

Artist Statements

Melissa Corbett – *Hotter Than Hell*

Hand Painted on paper

48 cm H x 180 cm W

2020

Hotter Than Hell is a hand-painted comic about the Black Summer Bushfire written and painted during the catastrophic fires that ravaged Eastern Australia during the summer of 2019-2020. Living in Spain meant that I was made an observer of events happening in my own country, but distance didn't make the unfolding ecological disaster any less gut-wrenching. In fact, it compelled me to create this comic about environmental destruction, international diplomatic failures and social movements as they arose during a time of acute climate chaos.

The comic works as a kind of documentary, weaving together a complicated web of actors and politics across time and space into a cohesive narrative about a historic event as it was taking place.

Personally, it has always been my dream to have *Hotter Than Hell* exhibited in Australia, where it undoubtedly belongs, and I am so honoured to have it displayed at CLIMARTE!

Rod Gray – *deluge*

Oil on linen

152 cm H x 112 cm W

2023

The title '*deluge*' is a nod to the biblical sense of a flood that supposedly punishes the wicked. In fact, today's climate change-induced deluges, respectively of fire and flood, continue to disproportionately impact poor and remote communities.

The painting *deluge* was my response to images I'd seen of a house burning in the floods of northern New South Wales. These communities had barely survived fires less than a year prior, so this image grew out of our burgeoning understanding of life in a devastatingly changing climate.

Many years ago I discovered that my great, great grandfather had built paddle steamers on the Murray River and that the wreck of one of them, burnt at midnight on a flooded Darling in a shearing wages dispute in 1894 is the largest wreck on the bed of the Darling River. It was called the P.S. Rodney. My name. Which is just plain weird. And so it's almost like I am buried in the Darling River the result of dispute and fire and flood. So you could say I take the generational abuse of the river quite personally and see the hubris of it all through that lens.

After visiting the Darling and Murray Rivers several times, making and exhibiting, I developed a sense of connection to that community and environment which has obsessed my painting and research for many years. That intensified considerably with the 2020-22 fires and floods.

Pam Kleemann-Passi – *Trolley Trouble in Troubled Times*

Archival Digital Print on Canson Rag Paper

84 cm H x 59 cm W

2022

The heavy cloud of climate change hovers over our streets and suburbs globally, threatening our lives, livelihoods and security. This image resulted from the *Trolley Trouble* Extinction Rebellion Action in Sydney Road, Brunswick in August 2022, intended to draw attention to pending food insecurity as a result of the climate crisis.

The flow of produce from the source to the shelf is fraught with issues that impact the climate, the economy, the producers and the purchasers on many levels: individually, communally, socially, economically, politically, mentally, psychologically and philosophically. Existing in a capitalist regime, we are all complicit.

Our global elected officials need to honour Mother Earth and act bravely to put climate and sustainability above politics and corporate greed. If we don't address the urgency of the climate situation immediately, the flow-on effect will be more intense and prolonged floods, fires and famines, leaving humanity literally lying on the ground dying, along with nearly every other animal and plant species... Are you willing to have that on your conscience?

Linda Knight – *Sudan 1956 (Anglo Egyptian Sudan)*

Linen and cotton, pencil on repurposed atlas

93 cm H x 86 cm W, A2

2023

Sudan 1956 (Anglo Egyptian Sudan) is a work from the series *Counter-mapping the British Empire*. The collection comprises stitched textile works and a repurposed world atlas, the kind that appears in libraries and homes. The works offer a counter-mapping of the approx. 200 places that were once colonised by the British in their expanse of the British Empire. Each work captures in time, the geo-political data of place as it gained independence from British rule, collectively offering an alternative reading of economic and military history.

The work critically examines the reasons for colonisation: the accumulation of Britain's vast wealth garnered from the extractive potential of each country. Britain occupied Anglo-Egyptian Sudan in 1882 to protect its access to the Suez Canal and its trade route to India, thus maintaining income streams for Britain to fuel and fund its industrial expansion via the British Empire.

The use of domestic textiles and the atlas highlight the contrasts of large-scale colonial violence: the access to resources such as cotton and paper, manufactured cheaply by colonised workers and which made their way into the homes of Britons, and the implication of British white women's involvement in colonisation.

Artist's additional comment: Although the meanings of *Sudan 1956 (Anglo-Egyptian Sudan)* relate to the *Counter-mapping the British Empire*, Linda Knight acknowledges the ongoing current situation in Sudan and South Sudan and the impacts of conflict on already vulnerable communities.

Jo Lane – *Listening Stones*

Installation

Gypsum cement molds, rocks and photograph diorama.

2023

This work is a metaphor for a community who hear, who hear the land and sea of this area.

Each 'stone' is made of gypsum rock and cast from the ear and nape of a community member who stepped up, took hours and hours of time out of their lives, to advocate a 'no' stance to a development that would have disastrously impacted on the coastal and marine environment of Westernport.

They are the ears of those that heard/hear our local environment and fought and long and detailed effort to save it, which they did, from the AGL liquid gas proposition for Western Port Bay and continue to advocate for this wonderful area. Local Mornington Peninsula individuals rallied in extraordinary ways and continue to rally to protect the place where we, the unique marine life, flora and fauna, live. The community effort was astonishing, and each person, from disparate backgrounds and circumstances, came together as they heard the environment needed help. While this is not unique to the Mornington Peninsula, our community is the only one that is ours ... our ears to our place.

Carolyn Lewens – *Submerge: the coming community*

Looped Animation with surround sound

Duration: 6 minutes

Animation: Aasmund Heimark; Sound Design: Tim Caitlin

2011

Taking a leap into the fantastic *Submerge* offers a biological gaze. Sunlight permeates through metaphors of photosynthesis and bioluminescence. Representations of 'living' things are contrived, evoking my fear for the potentiality of life in the flow and tangle of the global ocean. They speculate on what might evolve, challenging what it means to be alive. New forms, 'unstilled' through ghosting and ephemerality, 'thickened' through long exposure, 'unsettle' through real events.

Evolved from 'wild' beginnings as sun-prints, cameraless cyanotype-photograms, indexical traces of the presence and absence of light, peer into vital secrets of things placed on light-sensitive surfaces, creating shadows, suggesting potential. Architects and engineers used cyanotypes, one of the first photographic processes to copy their plans. 'Blueprints' are diagrams of what is to come.

Light caresses objects leaving traces of its penetration. Folds of density reverse, lightness becomes dark, or vice versa, an inside-outness, folding, unfolding, and refolding occurs at the point of contact where record and recorded meet. Materiality dissolves into shadows, from presence to absence, re-made through collaboration.

Potential regenerates in new narratives, new 'life' can emerge from pre-photographic processes and ecological concern spawning in the intermingling of generative processes, a lament for the passing of nature, and loss of potential through climate change. My hope is for biodiversity to prevail through human adaptation.

Analogue moves into digital, and a ghostly migration occurs. Material becomes immaterial; bodies now in code hybridize and re-fabricated for a future (un)natural. Wetness becomes dry, the actual becomes virtual, and the real a simulation. Oceans may be the last wild places left, awash with creatures like these, real jewels of the sea spawning opportunistically in the warmer waters of climate change. We sail into this grim future at our peril.

Jenny McCracken – SWIFT CYCLE

Fabriano 200gsm rag paper, toilet paper, graphite, pastel & synthetic polymer
210 cm H x 140 cm W
2023

SWIFT CYCLE refers to the migratory cycle of the critically endangered Swift Parrot, *Lathamus discolor*. The most recent estimate puts the remaining wild population at just 750 mature birds. One of only three parrot species to migrate across the sea, and the fastest parrot, documented as achieving speeds of up to 90 km an hour, they also migrate the furthest, often travelling up as far as the north coast of NSW.

All three migratory parrot species cross the Bass Strait to Tasmania, two for their annual breeding seasons. All three are now listed as endangered, the two Tasmanian breeders as critically endangered, primarily due to habitat loss. The old-growth habitat on the southeast mainland of Australia and in Tasmania on which the migratory Swift parrots depend for breeding hollows and overwintering food, flowers in cycles over one to sometimes fifteen years. These cycles are determined by long-term variable climate trends, among other factors, and so every year the birds are often found in very different parts of their range. This has made protecting specific sites for them ineffective, and inconvenient for the Tasmanian state logging companies in particular, who are currently exempt from the national environmental laws which would otherwise have the capacity to protect all identified breeding sites of a critically endangered species.

Inconceivably, the majority of product logged in Tasmanian native forest habitat in the last ten years has been sold in Asia for short-term paper products, including toilet paper. Coincidentally, it is a superbly dark irony that SWIFT is the acronym for the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications.

First set up in 1977, the growth of the SWIFT network, and the global economic exchange, directly corresponds to the increase in speed of the extractive destruction of the global environment.

Information and visual inspiration for this piece has been drawn largely from 'Lathamus', recently published by the Bob Brown Foundation, featuring new scientific information funded by the BBF, and featuring photographs by Rob Blakers.

Sarah Metzner – *Vessels of the Diaspora*

Suspended Installation

Soldered steel, wool, wire, canvas, cotton, hessian, coconut, husks, raffia, pipe cleaners, and naturally dyed muslin.

Dimensions: Varied

2023

Vessels of the Diaspora is a collaborative artwork that portrays displaced global, communities that are fleeing suffering, natural disasters and emergencies.

This project threads together 3 different communities of primary school students from: Manorvale Primary School in Werribee, where many migrant and refugee communities live, including: Somalian, Sudanese, Ethiopian, Karen and Karenni students who have contributed to this installation, and Thornbury Primary School with one of Melbourne's largest First Nations student communities and Sophia Mundi Steiner School at Abbotsford Convent.

Between 2016-21, I worked as an art teacher at Manorvale Primary School teaching many different communities of students, including many children living with trauma and suffering, due to their childhood experiences as refugees.

Simultaneously, throughout this last decade, climate disasters have become more consistent and impactful around the world. Scientists and environmentalists repeatedly have forewarned humanity of the measures needed to reverse these impending disasters forecasted across the planet; catastrophes that have the potential to increasingly destroy life and displace communities in their wake.

In May 2023, I returned to Manorvale Primary School and collaborated with students to create figures for vessels I had previously created throughout my Master of Fine Art Project: Vessel as Metaphor - A Studio Investigation.

I then invited Antoinette Vaiano from Thornbury PS and Nikki Fletcher from Sophie Mundi Steiner School; both wonderful art and craft teachers and dear friends to collaborate with their students to create communities of figures - the Diaspora - for this project.

Vessels of the Diaspora at its essence reflects on the need for humanity - to care, nurture and to be grateful for our lives, for each other, for our neighbourhoods, and for our natural environments - for our home - where we all belong.

Thank-you to the Grade 5/6 students from Manorvale Primary School: Delwyn, Chloe, Deliah, Kal, Nairobi, Matthew, Rivalea, Toby, Cara, Munira, Jordan, Oliver, Htee Kah, Sisi Paw, Caitlyn, Claire, Tyler, Saylor Htoo, Dallas, Tilly, Oskar, Laylah, K'Lee Htoo, Juerose, Zoe, Charlotte, Aneisha, Kaylee, Christy, Haylie and Assistant Principal Lily Ibrahim, and the Grade 5/6 students from Thornbury Primary and Antoinette Vaiano, and the Class 1- 4 students from Sophia Mundi Steiner School: Frannie, Elja, Spartak, Raven, Emme, Iris, Billie, Sascha, Zoe and Artist and Aftercare Coordinator Jude Walker

A special thank-you to Nikki Fletcher: a passionate, extraordinary Steiner Craft teacher and maker/creator - who helped me cut and prepare fresh bamboo from her garden and advised me how to dye the muslin for this project with natural dyes, who also made some vessels and sewed woollen felt and blankets into some of my steel-framed vessels, and was fundamental in helping me install this artwork.

Paul Prato – *Don't Bend, Ascend!*

Video: 2:42 minutes

2021

Don't Bend, Ascend! was filmed on my childhood farm on Yorta Yorta Country. The water rushing through the channel is both life-giving and life-taking; it provided life for our peach and plum orchard, and for our wheat and canola crops, but it was also an incision into the Indigenous land, aggressively forcing the flow of water from one place to another.

We were providing our peaches to Coles until they started to reject our harvests on account of small visual imperfections, so our fruit remained unpicked on the trees for a number of seasons. It became financially unviable to stay on our farm, so we had to sell in 2013.

At the time of leaving half of our peach orchard was ripped up, pushed into a huge pile of dead trees and set on fire. This was quite common in the area during this period; I remember driving to school and seeing plumes of smoke throughout the town where an orchard (maybe someone I knew or someone I didn't know) had suffered the same fate as our own.

But in hindsight it was the Indigenous land that lost the most; first by being cleared of its ancient and spiritual life forms, then by having foreign plants and animals imposed onto it and finally by those being cleared again only to have concrete poured over the top. When I filmed *Don't Bend, Ascend!* in 2021 I had returned a spiritually changed person to a physical location of trauma that had not changed.

The title of the video references Godspeed You! Black Emperor's album *Allelujah! Don't Bend, Ascend!* (which was recorded the same year we left our farm). The album, being so hypnotic and apocalyptic, was on repeat for me during covid and the title *Don't Bend, Ascend!* became a mantra to myself: to not bend into the trauma of your situation but to try and transcend it, to ascend beyond it.

Ascend, ascend, ascend!

Jen Rae – Centre for Reworlding, Unness, Reworlding

Fabric Banners

152 cm H x 91 cm W

2023

"We came to build a forest, not just a bigger tree".

- *Refugium* (Centre for Reworlding Film, 2021)

We are living in a period of 'un-ness' – the complex unprecedented, unexpected, uncertain, unstable, unpredictable, unknowable and the unimaginable. In the climate emergency context (or more appropriately 'the adaptation emergency' since the window to catastrophic climate change is rapidly closing), it is likely that within our lifetime, every aspect of our day-to-day and the resources that support all our livelihoods and well-being will be affected.

Life-giving futures unravel as disaster capitalism and right-wing conservatism trump relational accountability and justice for our future ancestors. Without the luxury of time, we are at a pivotal moment to reorient and act in the name of intergenerational justice.

The flags present two potential futures of many – one of un-ness...a state of inertia...the consequence of centuries of caustic power, privilege and extractivism. Here, represented as a tree in the Otway rainforest, where the leader has been topped and replaced with tossed coins. It is stunted and solitary with the dense forest bed below. The image speaks to disconnection, loss and disillusionment. Only through the process of unfucking, can we shift from unness to reworlding.

Reworlding is the unification of three Indigenous futuring and survivance relationships – rematriation, reconciliation and resurgence. Rematriation is an Indigenous way of life that recentres respect, restoration and care for Mother Earth and kinship relationships between each other and all life forms. Reconciliation is about repair, healing and making amends for past and present colonial injustices and establishing equitable and respectful relationships for the future. Resurgence is about reclamation, renewal and revival – honouring our ancestral legacies, complex cosmologies and reconnecting storylines*. The image is a digital montage of drone photographs from virgin, plantation and regenerated forests in the Central Goldfields of Victoria once ravaged by gold mining.

* Excerpt from Rae, J., Coleman, C.G. (2023) 'Reworlding: Relationality in the climate adaptation emergency'. [book chapter, upcoming publication]

Bronwyn Razem – *Tower Hill*

Possum Skin, Raffia

137 cm H x 121 cm W

2022

Tower Hill is a 3.2km wide volcanic formation known as a "nested maar" that is believed to have erupted 32000 years ago. Carved out by the fiery encounter of molten lava and water-bearing rock and witnessed by the Kerrup Jmara and the Koroitgundidj clans of the Gunditjmara, the details of its last eruptions have been passed on through the oldest known oral traditions of re-telling.

At least 6,600 years ago, the Gunditjmara created an extensive and complex aquaculture network where modified channels diverted water and eels into holding ponds where they grew fat before being harvested with woven baskets set in weirs built from volcanic rocks and wood lattice structures.

Bronwyn's practice explores her indigenous heritage, culture and identity. Her work represents places and events that are meaningful to her family. Sometimes she draws on possum skin cloak traditions of her ancestors. Born in Gunditjmara country, Warrnambool (Southwestern Victoria), she comes from a long lineage of traditional weavers.

Through her work, Bronwyn reveals the importance of maintaining cultural knowledge behind the weaving process and its significance in the rich history of Gunditjmara, Warrnambool country. Sharing such traditional knowledge brings to life, the everyday, building awareness, connection and engagement with the cultural values of Aboriginal people.

Louise Rippert – *Reflect*

Paper, vinyl, metallic thread, gouache, and *Lunaria annua* seed pods

100cm x 100cm

2019

Each year the *Lunaria annua* plant dies back to reveal a sparse arrangement of delicate coin-shaped seed pods, each with a distinctive silvery sheen. Its colloquial name in the US is the 'Silver Dollar'; in Asia, simply the 'Money Plant'. In Europe, its name evokes notions of power and betrayal: the 'Pope's Money' and 'Judaspenny' (coins of Judas). Here, the plant is known as 'Honesty'.

As the existential threat of global warming looms beyond our immediate focus, these rounded *Lunaria annua* seed pods, each trapped beneath plastic film, not only speak of wealth, power and betrayal—but mirror nature's unique but precarious delicacy, and the gaze of future generations.

Adam Stone – *Winners 'n' Losers*

Installation

43 parts each measuring 3.5 x 2.5 x 1cm

2023

This work draws its title from the cultural theory of 'winners and losers', where society is observed as a competition, predicated by the desire for success. A foundation of late-stage capitalism, these tropes are intensified by the prevalence of new technologies, including social media, which encourage the curated posturing of social, cultural and financial capital. Engrained in the fabric of Western culture, the 1913 idiom, 'keeping up with the Joneses' is a self-fulfilling ouroboros, prophesying continual suffering in the pursuit of unsustainable excess.

Here the snails become a playful 'stand-in' for society. Devoid of their trails, the snails in *Winners 'n' Losers*, reflect the values of our late capitalist culture, which preferences a focus on static moments of achievement and failure, rather than recognising the significance of the journey, implied by the absence of their trails.

Giselle Wilkinson – *Climate Refugees: Coming to our shores sometimes soon*

Oil on Canvas

76 cm H x 101 cm W

2023

Ever-increasing frequency intensifies impact after impact causing layer upon layer of ever-worsening social & environmental consequences. Whether it's fire, flood, famine or fighting, inequity prevails as the cruellest condition exacerbating every tragic global warming disaster.

"Nearly 2.4 billion people live within 100 km of the coast; (and) more than 600 million live in coastal areas that are less than 10 meters above sea level." (UN report, 2017)

Sea level rise is caused by ice melt causing the displacement of millions of humans from all parts of the globe, and the decimation of whole ecologies. Thermal expansion ensures equatorial regions must experience additional impacts and great suffering. Pacific Nations are already watching homelands sinking. *"62% of the most at-risk land is concentrated in the tropics with Indonesia (population 281 M) having the largest extent of land at risk worldwide".*(The Guardian 29 Jun 2021 quoting A. Hooijer & R. Vernimmen, 2021 Global LiDAR land elevation data reveal greatest sea-level rise vulnerability in the tropics, Nature Communications 12, Article 3592.)

This painting depicts what I imagine will be just the beginning of the cascade of humanitarian tragedies that can be (must be) anticipated reinforcing the need for urgent action to reverse global warming. Turbulent times cannot now be avoided as we transition asap to a safe climate economy. Yet there is no categorical evidence showing it is too late to restore safe climate conditions, to reverse global warming, to avoid ever-worsening conditions and the worst imaginable future. And so, we must give it our best shot.

So, this painting begs the question: Other than a rich nation of coal exporters, who are we? Can we imagine our best response as impoverished desperate displaced people arrive in devastating circumstances on our shores?

Will you welcome them?

