

Artist Statements

Ace Salama & A Ray - Soil: The State of Play in 2022

Food is divine, but without fertile topsoil, the situation could indeed become deadly for us and our future ancestors. This year the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation released a report which confirmed that if we continue with "business as usual" in our food systems practices, by 2050, 90 percent of all soils are set to be degraded. We rely on soils for 95 percent of the food we consume. Without change, degrading soils will put our ecosystems, our climate and food security in jeopardy. Thankfully, in our time there is a huge global movement to "save soil" from all sectors, including the world's First Peoples leading the way to sustainable land and farming practices, and soil regeneration.

For more information: <https://www.fao.org/fao-stories/article/en/c/1599222/>

(We provide a reference to the UN Agency as a means of seeking further information about this topic, it does not imply any endorsement by the UN of this artwork. It is also a starting point on this topic, there are many local sustainability groups who are working on soil regeneration & organic food projects in your own neighbourhood, so we encourage everyone to join one and get your hands dirty. Every effort no matter how big or small helps.)

Magdalena Bors - "Peaks and Valley" and "Castle on the Hill"

Peaks and Valley and *Castle on the Hill* are two images from the *Homelands* series. In each image, a dark-clad female protagonist stands at a kitchen table; one icing a cake, the other making a cup of tea. In a moment of distraction or daydreaming, a fantasy scene is conjured underneath the table, related to the activity taking place above. Aesthetically, these beige dining spaces the women inhabit couldn't be further from the fantasy landscapes manifested. Despite the apparent desire of the women to create an escape, something closer to nature, something "other", the glowing sugary landscapes ultimately emanate the excess, indulgence and overconsumption of their modern first-world, middle class lives.

Café Lab - "For the Restofus"

This piece is made from a miniscule amount of the 7.6 million tonnes of food waste and 1.9 million tonnes of food packaging waste that is produced in Australia every year with some guest appearances from food system heroes - mushrooms, kombucha and cold chain storage. Waste may be a curse, but it may also be a gift. Waste dies, and then it comes alive again. Its the circular economy, stupid.

Artists Helen Addison-Smith, Megan Edwards-Brown, Siobhan Jensen-Farrell, Craig MacDonald, Jean Darling, Honey fingers, Lichen Kelp, Bronek Kozka, Shane Hulbert.

Dr. Julie Joy Clarke - "Ontogenesis"

During an arts residency at the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery at St. Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne in 2019, I began a project called 'Seeds, Cells, and Pods'. My project related to armouring, protection, waste, recuperation, and recycling and involved collecting organic materials that I could draw or refigure. I was re-reading Gaston Bachelard's 'The Poetics of Space'. He explained that J. B. Robinet an eighteenth-century French naturalist believed 'everything that has form has a shell ontogenesis, and life's principal effort is to make shells' (Bachelard, 1969:112).

Robinet also believed that the diversity of shells was nature's way of teaching herself how to construct the human body. An imaginative notion, which inspired me to draw a fossilized shell with avocado seeds in the shell's cavity. Since seeds like cells have the potential for life. I made the drawing over a 'milk' wash made by crushing an avocado seed. I had discovered quite by chance when cutting an avocado in half that severing the seed made it ooze. My research revealed that avocado seeds are edible. They are beneficial in small amounts; however, they are toxic if too much is consumed. They are generally discarded after the soft green; interior of the fruit is eaten. In some countries the 'milk' of the seeds is used as a dye for clothing as well as foodstuffs. It undergoes a colour change when it oxidises. The colours darken and the seed hardens. This is what exposure to the world will do. No longer protected from the elements it braces itself. It has no choice but to change.

Louise Feneley - "The Committee for Global and Social Warming"

Simple fare, clean food, folks connecting together again, each with their different characteristics, ideals and personalities...What would be discussed? Would current concerns be uppermost?

Weather stories? Health? The chemicalization of food, air and water? Geo-engineering? What about a possible limited availability of food, deeply affecting our sense of 'security'?

Or would simple & edifying stories be told? Songs sung? Would laughter freely ring out?

"Earth Democracy connects people in circles of care, cooperation, and compassion instead of dividing them through competition and conflict, fear and hatred." Vandana Shiva

PS...Diverse characters (symbolized in the painting by the various plates of food) coming together in communication around a table seems the perfect antidote to division and fear. Each of these plates of food, and the central piece, have a story attached, each have their own individual title, but that'll have to wait for another time.

Deborah Kelly - “Beastliness & Empress”

Deborah Kelly is a Sydney-based artist who works across disciplinary and geographical boundaries to produce artworks which encompass collage, installation, event, and performance. Her works have been shown around Australia, and in the Biennales of Singapore, Sydney, Thessaloniki, TarraWarra, Venice, and at the tenth Asia Pacific Triennial in Brisbane (2021-2022). Her projects are often collaborative and concerned with lineages of representation, politics and history in public exchange, and practices of collectivity on small and large scale, from epic to intimate, both fleeting and durational. She is currently founding a queer science fiction climate change religion: CREATION.

Lichen Kelp – “Portable Seaweed Library”

‘This is the first edition of the Portable Seaweed Library. It was originally dreamt up as a solo project for an electric vehicle 4WD conversion to drive myself and my seaweed book collection to remote beaches in a sustainable way. Once at the destination the library would unfold and include an extra seat to invite quiet co-contemplation, conversations, and shared learning. It was a way to study my research topic in situ, with an ocean view, sand between my toes and a rack of seaweeds drying next to me as I read. I imagined one in ten beach goers would stop and ask me what it was all about, drawn in by the table of books and inviting sun umbrella and empty chair. One in twenty might join me for a quiet read or read to me or share a seaweed story. In covid times and without the costly electric vehicle funds at my disposal, this version remains a dream for now which is also fine because the first edition has evolved and adapted as a result. The bike allows me to make the project happen more quickly, more cost effectively and even more sustainably. I may not travel as far for the moment, but ideas from other projects such as the [Algalsphere](#) have flowed through, such as the value of bringing the ocean into an urban realm, adapting to post travel times and the benefits of sharing knowledge and dreaming in a host of localised settings. The seaweed and the books provide a connecting conversation starter for shared stories that often resonate with the deeply personal and ecopolitical.

It is a calm call for action - to arm ourselves with knowledge; to continue making personal connections, and to form collectives - amongst authors, artists, marine biologists, and the public, so that once enough people have removed their eco-blinders when it comes to marine algae we are mobilised for positive environmental change.

Hertha Kluge-Pott- “Wings of Kelp-page 4”

‘In her depiction of the Australian landscape Hertha Kluge-Pott adds a new vocabulary of rough, gestural marks to define its ancient essence... Kluge-Pott’s response to this landscape is primitive, evoking the raw power of its wild geology, winds and tidal power. Her studies of the local plants, beetles and ants that are found in this sparse landscape dwell on their strange prehistoric forms. It is the specificity of these studies, observed over years, which gives these prints their mysterious grandeur. One senses the immediacy of the artist’s response, the drypoint tool marking the plate irrevocably.

Although the subject is Australian, the manner of its representation retains the legacy of her training. The raw energy of German Expressionist prints is now harnessed into a new form which confronts urgency with ancient, timeless nature. It is this unique response to the Australian landscape that sets Kluge-Pott's prints apart from that of her contemporaries.' - Excerpt from the Preface Hertha Kluge Pott: Printmaker, Roger Butler, Senior Curator of Australian Prints and Drawings, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Jenny McCracken – “On Our plate: Ocean”

For many Australians the rich blue of the willow pattern design holds a distinct place in memory as a decorative border to family gatherings. Beginning for the artist at her great grandparents table, this pattern extended through time, framing the significant celebrations of every generation till now. So personally, it carries the complex emotional weight familial experience; of nurturing and support, expectations, respect, and responsibility, all tempered by those deeper currents of unmentionable emotional discords all families experience. That which cannot be mentioned in polite company, or so-called civilised conversation. In broader terms the modern willow pattern design is the embodiment of a complex history which includes colonial cultural appropriation, the expansion of industrial empire and the nostalgic talismans of the 'old country'. Symbolic of inheritance, both physical and emotional. All of which leads to contemplating the probable futures we are creating, the devastating outcomes of continued extractive colonisation of almost all of our natural environments, and to imagine how it might be possible to bring to the table a selection of painful, destructive disruptive practices for healing discussion.

Ian Paradine - “Eating our way to extinction II - Deep into the woods”

I was re-working this piece in the studio, when at the end of the day I sat down to watch a climate emergency documentary. The first five minutes had me by the heart...and throat.

These beautiful words opened the film's voiceover by Kate Winslet.

“Our earth She is ever in flow and motion. A dynamic symphony of forces all working together, breathing life into the four corners of the world. And for millennia, cultures the world over have called her their mother.”

After a lovely wild animal montage, the director Otto Brockway speaks.

“We live on an incredibly beautiful planet. A home that we will hopefully pass on to generations to come. But as years go by, it's becoming increasingly hard to imagine what kind of a world we're leaving behind us. We've spent the last four years travelling around the world filming the stark reality that people now face from the threat of ecological collapse. It's now become very clear to us that there's one thing driving the destruction of our ecosystems faster than anything else. Let us show you how this very same thing might just also be our salvation.”

The film, "Eating Our Way to Extinction", is now streaming for free on YouTube.

My work is a homage to, & in sync with the themes...some of the darker ones, and the messages of this film.

Schweet if you can stand with it for a while...following and joining the dots between the faces, shapes, the materials, and emotions.

**Robyn Rich – "Peas Carrots and Celery",
"Cabbage Cauliflower and Onions"
"Still Life With Egg #2"
"Plastics"**

Robyn Rich is a Melbourne born artist with a love of oil painting and fabric sculpture. She has had many solo and group exhibitions around Australia and has work in both public and private collections.

Working in oils Robyn examines both the beauty and the emotion that comes with everyday life. She sees beauty in the small, the forgotten and the sometimes very mundane. Robyn is not only drawn to those objects we surround ourselves with, but fascinated with the way we relate to, and interact with them, the way they make us feel and the memories they evoke. Robyn also creates realistic sculptural representations of the vegetables she loves to grow in her garden, all made from fabric, threads, craft filling, wire, and paint.

Robyn is continually striving both in her personal life and her work to be as sustainable and respectful to our environment as possible, making sure to reduce, reuse and recycle in every way she can.



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