompanying acrylic portal wall painting

Things are not as they appear (Allusive Object – 3 faced pod) represents my recent body of work that extends and transcends the inflated stainless steel objects beyond sculpture into the realm of painting and experiential installation. The crumpled and distorted liquid mirror surfaces of the allusive and elusive inflated stainless steel objects are already hard to fathom – to grasp, as their inter-reflective nature challenges cognition – challenges our reception of the form - revealing and concealing. Crafted, focused light then adds another smokey atmospheric element that conjures a cosmic array of refracted light, extending from the deep black painted portal and cast onto the surrounding architecture. This embodied experience summons a myriad of associations. It is the witnessing of the beginning of something – something elusive, indeterminate - life – the cosmos - an idea – energy – the source.



Rescue

2021

Bronze, Huon pine, mahogany

A cry for help before it's too late.

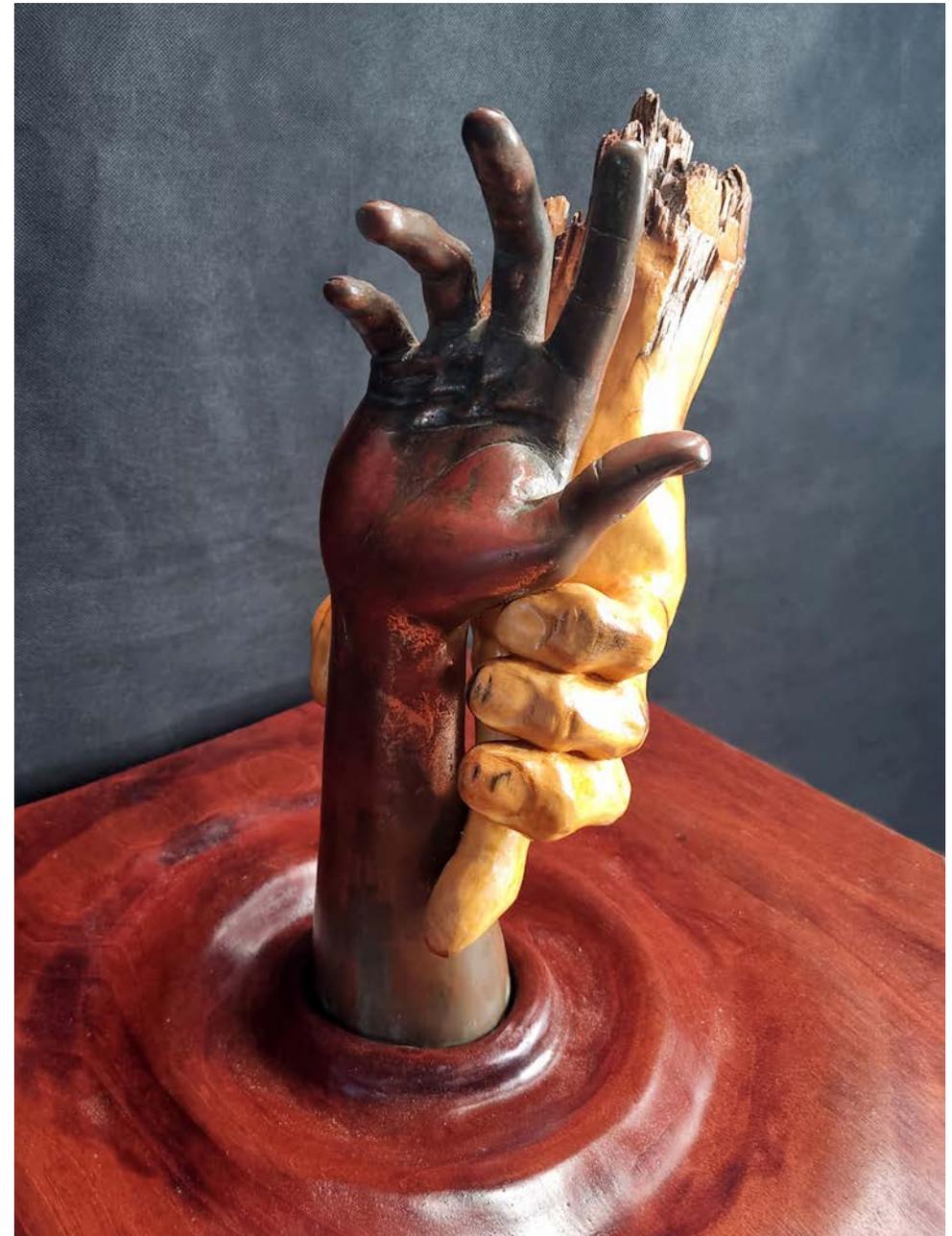
The very last second saving.

Many of us have experienced that drowning sensation – be it mentally, physically or spiritually – where we must reach for help.

We see fine, delicate fingers, yet heavily weighed down with the burdens of life. They appear to be in the lightness of water, but really are succumbing to the all-consuming suffocating mire. Never to escape and be locked in the depths. Yet a strong, light to touch, rough hand reaches down to rescue us. Not through an act of our own, but through another responding in a time of need.

Such is the act of a Saviour.

Such is the act of my Saviour as He rescued me from my heaviness and depth of despair.



Cult of Saint Roche

2021

Acrylic, oils and gold leaf on canvas

The *Cult of Saint Roche* explores themes of Catholic iconography and history while challenging stereotypical, eurocentric depictions of holy figures in Christian art. The figure in my work is staged to represent Saint Roche. Saint Roche is known as the Patron saint of Plagues and dogs, he is represented as a symbol of hope in art through Florence, often depicted revealing a plague wound on his thigh and accompanied by a healing dog. Saint Roche has gained renewed interest during the COVID-19 pandemic.

My painting includes a pastiche of both contemporary and traditional iconography and tropes, the gold leaf halo and parting clouds referencing religious experience. The inclusion of stage settings, sneakers, a bum bag and the iconic steeple of the Greek Orthodox Church in Marrickville, relate to the cultural and religious experiences of people in Western Sydney. The subject, a friend from western Sydney, was raised in an African-Christian family, his likeness replaces the traditional European representation of divinity. Despite the diverse population of Sydney's religious communities, it is typical to only witness depictions of European-white Saints and figures in Christian spaces.



straya#3

2021

HD video

Straya#3 is dual channel video that looks at Australia's religious and spiritual love of cars.

Straya#3 looks at the Burnout in particular which is both beautiful and destructive, exploring this paradox in relation to the landscape and the impact of urbanisation on the natural environment. This 'bogan Ballet' as it has been termed, followed and supported by passionate disciples, negatively impacts the environment in ways only now truly being understood.



From Babylon To Zion, The Prophecy Of Daniel 8:14

2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick, enamel on canvas

Born into a devout religious family, I was given the biblical name Daniel and was birthed 8 pounds 14 ounces. Herald as a great sign, my name and weight confirmed in the book of Daniel, chapter 8, verse 14, the key prophecy we were on the right path directed by God and the kingdom of heaven to come. I do not follow any religion or belief systems anymore, but look from my own experience what is true and real. I do not need to find understanding through another, but can apply my own insights to such texts. Daniel, who was taken from his homeland, to live a new life with king Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, remained committed to his inner light, his open heart and God within. The book of Daniel is a testament to the triumph of such a surrender to love, and has been of some fascination to me. Life can often seem like a den of lions, breaking down the walls of the heart, to discover everything is already in there, in the heart, love posing as fear, nothing to be afraid of, a freedom to revel in, a peace to rest in, the true return to Zion.



Ashes of Nineveh (II)

2021

photographic inkjet print

Using animals (primarily the horse) as a personal motif and symbol for the natural world, I engage with animals in performance exercises. Through photo media, I document these human-animal collaborations.

In the Old Testament story of Nineveh, Jonah warns that due to the excessive and selfish lives of its people, the city will be destroyed unless they change the way they live.

To avoid total destruction, everyone living in the city, including the animals must repent by fasting, wearing sackcloth and lay down in ashes. I found a sad irony that although the Old Testament preaches that humans have dominion over the animal kingdom, animals in this tale, must still pay penance for the selfishness of humankind.

I see this as the perfect parable to describe where we find ourselves environmentally (and spiritually) in 2021. Through our global greed, we now face imminent destruction unless we dramatically change the way we live and treat the planet. Sadly, though no fault of their own, animals (and the natural world) are paying the price for the 'sins' of humankind. The horses rolling in the ash-like sand, the smokestacks of human endeavour looming behind them, is my meditation on this conundrum.



Dia de los Muertos

2021

Acrylic on ply

Retablos are small devotional paintings on tin or wood that feature saints and images from other traditional Catholic Church art and are given in fulfillment of a vow or in gratitude for divine intercessions. Retablo comes from the Latin retro tabula meaning “behind the altar”.

Although associated with Western Christian observances ie All Saints Day, Dia de los Muertos has a much less solemn tone and is portrayed as a festive holiday of joyful celebration rather than mourning.

In homage to these practices, this work represents the vividly painted and decorated Mexican cemetery in the form of a retablo. The cemetery is freshly cleaned, swept and painted in anticipation of the Day of the Dead, a day that celebrates the belief that the souls of dead loved ones come to visit. In Mexico there is no real separation between the living and the dead and it is more common to share grief than to grieve privately.



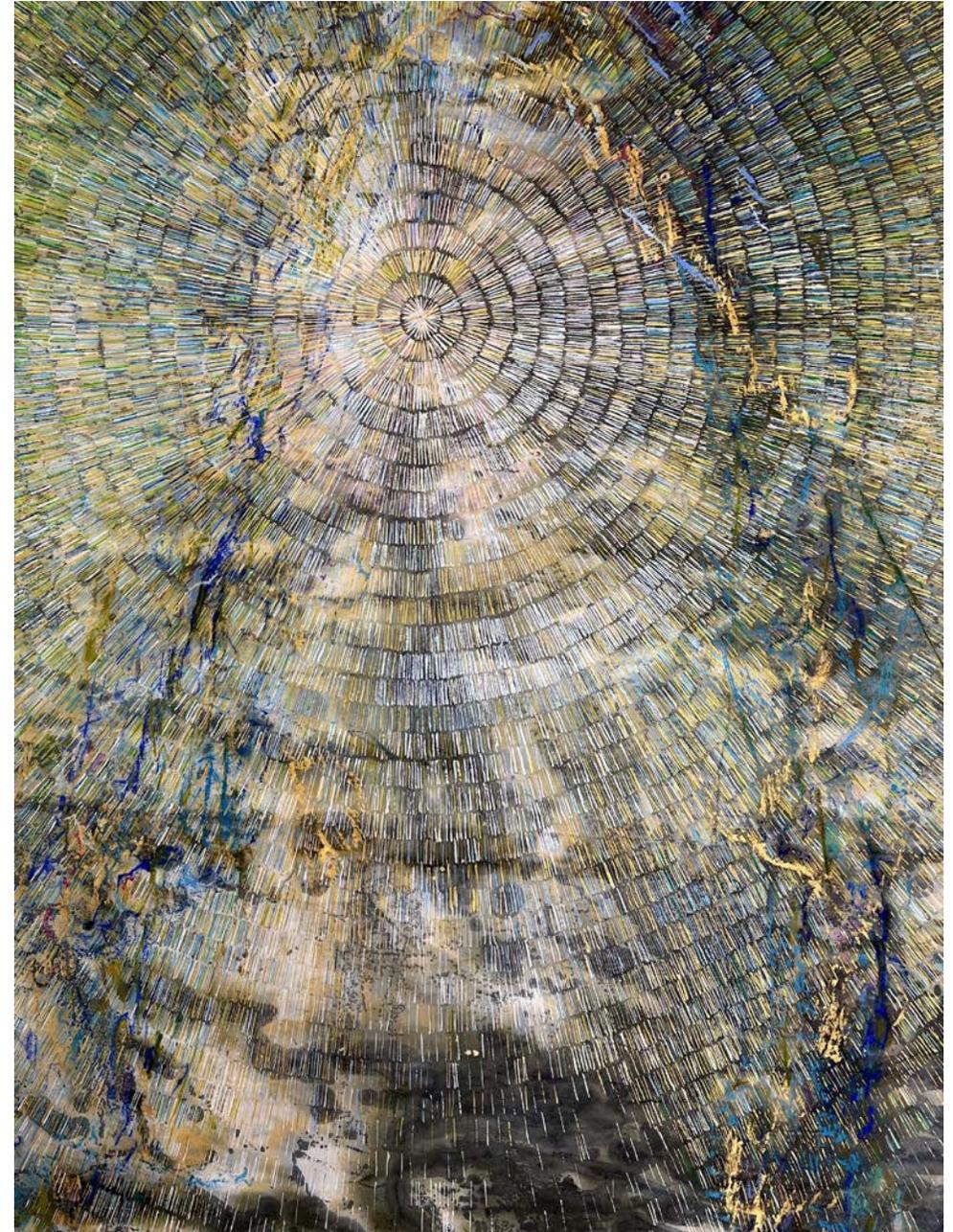
Prayers for the Dead

2021

Mixed media on Chinese paper

This large work on paper, like inked skin, holds 44,250 painted strokes, marking a tiny proportion of the vast number of people who have died from the Covid virus around the world. It is a prayer repository. For every hundred strokes I painted, I would stop, kneel, and pray for a hundred of these dead. As such, it has given me an opportunity to integrate my religious practice of daily petitionary prayer with my visual art practice. Despite religions varying widely, prayer is common to all faiths and so, I learned, are prayers for the dead to be at peace.

I chose to use Chinese paper because it is flexible, responsive and portable. Its absorbent character reflects, in ink, the textures of the physical ground I worked on. Reminiscent of a mandala, the shimmering circles of radial lines, painted with interactive pigments, inks and water-based paints, weave in and out of the ring of rock rubbings taking off a weathered New South Wales cliff face. The indexical imprint of the physical, found in marks made by my hand and from the geography of place, sit here in an expressive spatial tension, to hint at the mystical.



Doesn't it taste of blood?

2020

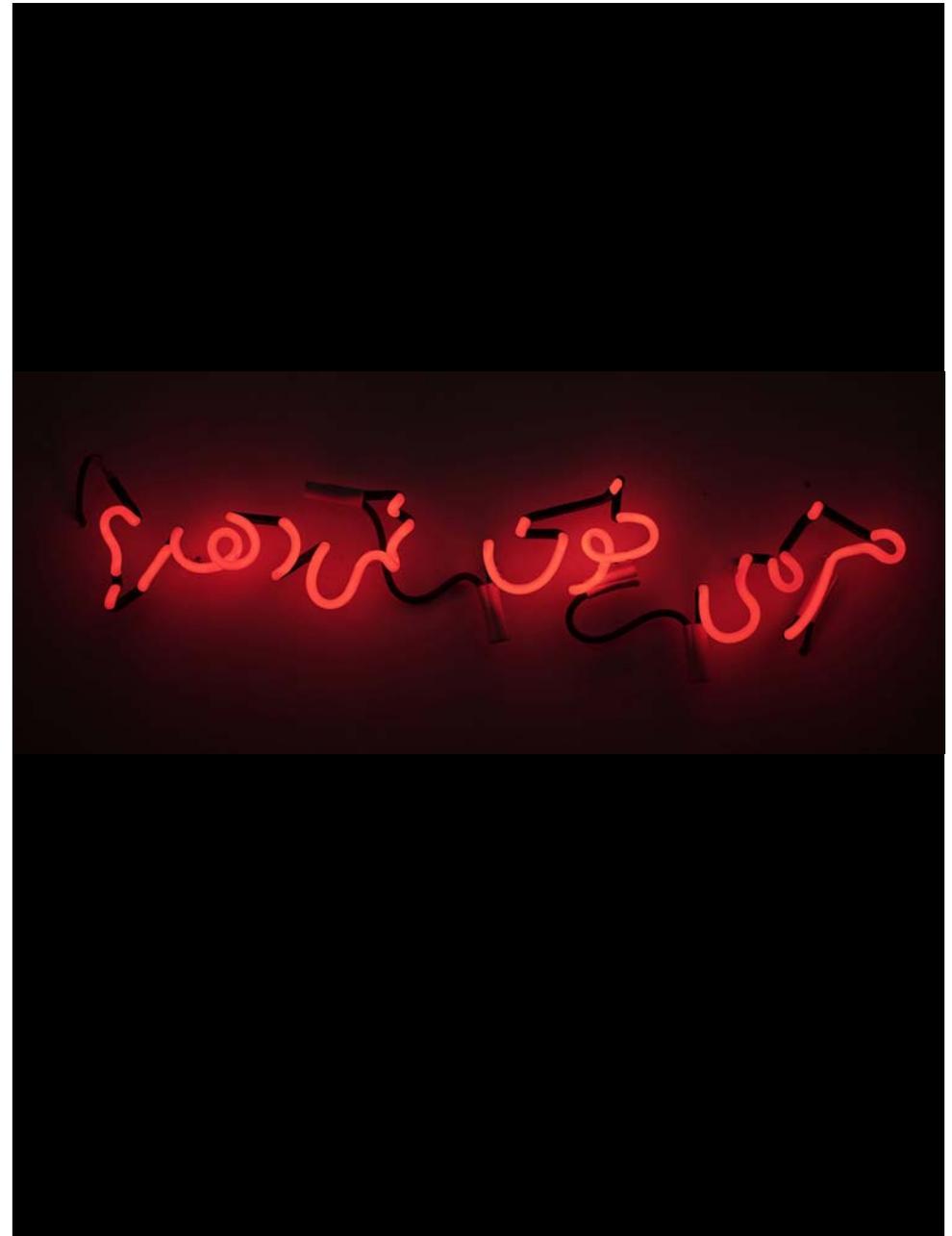
Neon

.....

In the last two years, one of my short poems was painted on streets in Iran and Afghanistan, picked up by the community as a kind of rallying cry. The short poem speaks to the toll of war on the individual and how many of the theocratic governments use religion to discriminate people. Hearing about it from friends, then seeing images that appear online, I felt a sense of giving up ownership over my words to the people - especially as my books have recently been banned by the government in Iran. This poem refers to water as one of the sacred elements of nature, water is the divine witness to all human deeds. Poem translation from Farsi to English:

“As you draw water from a well
and make tea with that water,
doesn't it taste of blood?”

Although these words were erased off the streets by the authorities, some marks remain. The fragility and the process of making neon with human breath and gas is important and I see the object as alive. Neon acts as the spirit of that erased graffiti.



Standing Still (with practice, one may learn to accept the feelings of groundlessness)

2020

Video

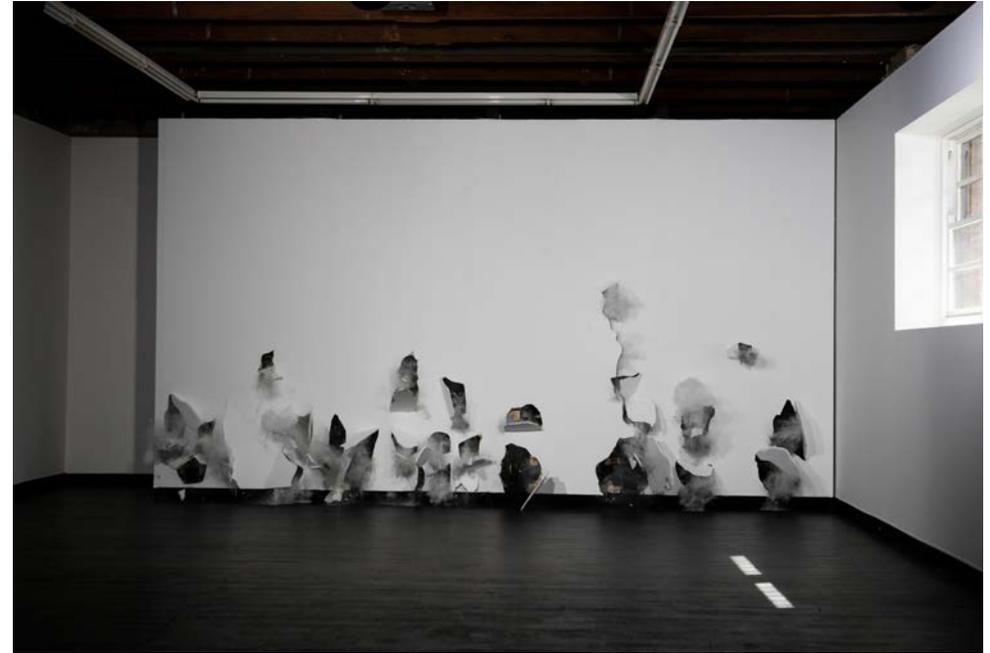
Image by Mairara Skarheim at Firstdraft Sydney

These extraordinary times evoke a rumbling underfoot.

Groundlessness is a material reality in a time of global heating and environmental catastrophe. Compounding years of heat stress buckles infrastructures that support normal techno and social functioning.

It also shapes an internal experience of instability.

What is reality when the very materials that support us become brittle and crack? This work explores the innate existential nature of living in troubled times, when a single human life span can effect the geologic, and the terrible sublime beauty of watching the collapse.



Near to the sound of your heart, beating waves into the ocean.

2021

Fabric offcuts sent from my grandma in Thailand, second-hand fabric, PVA glue, paper pulp, glitter, sequins, oil paint, plastic \$2 Australian flag, iPhone, video from phone camera, spray paint

Reincarnation has always been in my family's story, they believe my soul belonged to my grandfather. This artwork is about that spirituality and a homecoming to lost culture.

The maternal side of my family is from Thailand, where every home, building or hazardous stretch of road has a spirit house or shrine. These shrines have multiple purposes, one is to ask for protection from otherworldly beings. The other is to invent a history of a place, the former inhabitants of a home will be imagined and honored through caring for a shrine. This artwork reinvents and nurtures my history as a mixed heritage person. The shrines in this work give me refuge, the metallic tattered Australian flag represents a flawed ideal. My father is a white Australian, my mother is seen as an outsider. The flag describes my feeling of otherness, acknowledging that the existence of 'other' depends on specific political conditions that influence the relationships between cultures. Never having belonged to a culture, this artwork seeks to find a way home. If my soul once did belong to my grandfather, he would want me to reconcile these feelings. He spent his last years as a Buddhist monk nurturing spirituality.



Sleep no more (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*)

2021

Mesh and cast aluminium, steel, smelted Red Bull cans, Ritalin

Cast from aluminium, Red Bull cans and Ritalin (a prescription medication used to treat ADHD and sleep disorder), 'Sleep no more' seeks to elevate a humble migratory bird to the level of contemporary spiritual icon.

Every northern spring–autumn, tens of thousands of Gambel's white-crowned sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) migrate 4,000 kilometres between Alaska and California. They fly by night and feed by day, going without sleep for up to seven days at a time. Unlike sparrows, sleeplessness spells disaster for humans. Both the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown and the US space shuttle Challenger implosion are linked to fatal human error and eroded sleep. Still, the US military has studied the white-crowned sparrow, seeking to one day engineer the sleepless soldier.

The sparrow (and the contemporary condition of being always-on and never-off—like 'sleep mode' on a digital device) is an emblem for this work. While Silicon Valley rules the world through the extraction and colonisation of human and planetary resources, my work honours the labour of precarious and anonymous workers on which our globalised world is built.

The work is an (anti)monument—against patriarchal hubris—towards more-than-human collectivity, circadian rhythms and interdependence. A space for contemplation and belief in solidarity across difference.



Pishing in the archive

2021

HD video

The Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn is one of the most historical and beautiful multifaith burial sites in the world; spanning 478 acres of protected land, it's also a major migratory bird habitat and birdwatchers' haven. Unknown to most humans, this site is also the site of the first successful introduction of house sparrows into the Americas in 1857. Pishing in the archive continues my commitment to investigating the affective histories carried by animals and the animals carried by history. I redeploy pishing (a noise that birdwatchers make in the field to lure birds) as a cross-species form of communication through which to listen and respond to the sparrows' history. This artwork borrows a strategy learnt from birdwatching amongst the tombstones with human companions and drags it into archival research with the cemetery's historians. Pishing enacts a form of erotohistoriography, a particular corporeal historiography practiced by queer artists working with historical material, as a queer strategy through which I glean cross-species histories through my body. Pishing slips between anthropomorphism and zoomorphism, decentering the human audience. A queering of the human as animal aids me in learning to live critically with anthropocentrism by becoming the companion to the sparrow and its history.

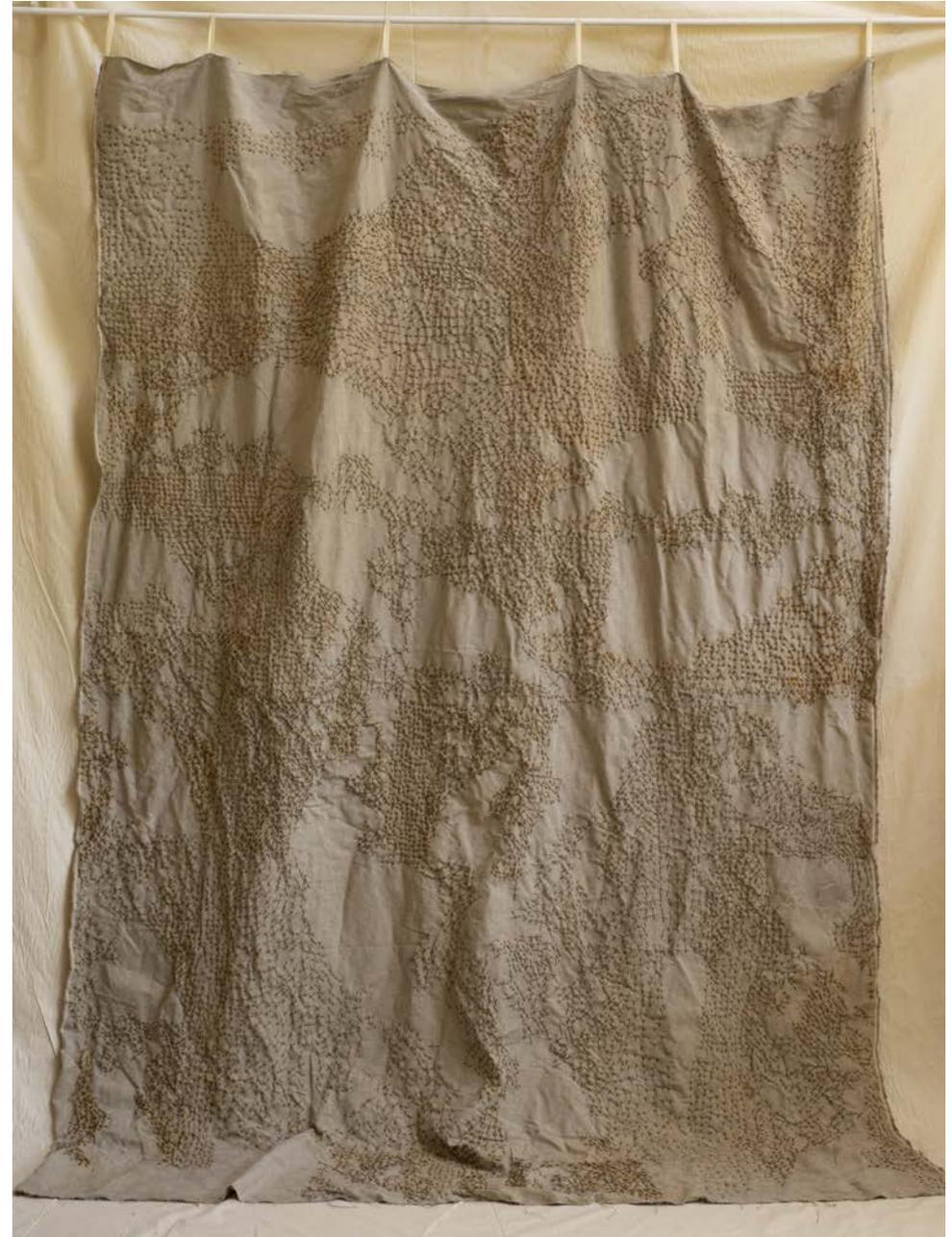


Habitual Moving

2021

Panel pins and salt on Belgian linen

My current art practice investigates the depth and significance of memory and the spiritual connection between life events and the oceans. Habitually Moving depicts seasonal ocean currents from the region of my birth (Aitape, Papua New Guinea) and a memory contained in the saltwater of a later life event. In Habitually Moving, I use panel pins to reproduce oceanographic maps of seasonal ocean currents to “pin down” the movement of the ocean at the site of my birth and of my memories, a task which, like any attempt to fasten our memories, is ultimately futile. The work has also been infused with a memory held in saltwater drawn from another significant site. The memory is called Where he told me he loved me, this, in turn, has rusted the pins, much like the ageing of memories, marking a place of spiritual, life, and relationship significance. As with the memories of these events, the work is slowly changing, morphing as memories do. The cloth invokes the sense of a historical document, a tapestry-like object recording my movements in the ocean currents and saltwater, preserving my memories, spiritual, and physical presence.



SIBLING

2021

Carrara Bianco Marble

Our weapons visible.

In the archetypal story of jealousy and murder from Genesis, Cain is often portrayed in the action of killing Abel, his only brother, with the jawbone of an animal - a powerful representation of how violence emerges from intimacy. The creative love which brings forth life runs into its own shadow: the weaponised jawbone taken from the creature that gave its life to nourish and sustain growth and the destructive jealousy which grows alongside familial care. The darkness is compounded when we, like Cain, hide from this violence and refuse to take responsibility.

This work renders and makes visible the fragile dichotomy of human strength and weakness. Marble itself has been used for thousands of years to signify places of worship - yet it is also a symbol of extravagance, greed, luxury. Chosen here for its ductility and long-lasting qualities it can also be used as a medium to ground the abstract and make manifest that which is hidden.

This artwork is a witness to our conflicted identities. It stands as a kind of revelation - that it is only in the revelation and visibility of our weaponised selves that we might find a kind of redemption.

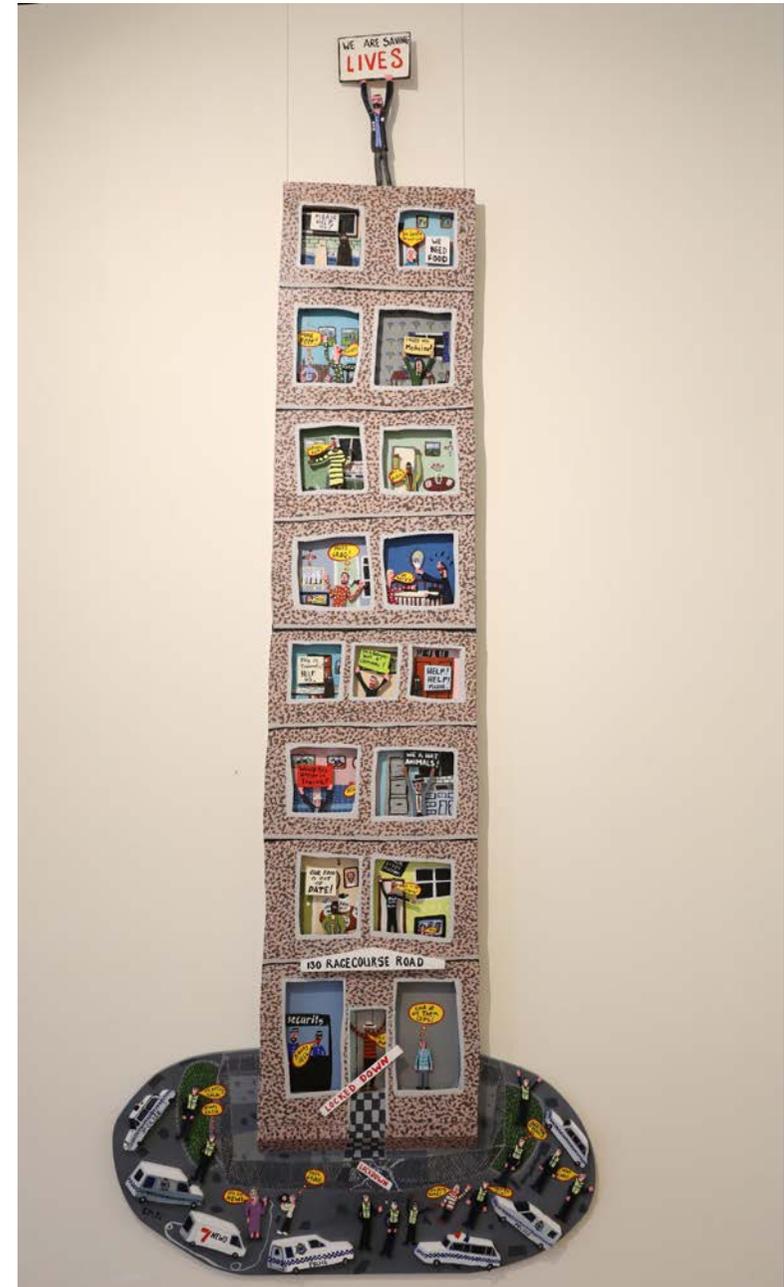


High Rise Towers

2021

Acrylic on wood

Over the COVID lockdown period in Melbourne, the Flemington housing commission hard lockdown really struck a chord with me. I'm not having a go at the Andrews government, because lockdown needed to happen. And I do believe that it did save lives. However, it was the way that this particular lockdown was done. It really did seem heavy handed, and lacking of all compassion. I can fully understand why these tenants were feeling upset. This painting tells a lot of those individual stories, and emphasises our common humanity.



Confessional

2021

Acrylic on canvas

This reflects the intimacy and soothing space of confession.



Yue Lao - The God of Matchmaking and Marriage

2021

Recycled Chinese Calendar papers, copper, beeswax, thread

My Grandma (Ah Ma) arranged my late uncle's marriage. Was it a successful union? We learn and pay homage to traditions as they contribute to the essence of knowing where we come from. In this in-between homeland – Australia, I struggle to clarify tales and myths with my elders. But there is a desire to understand why some practices still exist today but just in a different structure. Perhaps it is a fiction to give and sell hope to our contemporary society and mimic what already existed all these times.

Yue Lao is an old learned Chinese mythological cupid. He is believed to be immortal, and his focus is finding the perfect marriage matches for people. Our contemporary society engages in matchmaking apps to look for prospective suitors and it reflects similar practices to Yue Lao's. The common thread is time. The chosen medium are sheets of recycled Chinese calendar papers that I religiously tear every day. It reveals prospects of suitor's details, potential faux pas of the day and even prescriptive taboos. These strips of historical calendar papers re-narrate a divinely preordained plan of creation, it cements my beliefs in love and fate and, therefore, unavoidable.

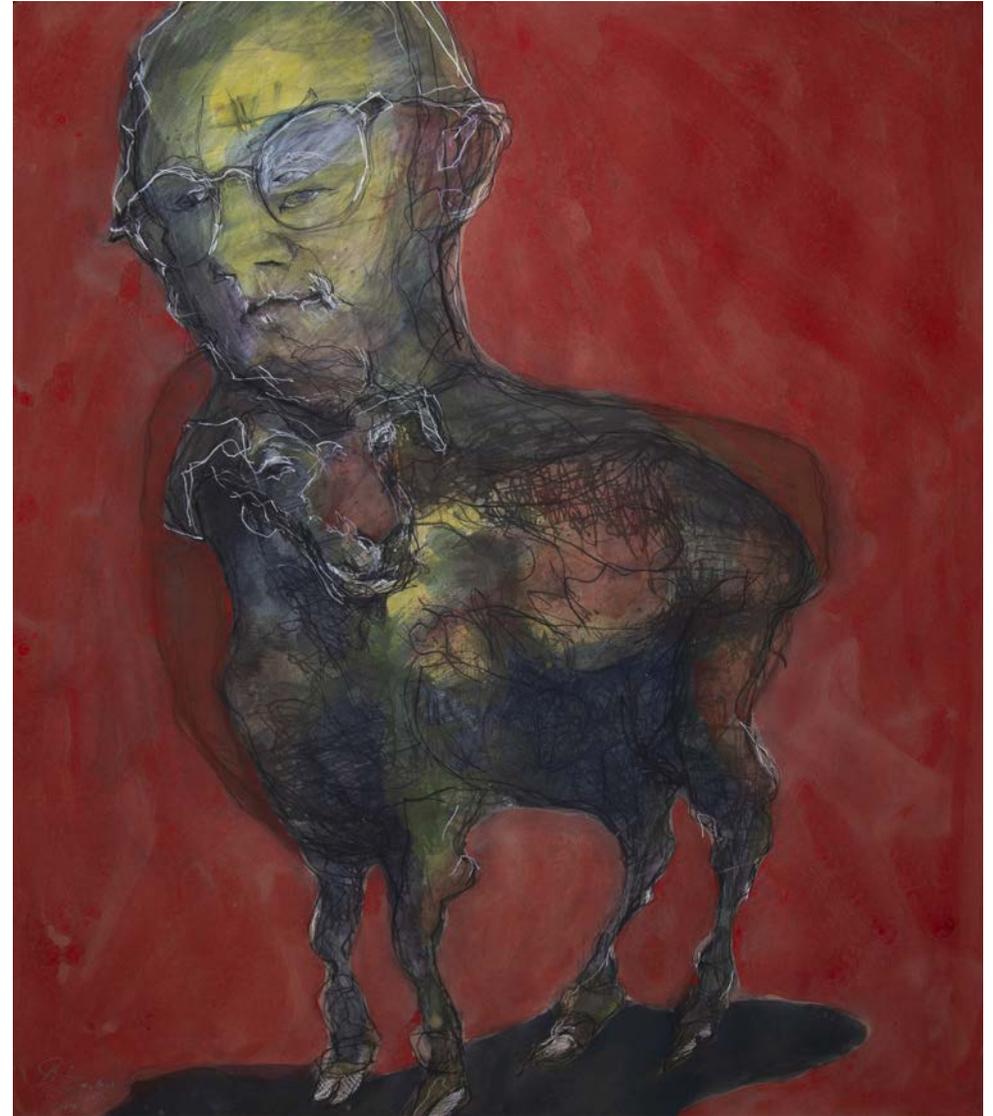


I am the lamb of all gods.

2021

Ink, pastel and pigment on paper

During a past art research project, I drove around Flinders Island and wherever I went I was met with masses of roadkill. Along with the bloated obstructions on bitumen, the roadsides carry a snowdrift of millions of tiny bone relics. At this very time, that 2018/19 summer, the southeast of Australia was on fire and images of burnt, dead or dying creatures filled my news feed. I was carrying images of smouldering bird-life, kangaroos, koalas, cattle, plus roadkill, all of it in my daily periphery. Sheep stood in simple shock, dazed in their black burnt wool. De-sensitised, yet fascinated, I placed one of these sheep into my chest and it became part of a self-portrait. In turn, I adopted its body. In this way I became like a sacrificial lamb, to all the gods we invent to cope with our mortality and our flawed humanity. Can we forgive ourselves if a Jewish lamb was sacrificed on our behalf? The way we inhabit our landscape leaves me confused, acquiescent as well as in sorry awe. I sought to explore this confusion as I struggle to comprehend the human creature and if any system of belief is ever justifiable.



Finding Your Feet

2020

Wool, acrylic

Finding Your Feet was created from the collective contributions of refugees and asylum seekers during a community art project in Western Sydney. The project was never about the end product, although that became this beautiful artwork, but what happened in the act of its creation. The aim was to bring together people of different religious and cultural backgrounds so they could forge friendships in an unfamiliar land. Over two years at the Auburn Community Centre during Community Kitchens run by Settlement Services International hundreds of people sat together with Afghani refugees Sayd Abdali, Nasaphah Nasaphah and Sydney artist Jane Theau and learned how to tuft this rug. Often there was no shared language, and communication occurred via demonstrations, smiles and hand signals. Around the table was a generous spirit of sharing and working towards a common goal.

The design of the rug uses the universal language of flowers to represent the peace and security of the refugees' new home: Australian native flowers in the border of the rug embrace a central panel with the national blooms of the major refugee groups of Auburn. Graphs depict refugee arrivals in Australia and the growth of global wealth inequality, a key cause of people displacement.



A new and different sun

2021

HD Video

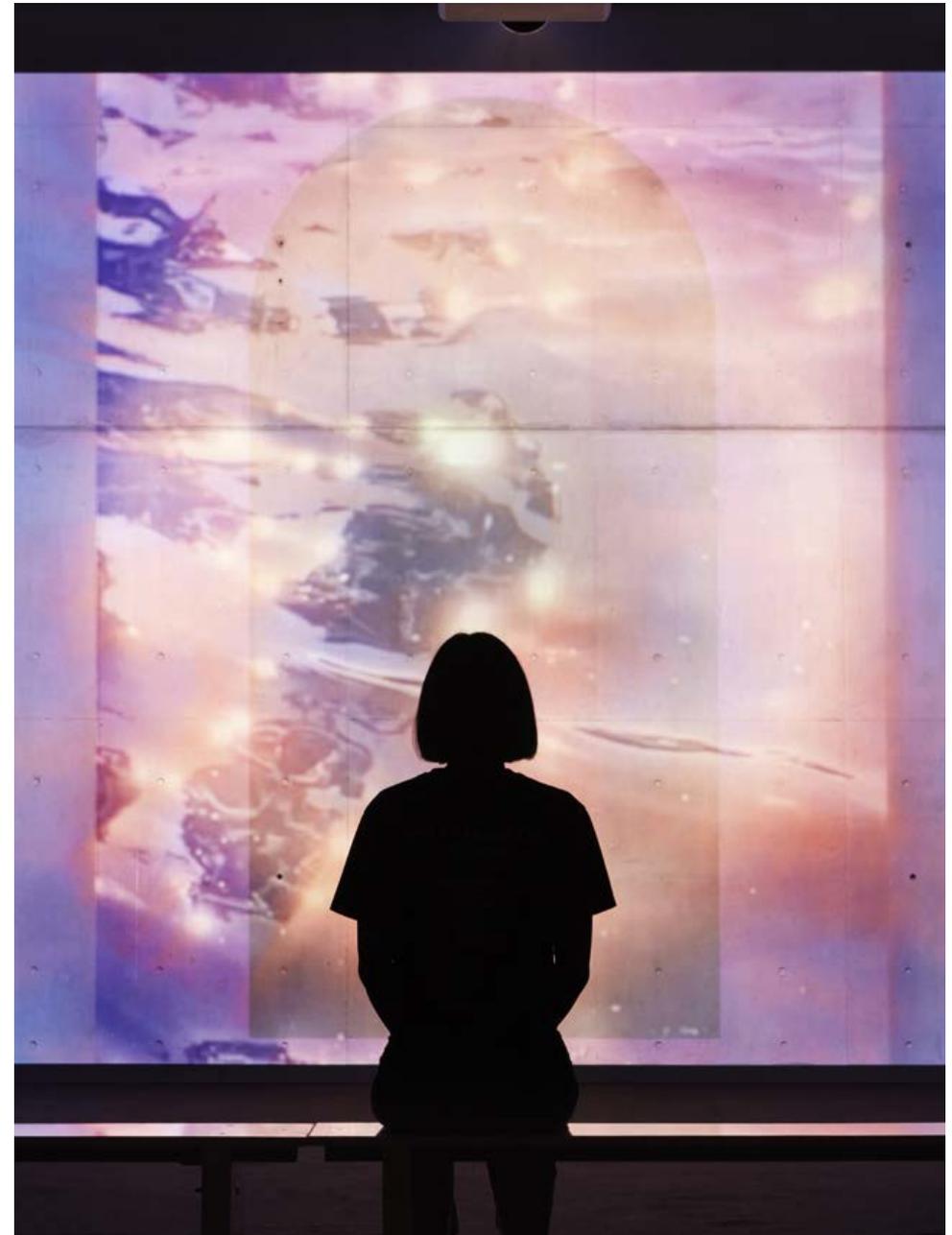
Working with video and sound, with concepts informed by excavating my own personal history, Western Culture, Christianity and the everyday. Exploring an interest in creating emotionally fraught sublime environments, asking viewers to confront their understanding, experiences and beliefs of spiritual metaphysics, the Divine and the metaphysical.

This video filled with liminal spaces, ritual, and transitory moments, becomes a meditative site of contemplation and inward reflection for viewers.

Aesthetically dramatic to induce the Sublime, cloud formations swirl and marble. Circles of light bounce, wordless emotions pulse, portals, and windows layer on top of one another as the viewer cycles through horizonless skies. Whether in nature, in art, in religion or spiritual experience, the sublime gives a sense of our vanishing puniness in something massive and alluring.

Motifs of sacred geometry- circles and archways, are used to signify time and transformation- Windows to different realms of physical, metaphysical, and spiritual possibilities. Symbols of earthly experience and liminal space become metaphors of our understanding and experience with the unknown and our place within it.

Paired with a carefully orchestrated sound piece driving the videos narrative, drawing the viewer in, inviting them to stay – to embrace their inner spiritual worlds, emotions, and beliefs.



I want to believe

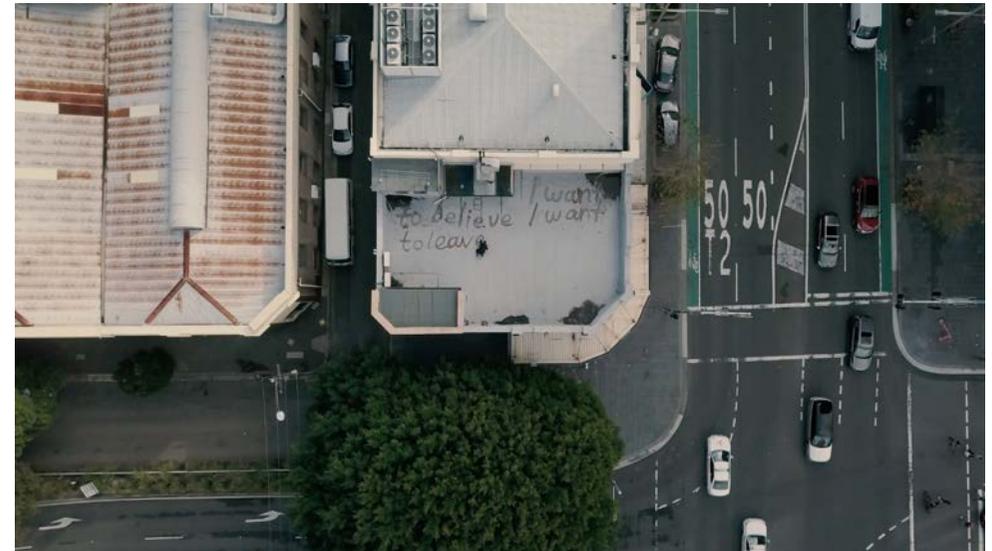
2020

Video

I want to believe is a work about faith and hope. The work consists of a filmed performance that took place on the rooftop of my apartment building in inner-city Sydney, during the 2020 lockdown. I had been thinking about people confined with abusers, reflecting on my last relationship and how I might have navigated a lockdown.

In it, I use my body and the accumulated grime on my rooftop to repeatedly write out the phrase 'I want to believe, I want to leave'. 'I want to believe' is sampled from the vernacular of extraterrestrial belief and exploration; here it serves as a kind of invocation, prayer or plea, and creates a direct, physical relationship between the domestic and the cosmic. In this sense, a UFO could be interpreted broadly as an unidentified 'faith' object.

Precarity is threaded through all accounts of intimate partner violence; people surviving at the thresholds of love and fear, hope and doubt. I chose to film on my rooftop because it's a liminal space – a boundary between home and the heavens, confinement and escape, doubt and deliverance. Writing becomes an embodied, broadcast performance, articulating a choreography of control in which hope is harm, and signs are sirens.



On Looking Up

2021

Video (found footage)

On Looking Up uses found video documentation of young people experiencing states of divine ecstasy. The footage stretches across time, from the five young girls in 1960's Garabandal, Spain to the more recent experiences of twelve-year-old Christiana Agbo in Nigeria. Bringing the divergent footage together invites the viewer to contemplate the performative gestures of divine experiences, and how they are shared and repeated across time and space.



WE ARE ALL ASTONISHINGLY WISE

2021

Interactive AV installation

WE ARE ALL ASTONISHINGLY WISE is an experimental oracle designed for intuitive reckoning of uncertain times. A goodnatureed, pink fluffy House Ghost with snazzy green shoes waits patiently in the shadows, hoping for an opportunity to be helpful. When the viewer waves their hand in front of the sensor, the Pink Ghost draws a card from her deck of 48, and holds it up for the viewer to read. Two Diviners (Nicole Barakat and Carla Jamieson) have offered possible interpretations of each card, and scanning the QR code will give the viewer access to these interpretations, but The Ghost also invites you to trust your own gut response; how might these scraps of poetic text help you understand your own situation? When order crumbles, everything can be an oracle; courting trans-rational understandings can help us in our quest to undermine toxic foundations of the old world as we give birth to the new.



Floral Nihilism 22

2021

Acrylic and pastel on paper and aluminium

My art expresses a relationship between weightlessness and intensity; the painting reflects fleeting pleasurable feelings which are never wholly contained. The marks, shapes and colours are an exploration into my own mythology of colour; in pursuit of maximalism stripping context and figuration to create a tangible real world abstraction. My works are vibrant entities influenced by the constant sensory bombardment of modern life, the natural, the built and the felt. I sought to make a living abstract with its own aesthetic independence, changing and reassembling itself with each viewing like a garden of wildflowers. They are observations of creativity itself rather than purely a bi-product of creative process. They are pendants for your thoughts, projections, subjects and figurations - and convert the lightness and joy of the act of creating.



NOT OUR TEACHERS segment 2

2021

Video and found pray rug

NOT OUR TEACHERS segment 2 speaks about the other people, their histories, traditions and ways of learning and being. The work filmed in a small village in the mountains between modern day Lebanon and Syria features the closing of a Zikr ceremony. In Tasawwuf (Sufism) we refer to these devotional ceremonies as remembrance of the Divine.

Sufis often speak about the innermost part of the heart in which divine revelation is experienced and learned. And for this work, the personal intention follows suit to the importance of experiencing religious and spiritual traditions through emotional, intellectual, and physical practices with all people in this time and space.



No Place To Settle But The Placeless

2021

Acrylic on canvas

This piece navigates the cultural displacement my father experienced in escaping religious persecution in Iran as a refugee because of his Bahá'í identity. This estrangement is embodied in the dislocated limbs spread across the silhouette of Iran. In exploring this, my father shared with me the tug and pull of material home as he sees both Australia and Iran as his home.

However, in spite of his hardships and sacrifices I found in my father a calm perseverance and contentment, conscious that with no material habitat to turn to his only place of comfort was a spiritual home found in prayer and meditation.



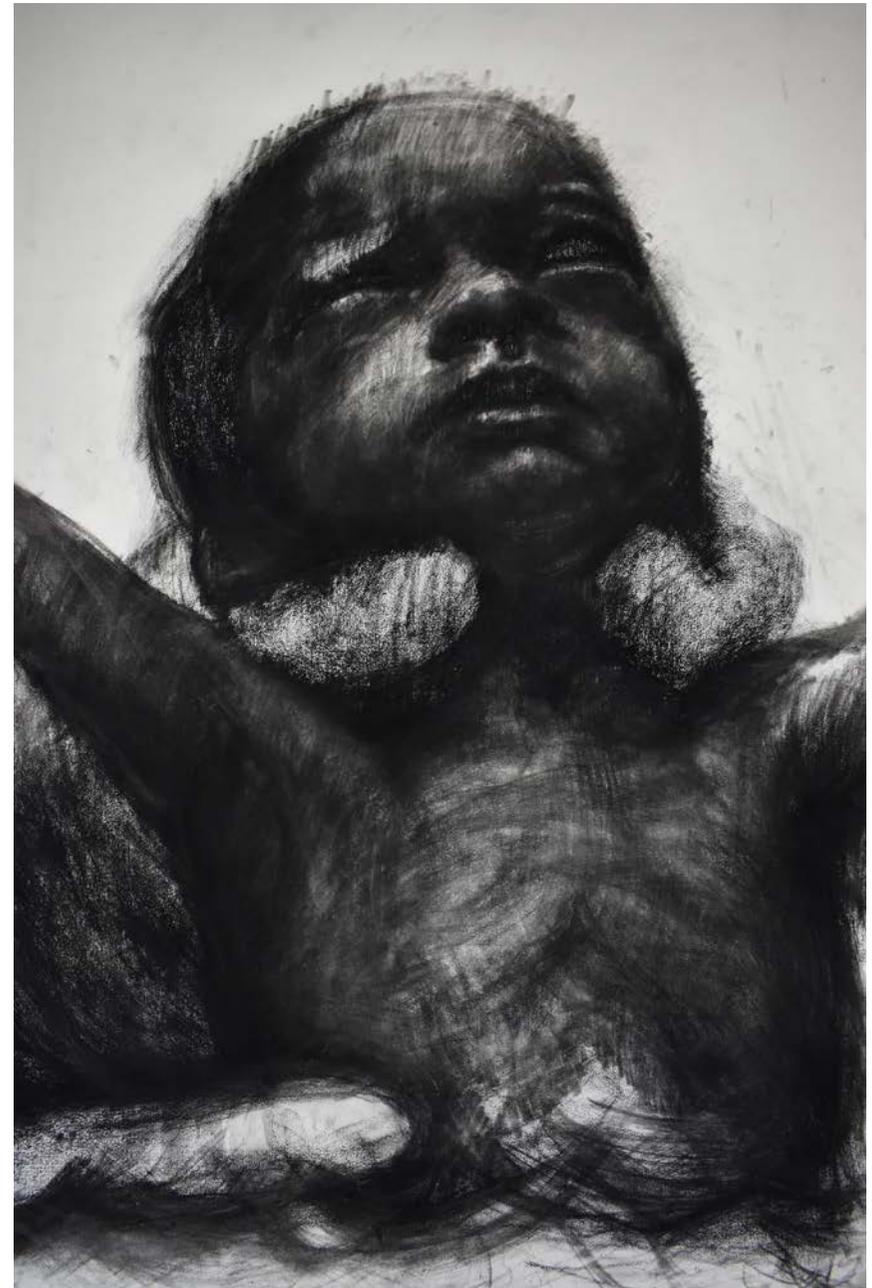
Passover

2019

Charcoal and sandpaper on paper

This drawing is based on a photograph of a friend's premature baby captured amidst the moment of birth: an oozing bundle of flesh wrestling its way onto existence. With arms outstretched as if in victory, the image is particularly poignant knowing that doctors weeks back advised about the poor health of the unborn, putting into doubt her viability. Despite this, the baby was able to pass over from outside the womb and into the world.

For the Jews, the Passover meal commemorates the passing over of the Angel of Death, bringing about their exodus and escape into freedom. For Christians too, the phrase Passover elicits imagery of death and passing over into New life.



Radical Acts

2020

Video (made from commercial stock footage)

Radical Acts is a critical short film made entirely from corporate stock footage sourced from the internet. The artist has used this footage to create a fantastical tale about a group of frustrated climate scientists who develop a mind-altering pathogen in order to disrupt corporate productivity. Although the story is fictional, it reflects contemporary realities such as the dire situation of climate crisis, political corruption, fake news, corporate greed and the revolutionary potential of non-violent civil disobedience.

Radical Acts features a song that is sung by Extinction Rebellion climate activists when one of their members is arrested. Laresa is actively involved in this group and has herself participated in peaceful acts of civil disobedience. Her film explores the spiritual and moral basis of active resistance, and how we as individuals might seek to restore justice, accountability and balance in a corrupted world. *Radical Acts* was originally commissioned by the Buxton Museum as part of the Light Source Commissions in 2020.



A foreign father, and a child in the dark

2021

Oil and acrylic on linen

A childhood in 90s Manila was one of bustling jeepneys, concrete courtyards and sweaty congregations at Santa Ana church.

Life-sized statues of saints, the Holy Mother in an armoured dress and bloody fibreglass messiahs filled my dreams as I fell asleep on kneelers to the sound of a children's choir. Beyond the church walls, children begged and sold stolen jewellery.

My painting allegorises the role that Catholicism played in the daily rhythm of my life in the Philippines, full of deeply personal symbolism; my pet growing up was an orphaned macaque named Tootsie. Taken from the forest, her caged existence is something that still brings me tremendous guilt, so I paint her here as penance.

My father worked in Australia as an illegal immigrant, so before I met him for the first time at seven, we prayed for him to come and deliver us from evil. Every time a plane flew overhead, I sent a wish heavenwards, to my father in the sky.

'A foreign father and a child in the dark' is an inversion of the title of Henry Lawson's short story 'A child in the dark, and a foreign father.'



'The Phenomenon that is Me', a Vanitas Self-Portrait

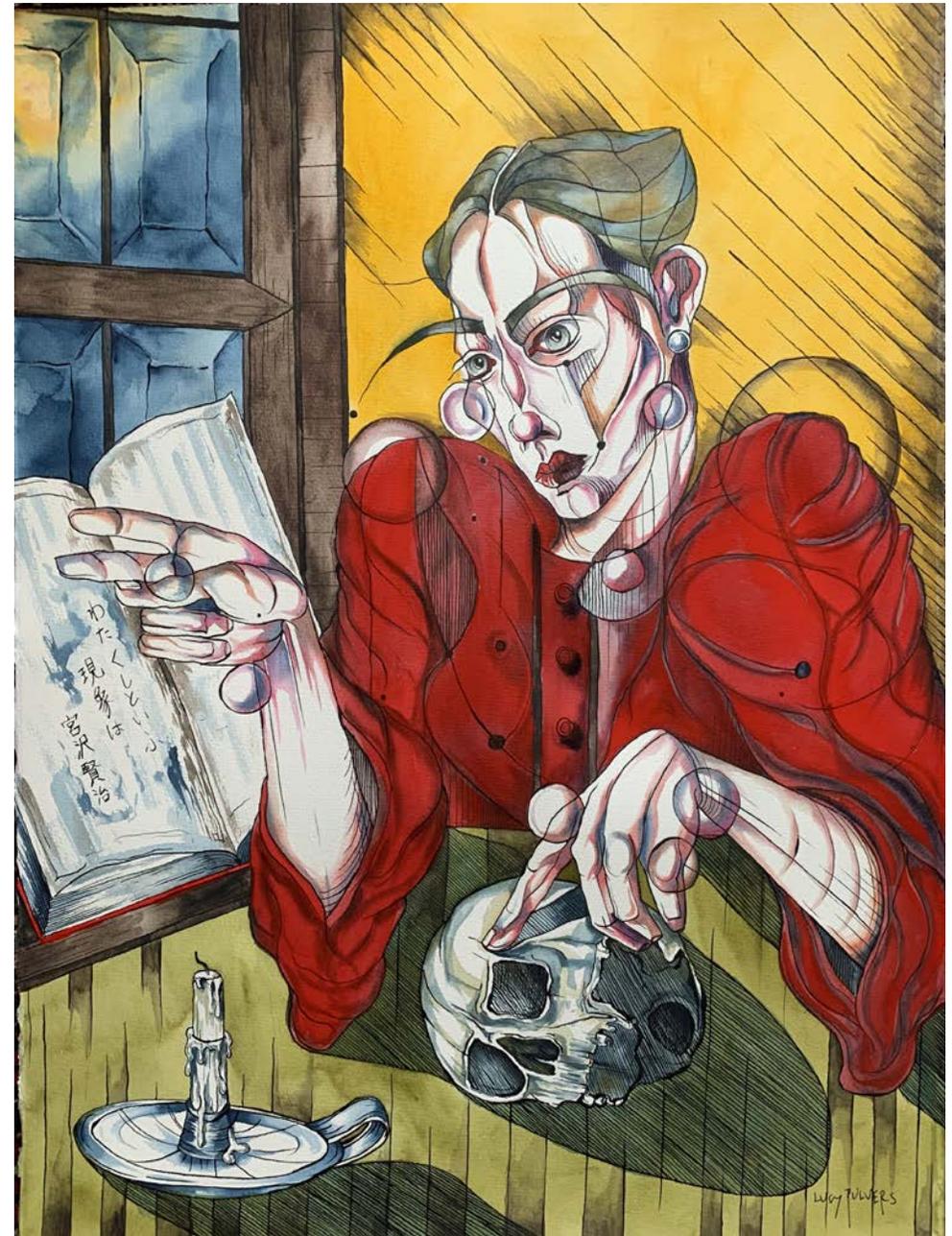
2020

Watercolour and ink on paper

This watercolour re-interprets a painting of St. Jerome attributed to the workshop of the 16th-century Flemish Renaissance painter Jan Massys. Many paintings such as this of St. Jerome have been painted over the centuries as a reminder that one should always remember the imminence of death as a reminder to treasure life and to strive to live a good and meaningful life.

I was born and spent much of my childhood in Japan and experienced Japanese religious and spiritual sensibilities. In this painting, I also reference the much-loved 20th-century Japanese writer, Miyazawa Kenji. Miyazawa Kenji was a devout Buddhist who, in his work and life, dedicated himself to contemplating the meaning of life and how to live a good life and help others.

The words on the page in the painting are a quotation from one of his poems and reads in English translation, 'The phenomenon called I'. I was moved by these difficult and unsettling times to create this painting.



Fire-ground (Pieta)

2021

Wood, steel, textiles, found objects

In late 2019 bushfires ripped through millions of acres of bushland. The loss of biodiversity and animal life was incalculable.

This work was made in response to walking through the fireground near my home the day after, the blackened textures, the still-glowing logs. How to process such grief, loss & trauma? And what to do? When the big picture was and is overwhelming, I find small, daily acts of care, for myself, for my community, for my garden, for my environment, help me go forward. As Thich Nhat Hanh says, "Compassion is a verb". This work is a tender love-song, a noticing of detail, to fix that event within me & to not forget. When I walk in the leafy and green-sprouted bush now, it is what my ears do not hear that bears witness to the losses: no insects buzzing, no small animals in the undergrowth. This work is for them, and for us.



Sister +++++ Familial Formations

2021

Photographic Print

This is an on-going work that looks at the act of mourning as a form of collective care. The stylised ritual shot mimics the exalted acts we perform as 'culture' and for 'community'. In this instance, the work speaks to a narrative of textured identity and stylised ritual, gendered performativity and emotional memory.

The linger of death and mourning thematically take us into the familial laws of governance, with a sense of familial rootedness that transcends place, generation, language and identity as mothers, sisters and daughters are socialised to perform in particular ways. How we grieve in between the code-switching liturgy of community and spiritual comfort. The work moves us towards connecting the sacred with the secular. Memorialising the death of culture, connection, community and gendered duty.



Cooks River, 760 – 860nm

2021

Infrared photograph, dye sublimation print on aluminium panel

Shot in Infrared, *Cooks River, 760 – 860nm* focuses on a light source beyond the frame, capturing an image of the world outside of human perception. Natural landscape elements contrast constructed ones, the remnant river a reflection of alternate possibilities. Existing beyond the visible light spectrum, infrared light from the setting sun is reflected by chlorophyll in plant foliage rendering it ghostly white and absorbed into shadow by the body of water and its concrete tomb.

Referencing sublime landscapes with their painterly visions of an industrial hell, the photograph in these images is mirrored Rorschach-like, lurid colour set against the monochrome to create alternate visions of this unearthly scene. *Cooks River, 760 – 860nm* reflects upon on the nature of reality and the human ideologies that have led to this present moment. It considers changes in the relationship between spirituality and the natural world, the death of rivers, and the existential divide we have forged between ourselves and a living cosmos.



...And Since Then I Didn't Grow Anything There

2021

Video installation

Visceral hands mark time, illuminating the surface of the soil from my father's garden. Illusions created by the projection cause dirt granules to sparkle and shift, altering our perception of the seen and unseen.

The work draws from a personal story told by my father about a pair of diamond earrings and a ring that were designed by my parents and gifted to me on my 18th birthday in 2012. It follows the events of the jewelry being misplaced and lost and the labor involved in trying to find them. One year later my father miraculously spotted the ring whilst he was turning the soil in his veggie patch. After concluding that the jewelry somehow ended up in the compost bin, the soil was sectioned off with the intention to find the earrings that remained lost. Together with my family we partially sifted the soil in the years that followed without any luck of finding the earrings.

The event felt too uncanny and coincidental, and instead felt like a divine encounter that anchored us in our sense of belief and faith. Despite the soil not yielding fruit, the event that followed nurtured us spiritually, and provided a different kind of sustenance, giving us a sense of hope and meaning.



The Gift of Art, Self Portrait, after Francesco Del Cossa

2021

Industrial enamel paint, gold liner, gold leaf, rhinestones, glitter on canvas

This painting is inspired by Del Cossa's *Annunciation* and is both serious and playful at the same time. It is serious in my treatment of and respect for Del Cossa's original, and playful through the combination of images which make up the composition. Annunciation - it is such a serious and loaded word; yet the notion of conveying an important message from the spiritual domain to the temporal is central to many faiths. As the artist, in many respects, an 'outsider' to Christian tradition, I have depicted myself reacting to the news from the Archangel Gabriel, that God has granted me the gift of art, along with all the skills, joys, pains, vulnerabilities and self-doubts that it entails. God is lurking in the background, clearly enjoying this potential dilemma He has thrown at me. There are several Turkic 'djinnns' too, the bogey-men of my childhood, also keenly observing the dramatic events unfolding before the mortal, possibly planning his success or potentially plotting his downfall.



Sensing Comes Before Feeling

2021

Photographic print, metal, fabric, wood, acrylic paint

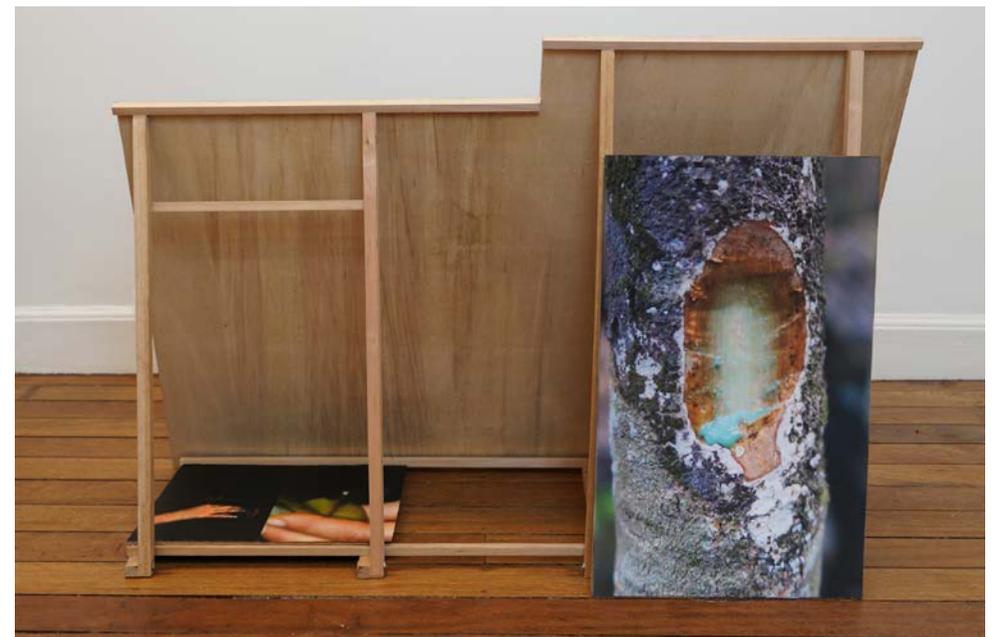
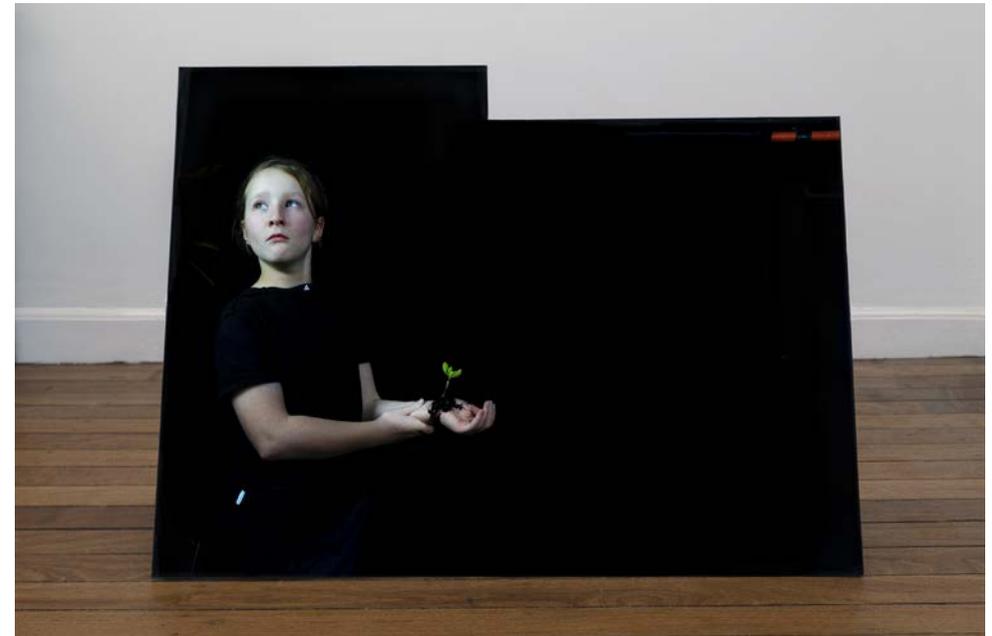
There's a type of tree in New Caledonia able to thrive on rocky soil with toxic levels of nickel. It absorbs the nickel into its body, expressed in its sap, latex and seeds. When it is cut, the nickel-green hued latex is evident. These unique and remote mineral-absorbing plants offer hope for restituting post-mined wastelands; a plant-led healing of a human landscape.

There's a girl who worries about her future on this damaged planet and wants to look after plants and animals when she is older, while hoping something will change.

We used to teach ourselves that there were three 'kingdoms'; animal, mineral, vegetable, but there is only one.

This work is part of a wider storytelling of bodies and circulation, of wounds and healing, systems of knowledge and beliefs, of divisions and conjunctions, of human and post-human.

It reflects materially on the strategic divisions and conjunctions used historically in Western European triptychs.



Hercules

2021

Archival pigment print

The whole universe is said to be operating within the invisible womb of the divine mother, she is the womb of all creatures.

I made Hercules in reflection of the recent draconian *'Texas Heartbeat Act'* a legislature that bans abortion after the detection of a heartbeat, this law was enacted September 1, 2021. This direction seems archaic in comparison to the monumental gains made over the past several decades in securing women's right to abortion, with nearly 50 countries liberalizing their abortion laws.

The rights of women and girls to make autonomous decisions about their own bodies and reproductive functions is at the core of their basic human rights.

A woman's sovereignty over her womb is sacred and a vital aspect in the evolution of human consciousness and a kinder, gentler universe.

To quote American poet and essayist Adrienne Rich *"We need to imagine a world in which every woman is the presiding genius of her own body. In such a world women will truly create new life, bringing forth not only children (if and as we choose) but the visions, and the thinking necessary to sustain, console, and alter human existence - a new relationship to the universe."*



“Ozi, Ozi, Ozi, Fuc’N, Oi Oi Oi!”

2021

Mixed media on canvas

This image arises out of an Australian terrorist attack on two Mosques in Christchurch NZ, March 15 2019. A dark subculture that remains under acknowledged within the Australian community. This work explores implications of media manipulation, social media generated cultural bubbles, notions of what truth is or could be and the alternate realities within contemporary popular culture. This iconic image is a composite of fascist, racist, iconography, fuelled by extremist media (IE the ammo magazine loaded is with hate) and challenges notions of our colonial white Australia policy (the rifle stock is emblazoned, with White Australia racism from 1901). Understanding Australian based terrorism remains an under explored notion of who we are within an Australian culture, a culture that is yet to come to terms with the catastrophe of colonialism & religious intolerance.

The title “*Ozi, Ozi, Ozi, Fuc’N, Oi Oi Oi!*” asks us not to forget but to contemplate what makes for a truthful national portrait.

What now?

Do we just move on as the Pentecostal PM asks, clap our hands and speak in tongues?

How are islamic worshipers to now enter a place of worship?



The Road to Braidwood

2021

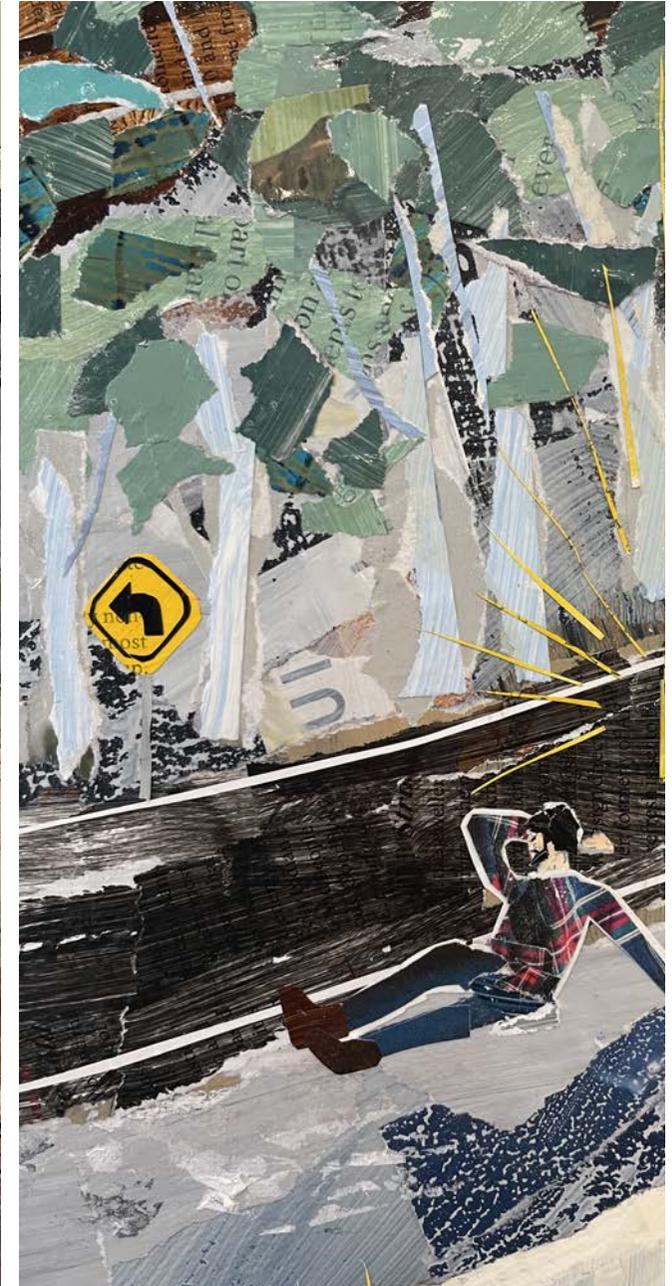
Collage on canvas

Just like Saul on the road to Damascus, I had an epiphanous connection to my faith on the road to Braidwood.

All through my life I have spoken to someone in times of thanks and in times of need. I always thought it was to my alter ego or my id, a place I didn't have direct access to. Just some nebulous thing, that was always with me.

On this day on the road to Braidwood, I realised that the god everyone speaks to is this same being I speak with. I just didn't realise I shared it. In fact, I was kind of pissed off that I had to share my god.

This work charts our progress to heaven. In this work, the journey begins with me, bottom left, with a flash of realisation that my faith is a shared one. There's the long path that lies ahead for me to reconcile that faith with my own beliefs. It's a difficult, dangerous path. It's a road we have to navigate largely on our own, guided by our own faith.



'Strayan Idols: The Holy Trinity

2021

Digital collage on paper

These works are part of an ongoing series exploring the 'Strayan psyche. Intentionally crude, they pay homage to memes and the origin location of the comments used in the work, harvested from social media platforms.

Online, devotees whip themselves into a frenzy in defence or support of their idols. It provides an interesting insight into the minds of those who deify these men. Worshipping them for their actions, their comments form the halos.

Ned Kelly is openly praised for killing policemen. His image is still widely used and sold on paraphernalia, an exemplar of antiestablishment heroism.

'Breaker' Morant is known more for the supposed injustice he suffered at the hands of the British legal trial than the crimes that resulted in his execution. One can draw parallels with the Ben Roberts-Smith VC, MG court case saga still ongoing now.

Whilst some deny the possibility that Roberts-Smith could commit war crimes others justify, and perhaps more disturbingly, hope that he committed the atrocities he stands accused of.

It is little wonder 'Strayans struggle to process that Australian Special Forces soldiers may have committed war crimes in Afghanistan when historically criminals and murderers in are revered with such religious zeal.



Manta Miilmiilpa - Sacred Earth

2021

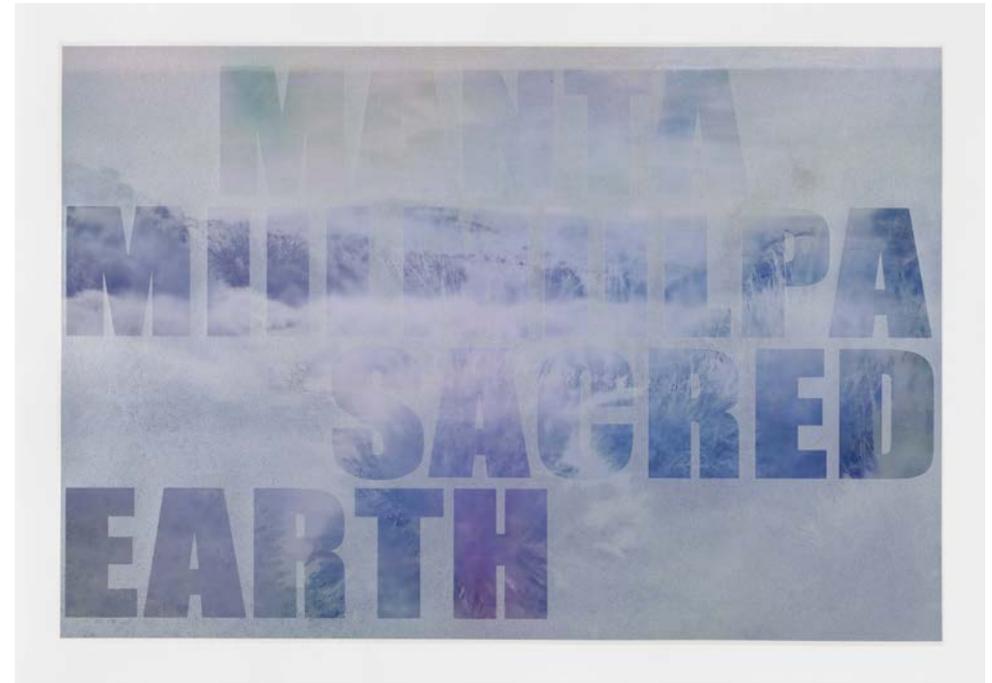
C-type print of UV photogram with pearlescent alterations

From the earth we come, to the earth we return. My culture allows me to connect deeply with the sacredness of the earth, and see the presence of our ancestors in every aspect of life. This connection to Tjukurpa, the energy that connects us all and permeates every aspect of being, is rarely truly felt by those who don't live in the sacredness of the earth anymore.

This 'landscape photograph' is informed by techniques used by the first European explorers that travelled into the heart of our country, capturing glass plate photographs to categorise our land to fit their minds. They collected depictions of country, killing it in the process. They failed to see the true presence of our land, its true sacredness.

I am challenging this gaze by exposing UV-sensitive paint with large contact negatives within the landscape. Exposing my prints under the light of the sun, the landscape becomes the storyteller, the ancestors that are still part of the landscape start speaking, and Tjukurpa becomes momentarily tangible.

My artwork changes depending on which angle it is observed from, reflecting the viewer. An ever-changing presence it offers glimpses of a truth we all need to remember: "Manta Miil-miilpa, Sacred Earth".



Roadside Memorial

2021

Photographic print

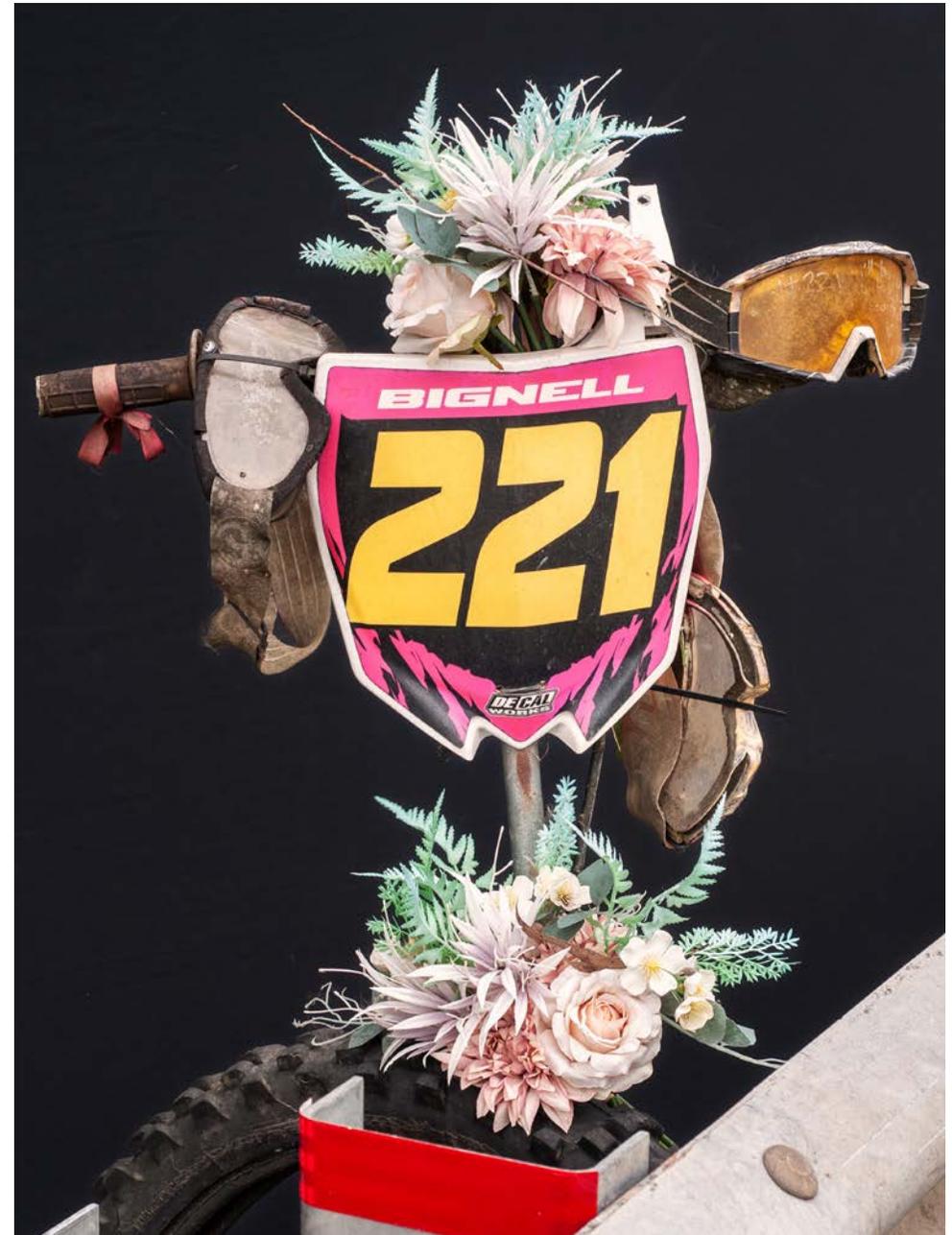
Is the tradition of roadside memorials in Australian culture succeeding traditional commemorative rituals?

Is there a shift in the culture of mourning and afterlife beliefs?

Roadside memorials mark places of death. The place transforms from an ordinary space to a place that has special or sacred meaning. Marked with a memorial, the place becomes a symbol of the desire to continue the bond with the departed after death and creates a place for this to occur.

Roadside memorials can assist in the process of bereavement, making death and grief visible and public. They are cultural manifestations of grief, mourning, and memorialisation that occur at the intersection of public and private space. They represent a point of spatial occupation and a personalised site of memory for those who knew the victim. Roadside memorials stand out because they are not established at the normally prescribed places commemorating death such as a church, funeral home or cemetery.

Spontaneous memorials could indicate a desire to reconstruct new forms of ritualised mourning, they suggest that the traditional mourning rituals of conventional religion are inadequate for a traumatic death.



“When the world pushes you to your knees, you’re in the perfect position to pray.”

2021

Installation

Bashiqa is an Iraqi town in northeast Mosul, Bashiqa’s residents are Kurdish, Yazidi, Shabak, Assyrian Christian, and Arab Muslim. In June 2014, ISIS took over the town. November 2016, Kurdish forces liberated Bashiqa from ISIS control. I found it a subsequent ghost town in pieces, filled with waste and destroyed weapons. Mosque, temple, church were all desecrated.

The burnt remains of Bashiqa Church revealed a number of light-boxes strewn in different places, each held printed paintings of Jesus Christ, before and after, Crucifixion – the twelve stages of the Cross. The ruined iconography reflected the torn condition of the church, its town and most importantly, its people. I found civilian clothing for women and children, belonging to those perhaps murdered by ISIS. It was an extremely heartbreaking moment for me – a Kurdish refugee whose people have endured ethnic violence and religious persecution for centuries.

Ornately held in gold gild frames, these images allude to the romanticisation of faith in the Western historical imagination, my photographs – a documentary medium – challenging the difference between the doctoring of historical record and eyewitness account.

This work explores the destruction and transience faced by displaced communities globally and the built (religious) environments they are forced to leave.



Wonnarua

2020

Video

Wonnarua is a contemplative moving image installation work that aims to provoke discussion around themes of Indigenous ways of living in juxtaposition with western settler-state system's unsustainable, damaging ways of using stolen lands.

The video diptych contrasts living portraits of five Aboriginal people from the Wonnarua Nation with drone shots of the vast Muswellbrook coal mines, which are situated in the heart of the Wonnarua Nation.

The frame in which the video work sits is an 1820's antique Victorian era influenced design which correlates with the exact time period that European settlers first reached Muswellbrook, Wonnarua Country. The symbolic frame also metaphorically acknowledges the paradox of living in and between the two worlds and addresses a subtle hypocrisy; the act of critiquing Western systems although at the same time living and breathing them.

The moving image work is a plea for profound enquiry into how Country is currently being managed, and alludes the simple remedy is to return to traditional First Nation's sustainable practices for caring for Country.



“Qadarullah” (Divine decree)

2021

Mix yarn with hand manual tufting

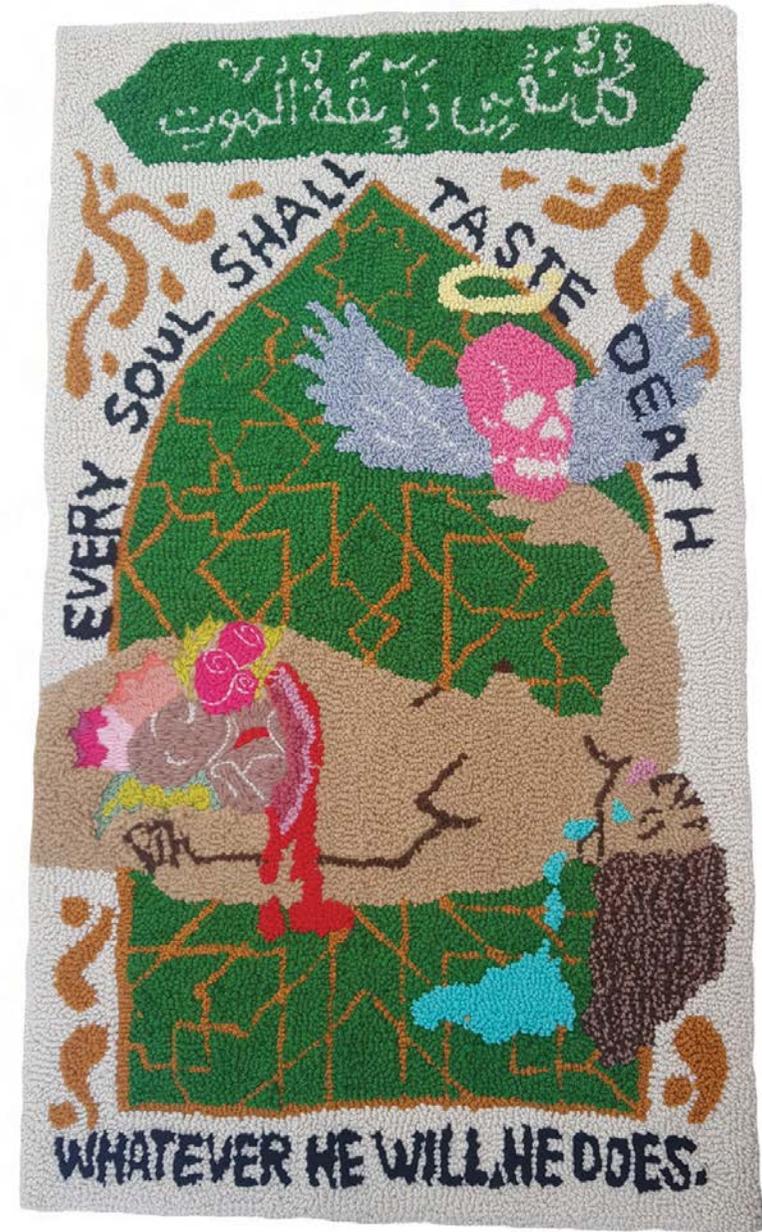
“Qaddara Allahu wa ma sha’a fa’ala (Allah has decreed and whatever he wills, He does.) (Abu Hurairah)

“Kullu nafsin zaa’iqatul maut” (Every soul shall taste death.) (The Qur’an 3:185)

When I was pregnant, my biggest dream was to give birth naturally, I tried to prepare for a natural birth but fate happened otherwise. An emergency caesarean was the only way. I was very upset with myself, the hospital and my husband. Five days before I gave birth I got news my mother had passed away, that stressed me out, we hadn’t met in person for a year. I went through contraction pain for three days at home, I couldn’t sleep, therefore, I didn’t have the energy to push.

It took a long time for me to heal and accept what had happened. I try to understand the “Qadarullah” (Divine decree) and surrender to God. I believe everything was planned by Him.

The form of Sajdah (prayer mat) that we (Muslims) use for Sujood (Prostration), my perception is “Surrender”, that also is the reason why I use yarn material. The symbol of a skull with wings is my mother. The naked woman and the baby in c-section condition is me. In fact, the human was born and resurrected naked in the afterlife.



You may think we have forgotten, that we're naive, I'll Understand

2021

HD video installation

Sam Doctor's art practice can be seen as an ongoing confrontation between humankind and the environment, highlighting the fragility of mankind in the face of natural forces, exposing the Faustian side of human nature and our will to contain what cannot be contained. His practice incorporates a range of artistic strategies: video, sculpture, photography and performance.

Doctor also regularly collaborates with musical composers to construct soundscapes that either complement or feature as integral parts of his work.



First Communion- Altar

2021

Wax, pigment, wood, beads

First Communion is an important ceremony for every child, It is when the sacrament of the Eucharist is received, transforming bread (hostia)and wine; symbols that refer to the body and blood of Christ. As the word indicates communion comes from Latin “communion” and it means “participation in common”.

I was born in Mexico City and at the age of 10 received my First Communion, I got ready a few months earlier going to the church every Saturday to receive the catechism by a priest where I studied the fundamental aspects of faith in the Catholic Church.

First communion is an altar, representing my first approach to faith and hope, an elevation consecrated to religious worship, and it is the spiritual revelation of a state of faith that I lived as a child.

The decoration of my work represents with excess of symbols, elements of my First Communion The hanging pearls and flowers symbolise the trust placed in the virgin Maria and her protection. The white colour of 85 wax candles and 50kg of wax alludes to purity, to innocence and faith.



Mother & Bother, from the series *Edge Of The Garden*

2020

Photographic installation

These night visions emerge as apparitions found at the edges of the garden, between dusk and dawn, as though of an alternate dream world. During the period of Covid isolation, I spent several months making wearable sculptures and photographing members of my family on the property I grew up on, on Wonnarua Country. More than simply adornment or even protection, each sculpture is an apparatus, designed to interact with the body. The wearables were produced from materials found on the property, including objects from my past such as old sportswear, dance costumes, curtains, carpets, knives and flowers.

Edge of the garden both un-earths a family history, at the same time re-earthing that history to my familial (and familiar) environment anew. A tablecloth becomes a gown and a mirror a torch. The resulting imagery lives in the realm of the uncanny, existing between places and times; between vision and blindness, real and imagined, unease and rest. Like animals in headlights, or indeed backyard nocturnal critters exposed by torchlight, my family are re-posed as strange spirits of the unconscious, shape shifters in transition, jewels in the night.



Homo Suburbensis

2020

HD video

'Homo Sub-ur-bi-en-sis' (2020) follows a single figure who undertakes a series of actions in what ultimately becomes a transcendence of one's physical state of being. The capacity for one's body to be extended beyond its everyday function is a central theme of the work, challenging both the self and the intended design of one's immediate environment. The video sequence alternates between mundane activities and heightened psychological experiences, which are linked together by the figure undertaking an ultramarathon, one of the most extreme disciplined practices in contemporary society. The performed actions highlight the ritualistic nature of these common activities, where running in particular is enacted with an energy akin to religious vehemence. Initially, the various exercises are performed and defined sep-a-rate-ly but soon merge into a series of cate-nat-ed hybrid movements. The increasingly related behaviours intensify and ultimately culminate in the final scene, in which the figure attains a higher state of being in what becomes a form of spiritual transcendence.



Cicatrix (All that was taken, all that remains)

2019

Giclee prints, Performance Documentation

For *Cicatrix* (2019), 147 incisions were made in the skin of the artist's back, in a ritual working of 147 minutes duration. 147 is the number of Aboriginal people who have lost their lives while in police custody in Australia over the last decade.

Scarification is foundational component of the ceremonial languages of many Aboriginal peoples on the Australian continent. Codified markings on the body might render various things about an individual legible- such as their marital and kinship ties, or their status as an initiated person. Scarification is also widely utilised in mourning practices: ritual breaching of the skin may be performed to honour the dead, as well as to demarcate a living body in state of grief. Scarification remains an extant religious practice in remote parts of Australia, however colonisation and cultural repression has all but eradicated the practice in the South-east.

In this work, Norman stages a personal reclamation of the ancestral mourning rights they have been divested of as a Wiradjuri person. *Cicatrix* invites a consideration of the body as a vessel of complex grief, and the wound as a technology of transmutation.



Trigon

2021

Mirror, stained glass, rope, pine bark, high gloss enamel

This work recalls the symbology of the innate human pursuit to represent the spiritual sublime, to manifest personal moments of divine ascension into something greater than the sole being.

The retelling of these moments, that are life changing to the individual, germinate the roots of religion. These moments of truth reach beyond physical existence and, particularly in western religions, are often depicted as an elevation beyond one's self and beyond nature, thus reflecting a collective self.

The triangular arch and three columns reference religious geometry in the architecture of places of worship, as well as the 'trinity' which finds itself in various representations of the relationship between humans, nature and the divine.



Still Life in the Year of Fear

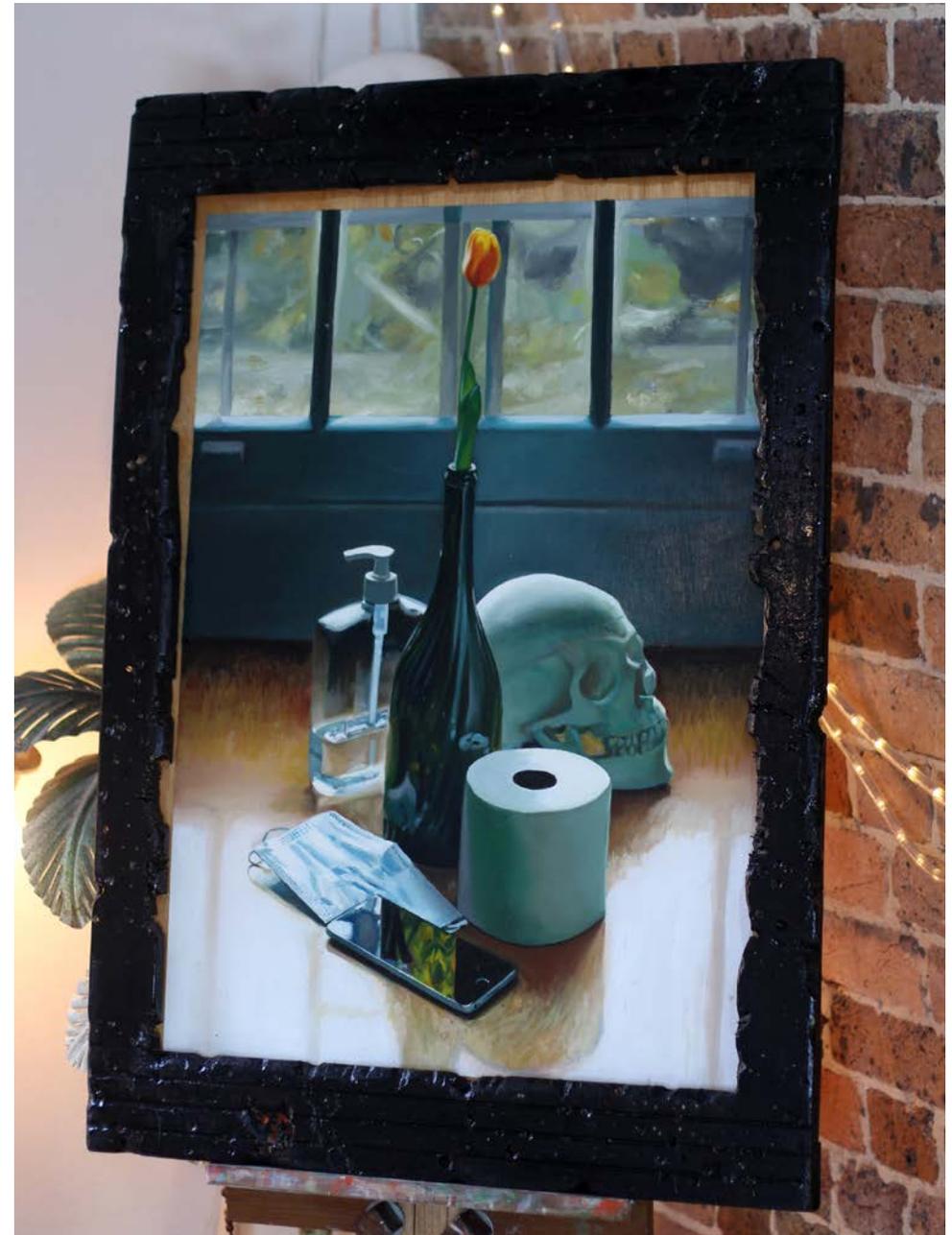
2021

Oil on Marine Ply

Our mortality is something we often prefer not to dwell on.

In the last couple years, it's been front of mind for many people when meditating on an event that's become centre stage in our lives. This still life, attempted in the Dutch Still Life and Vanitas tradition that is a part of my ancestral heritage, shows the paraphernalia intrinsic to the COVID experience. My aim was to show that even amidst all the fear and disruption caused by these unfolding events, there's always something beautiful in the world to appreciate and life still finds a way.

I find that idea hopeful and uplifting.



Peanut on an Escalator

2021

Steel, motor, electronics, baked peanut, polylactic acid bioplastic (PLA)

Peanut on an Escalator is inspired by the scene I witnessed of a Twisitie tumbling at the top of an escalator in a Westfield mall around 2016. The sight had allegorical and metaphorical humour to me. I thought of Titan's Sisyphus and a dung beetle's workday week. I enjoy the purpose/purposeless relationship between the peanut and the 'escalator' here - neither hold meaning without the other - they live for, and because of their relationship.



Kulama

2021

Locally sourced earth pigments

“I like painting for culture way – Kulama – that means painting culture. We teach culture. Kulama also mean yam – they eat that one, they get it from the ground and eat it. Kulama is ceremony where they yoi [dance].”

“I paint Japarra [moon], Kulama and Japalinga [stars].”

Timothy has dedicated his art career to painting designs that represent Kulama. Kulama is a Tiwi coming of age ceremony which coincides with the harvest of wild yam. It is performed late in wet season when a ring appears around Japarra (the moon). The circles in his work symbolize the moon, yam and ritual circles of the Kulama ceremony, the “cross” reflects his spiritual life, the pwanga (dots) depict the japalinga (stars).

Timothy’s Kulama designs embody the visual language of the wulimawi (old people) and are part of a living culture that did not have written text prior to colonisation. One of the great successes of Timothy’s artwork is its ability to bring together the old and new in a way that celebrates long-standing cultural designs and symbols as contemporary artwork and a representation of his own spirituality.

“I will take a painting to heaven so my mother will recognise me.” – Timothy Cook



It's Very Beautiful Over There

2016-2019

Lenticular Photograph

This work is part of a larger series exploring experimental approaches of photography to evoke 'immaterial' subjects such as life after death. Engaging in the mystery of the afterlife, *It's very beautiful over there* references the famous last words spoken by American inventor Thomas Edison to his wife, when he emerged briefly from a coma just prior to his death.



Babuskarism: Grandmothers Started the Revolution

2021

Performance documentation, photographic prints

What happens when you can't attend the Marches? When you're too young to voice, or too old to walk. What is the homebound songs of protest? A Greek religious red egg (symbolising rebirth) is passed down through a generational line of Greek immigrant woman - mirroring bird feeding, the death mouth, and a kiss. The eggs create a shape for song, the passing of knowledge through oral traditions, moving beyond audibility, linear time, and words. From the strength of grandmothers, all the women in the work have been impacted by either poverty, domestic violence, or racism and together re-frame what protest is across different forms of access, language, belief, and age. Babuskarism is a way of marking our epoch through elderhood across species, grandmother practices and the coming to terms with ageing in contemporary life. The artist documents intergenerational poetics and explores ways to memorialize the present in joyful and poetic modes where her own grandmother becomes an ecomonument. A cultural depletion occurs when other voices are left out, not just human female voices but stories, phenomena, dreams, beliefs, failures. These other types of knowing's are the Grandmothers. The work moves beyond the personal matrilineal human to grandmother as a larger dimension.



LIST OF FINALISTS

Abdullah M. I. Syed	Glenn Morgan	Penelope Cain
Akil Ahamat	Jacki Fewtrell Gobert	Petrina Hicks
Amanda Jane Reynolds	Jacky Cheng	Phillip George
Amber Hammad	Jane Giblin	Ray Monde
Andrea Wilson	Jane Theau, Sayd Abdali, Nasaphah Nasaphah	Rob Douma
Asa Letourneau	Jodie Whalen	Robert Fielding
Belem Lett	JD Reforma	Ronnie Grammatica
Braddon Snape	Kate O'Boyle	Rushdi Anwar
Chidzey	Katy B Plummer	Ryan Andrew Lee
Christopher Logemann	Keiran Gordon	Sakinah Alatas
Damian Dillon	Khaled Sabsabi	Sam Doctor
Daniel Brinsmead	Khashayar Salmanzadeh	Sergio Plata
David Charles Collins	Kristone Capistrano	Shan Turner-Carroll
David McKay	Laresa Kosloff	Shaun Gladwell
Ella Whateley	Loribelle Spirovski	SJ Norman
Elyas Alavi	Lucy Pulvers	Szymon Dorabialski
Emily Parsons-Lord	Margarita Sampson	The Pyper
Emma Hodges	Marian Abboud	Tim Andrew
Eugenia Lim	Michaela Gleave	Timothy Cook
Fernando do Campo	Monica Rani Rudhar	Tina Dale Fiveash
Fiona Currey-Billyard	Murat Urlali	Tina Stefanou
Gaspare Moscone		

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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