

Artist Statements

Annie Bolitho – *This is not normal: Self-Portrait 2020*

Eco-dye, needle felting and embroidery on discarded materials.

Northern NSW's Big Scrub rainforest, around 75,000 ha. at the time of colonization, was reduced to less than 1,000 ha, through logging and agriculture. The landmark Terania Creek blockade (1979) and advocacy led to preserving remnants of the old-growth forest as *Nightcap National Park*.

Fierce climate heating and mega-fires in 2019 shattered a previously held local reality, that the Terania action had preserved the rainforest intact forever.

The Climate Council's November 2019 report on climate change and escalating bushfire risk was titled *This is not normal*. I'd visited my old home at the time the mega-fires were burning. It was the perfect title for my response.

Climate Guardians Procession: REVOLT

Video 3 mins. Creative Producer: Tharshiv Suresh. Photography: Richard Hart, Julian Meehan, Tharshiv Suresh. Climate Guardians: Daniella Conser, Sophie Cubit-Jones, Pauline Galvin, Rosie Ganino, Deborah Hart, Nancy Lang, Bronwyn Plarre. Outreach Angels: Melissa Corbett, Gomathi Suresh, Brenda Tait. Plein Air Artist: Olga Dziemidowicz. Sound: Jahan Xanlü. The Federation Handbells are managed by Museums Victoria on behalf of Creative Victoria.

Inspired by Allana Beltran's graceful and haunting ***Weld Angel*** and based on the best available science, [Climate Guardians](#) use angel iconography to highlight the vital role of guardianship for all life and the precious natural resources that sustain it. Climate Guardians warn of the imminent threat of climate breakdown if human economies fail to transition to zero emissions while also drawing down legacy carbon at emergency speed and scale, before 2030.

Ringling Federation Handbells, Climate Guardians staged a Climate Emergency ***REVOLT*** procession through the heart of Melbourne's financial district during evening peak hour on Friday 24 February 2023.

Visiting the entrances of some of the world's largest fossil fuel companies and financiers, including JP Morgan, Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs, Credit Suisse, Bank of China, ANZ, Commonwealth Bank, Westpac, NAB and Macquarie Bank, as well as the Melbourne Club, the Angels exposed around \$140 billion in fossil fuel investments in 2022 alone from companies located in upper Collins Street, Melbourne, Australia.

It's clear that behind the elegance of these upper Collins Street facades lies a key political frontline of Australia's so-called 'Climate Wars'.

In its exploration of public performative protest, this film was specially commissioned for **REVOLT** with assistance from the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts and funding body, and the City of Yarra.

Melissa Corbett – “Greta the Great” 2023

As an artist, I really enjoy creating graphic narratives, the art of telling stories visually. When it was suggested to me to create a comic about climate activist Greta Thunberg for **REVOLT**, I ran with it!

The way I have conceptualized Greta's story is that of a lonely child whom society has labelled as "different", "weird" and "disabled". Through taking action on the climate crisis, which was causing her great personal distress, Greta found the power of her own voice, community, friendship, and happiness. She also inspired other young people to join the movement, many of whom had also struggled with isolation, depression, and anxiety before becoming activists. I think it's a beautiful and timeless story, one that I and many others I am sure can relate to. Greta is in a way the vehicle through which we can learn that by taking collective action on the crisis of our times we can launch ourselves out of the individualistic and materialistic paradigm we have been living in and into a new one based on ecological conservation and communities of care.

The final page and poster for “Greta The Great” is a homage to the many activists and scientists who have contributed to the environmental movement over the past decades. It also visually represents the 1978 poem by Dinos Christianopoulos, “They tried to bury us, they didn't know we were seeds,” which has been popularized by various social movements, particularly in Latin America.

Olga Dziemidowicz – *Sounding the alarm*

As a climate war artist at the frontlines of the Climate Guardians' **REVOLT** procession in Melbourne on 24 February 2023, I captured the event live in dynamic A3 sketches. Walking with the Angels as they played the Federation Handbells through the CBD, we passed the headquarters of major climate polluters, the sounds of the bells strongest near these companies.

The sketches aim to convey the tension and urgency of the event and the climate crisis, presented on a neutral background to highlight the contrast between the darkness and light of the Climate Guardians and their sounds.

Two large works on reclaimed cardboard offer a larger-scale representation of the procession, featuring graphite, charcoal, and pastel layers that create a complex and layered view of the city. The architecturally dynamic 3-point perspective speaks to the tense times we live in. By using reclaimed materials, the aim is to address the climate crisis and bear witness to what is happening.

The work engages with pressing social and environmental issues, aiming to inspire awareness, action, and positive change in an energetic and complex world.

Mark Edwards – *Untitled*, 2023

Through my drawings, I search for ways to incorporate people, land, countries, and places that reflect the concept and resonate with deeply personal, sensory, and emotive feelings that for me, create a deep and personal awareness of what is going on in the world and that which touches us all through "Climate Change". Responding to these issues my work portrays themes that are a direct result of a world in crisis. The planet is being depleted of natural resources and human intervention for wealth, political power and subsistence continues to create havoc on the environment at an exponential rate. My work highlights the continents as a global issue and these images are a silent protest, a "revolt".

Kate Gorrington-Smith – *How Do You Sleep at Night?* 2022

How do you sleep at night? an installation of 52 paper 'pillows', bears witness to the collective nightmare of climate change. The pillows, marred by marks created by the elements of earth, water, air and fire in conjunction with natural and man-made objects, evoke the collective fears and experiences of climate change that spill into our most vulnerable moments as we sleep. Whether through fire, drought, or flood, by 2022 every Australian's life has been touched by climate change. The question 'How do you sleep at night?' can be asked with genuine concern to those trying to tackle or survive the effects of this global crisis. Alternately it can be used to accuse those in power who still fail to act. There are 52 pillows, one for each week of the year, to represent the march of years in which governments have failed to act.

Simon Rigg – *Still Warm but You are Gone*

A life-size single children's mattress on an old cast iron bedframe, from the indentation in the centre of the mattress, suggests someone young has just risen. The surface of the mattress has also been made to imitate an earth or forest floor. There are leaves and small branches, even long elongated squashed. Lily-type flowers hanging draped on the sides. Old leather mattress buttons with broken threads also made from porcelain are spaced amongst the organic forms. The duality here represents both loss and grief, not just for the person who moments before was laying on this mattress, but a grief that expresses loss of the very landscape we are so connected to.

Our dreams appear in our personal space during sleep within the confines of a bed serving as our place of security. Within the real landscape spaces of country and ocean beaches, in our awakened state, these are also places of security and privacy where we openly dream. The environment we thought we all knew so well, from early years, is not the landscape we remember. Dreams may be forgotten as we open our eyes but in our wakened state, we have all watched the earth change. What happened to our stewardship, or does it only remain confined to our dreams?

School Strikes for Climate Wall

This work is the result of a collaboratively organized social engagement art project produced by local 'school strikers for climate' in collaboration with the City of Yarra's Climate Emergency Team, Melbourne Girls' College and CLIMARTE.

The global "School Strikes for Climate" movement began in earnest in October 2018 when high school students in Castlemaine organized a protest in response to Greta Thunberg's solo demonstrations outside of Sweden's Parliament. By mid-2019 millions of students, and grown-ups in their lives, had marched in thousands of events in around 125 countries.

We, the young, are deeply concerned about our future. [...] We are the voiceless future of humanity. We will no longer accept this injustice. [...] We finally need to treat the climate crisis as a crisis. It is the biggest threat in human history, and we will not accept the world's decision-makers' inaction that threatens our entire civilization. [...] Climate change is already happening. People did die, are dying and will die because of it, but we can and will stop this madness. [...] United we will rise until we see climate justice. We demand the world's decision-makers take responsibility and solve this crisis. You have failed us in the past. If you continue failing us in the future, we, the young people, will make change happen by ourselves. The youth of this world has started to move, and we will not rest again.

Excerpt from an Open Letter from the global coordination group
of the youth-led climate strike (15 March 2019)

This vibrant and dynamic wall gives us some idea of how some of our local secondary school-age students are feeling about growing up in a Climate Emergency. The project's prompting of deep and vital conversations with and between young people will help inform the City of Yarra's next Climate Emergency Plan. Images from Melbourne-based 'Fridays for Future' School Strikes are courtesy of [Julian Meehan](#).

Gomathi Suresh – *Ruptured Worlds 2022*

Material elements inherent in clay and their alchemical interactions within different kiln atmospheres are driven by the rise and fall of temperature cycles. They can never be fully controlled or predicted. My work investigates the metaphorical allusions of such serendipity to the ecological uncertainties in the current Climate Emergency triggered by human apathy and hierarchical greed. Tethered to a red thread, and teetering on a burnt log of wood, this vessel for all its lineage of material culture, barely standing, refuses to contain, is empty and bereft.

The surfaces of this dysfunctional, truncated, fragmentary form with its unfinished, torn rims become the canvas. The gestural, frenetic physicality of clay slips and glazes applied to its surface are parts of an intricate yet abstract visual vocabulary. It conveys notions of environmental precarity, animal death, charred landscapes, and erasure in the most vulnerable ecologies of the world.

Informed and influenced by my lived experiences of the climate crises, drought and death, it interrogates and investigates the anthropocentric imprints of the human hand and its direct links to the environmental death and displacement of life in the vast tracts of the marginalized fringes of society: a societal landscape plundered and laid to waste, covered up, smothered, denied of its very existence.

The Exceptional Network 2023

Part I: Painting, Paper, hemp thread, pigments, and Watercolours, 303 x 120 cm, 2023.

Part II: Interactive Map in development until REVOLT closes on 22 April 2023 at 5pm.

Collaborating Artists and CLIMARTE Creativists: Annie Bolitho, Esther Ellwood, Deborah Hart, Nancy Lang, Julian Meehan, Ros Prato, Sarah Metzner, and Gomathi Suresh.

This collective, collaborative work traces the genealogical roots of Climate Activism and its contribution to the extraordinary upswell of recent protests around the world. It is an experimental, imaginative counter-mapping project that drives the conversation towards an informed, deliberate examination of the contextual underpinning of climate activism.

Combining abstract painting on paper and cartographic research processes, ***The Exceptional Network*** reveals an entangled topography of organized Civil Disobedience and Direct-Action groups and tactics. It invites reinvention and reimagination, drawing its inspiration from the Exceptional Fig Tree at the Bowen Street entrance to Melbourne's RMIT campus.

The metaphorical allusions of arboreal roots, root nodules and shoots, to various Climate Activist organizations and groups at the grassroots, mimic a rhizomatic subterranean network. In this context, they represent an organic collective human consciousness, steeply on the rise.

There's an urgency and imperfection in the exposed hand-sewn cross stitches that create a tension of contrasting materials joining the frayed edges of the paper together. Equally, the immediacy of mark-making, pouring, and pooling of natural and water colour pigments are accentuated by the gestural use of found materials as the "non-brushes".



This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body, and the City of Yarra