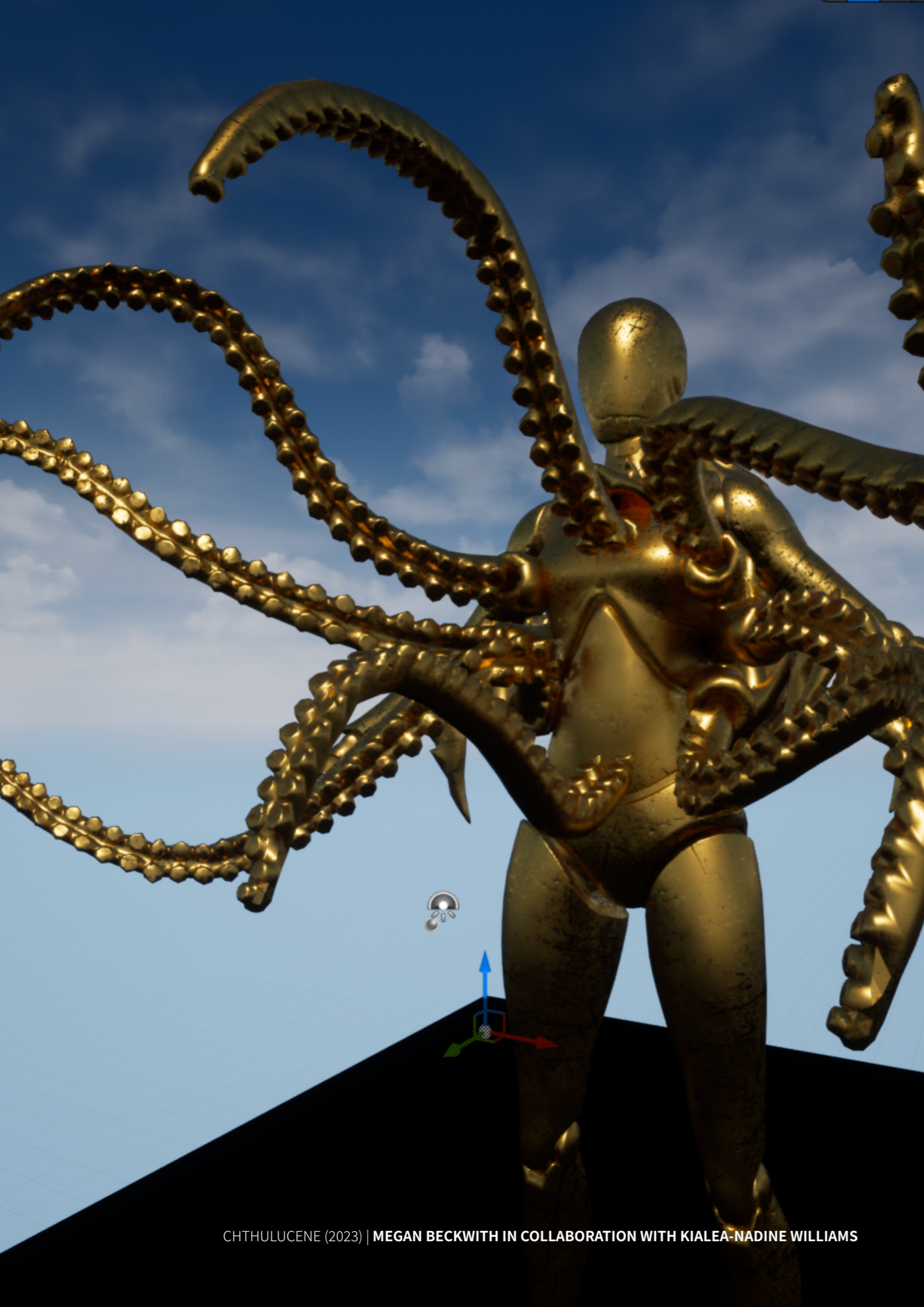




TOXX (2023) | LUNA MROZIK GAWLER

CONFLUENCE CONFLUENCE



CHTHULUCENE (2023) | MEGAN BECKWITH IN COLLABORATION WITH KIALEA-NADINE WILLIAMS

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EDITOR PRIYA NAMANA

**EXHIBITING
ARTISTS AND
ARTWORKS
WITH
EXHIBITIONS**

ANNIKA KOOPS | **STROKES**
MEGAN BECKWITH | **CHTULUCENE**
MATT GINGOLD & PHILLIPE PASQUIER | **LONGING + FORGETTING**
THE THIRD THING | **AN EXPERIMENT IN INTERVALS III - VIOLET DESERT**
TULLY ARNOT | **EPIPHYTES**
LUNA MROZIK GAWLER | **TOXX**
HARRISON HALL, SAM MC GILP & NAXS FUTURE | **BODY CRYISIS / 身體災變**

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**PUBLICATION
CREATED BY**

PRIYA NAMANA FOR CENTRE FOR PROJECTION ART

DESIGN

TAILOR AGENCY

**SPECIAL
THANKS TO**

BOARD AND STAFF OF CENTRE FOR PROJECTION ART
SEEKERS
CITY OF YARRA
COLLINGWOOD YARDS

EDITORIAL NOTE

PRIYA NAMANA

In the dynamic realm where art, technology, and public space converge, a fascinating discourse emerges, challenging and redefining the boundaries of the way we experience artistic expression. This publication is located at this intersection delving into an intriguing junction where public space, new media art, civic engagement, and gestural interactions converse on registers of creative thinking, art making and reciprocal partnerships. The tapestry of these words shared by artists, writers and critical thinkers in this collection is made up of studio based artistic practices that feel through the transformative potential of presenting work outside of contexts that are understood and presented through canonical frameworks.

Public spaces seem to have become lively canvases for the mediated confluence of digital interactions in our day to day. As we witness the impact of this on various socio-political registers, we locate artists who experiment with this as a way to find responsive

and collaborative ways to interrogate their work. The idea for this digital publication was seeded as a way to archive and document the curations of our work in 2023 with the team at Seekers and Tailor Agency, who are important members of the local community of Ngar-Go / Fitzroy in Naarm and committed to centring art as a way of everyday thinking. Together we have worked our way through the production of this publication at a pace that trust evolves at and worked to our capacity observing sustainable and relational ways of collaboration. It is important for me to note that since the beginning of this publication, the majority of Australia has rejected the referendum for First Nations Voice to Parliament and we witness an unfolding genocide in Palestine with a layer of unfathomable civic vulnerability. On behalf of this publication, I would like to express my solidarity with the First Nations people of this continent who are the true custodians of these lands, waterways and stories and the people of Palestine who are documenting and

who are moving between choreographic scores, film, technology, motion data analysis and creative coding with projection-based exhibitions and installations. Alongside the artists are observations by critical thinkers to offer insights into the evolving landscape of their research. These perspectives add to our expanded understanding of the transformative potential embedded within the intersection of new media art and public space.

Thinking through these curations and this publication as an archival trace, I am inspired by Fred Moten's insights, which serves as a catalyst for this exploration. Moten emphasizes that civic spaces are extensions of the community, functioning as stages for our public lives. They become settings where celebrations unfold, social and economic exchanges transpire, friendships intersect, and cultures mix. In their true civic role, these spaces embody a collective organism rather than a mere aggregation of independent entities. This perspective adds depth to our inquiry, inviting us to consider how these interventions in public spaces have the capacity to enhance the symbiotic relationship between art, technology, partnerships and community as both audience, artist and curator. On some registers, these interfaces offer tacit contexts for our civic psychologies.

My heartfelt gratitude to all the contributors and the wonderful team at Seekers who have generously trusted in the development of this work and supported this project through their time and curiosity.

Priya

broadcasting the occupation and devastation of their lands and public spaces by the State of Israel. Our work is located within these truths.

The essays that follow here are a combination of artistic, critical and visceral responses to two of Centre for Projection Art's programs presented in 2023 – Body-Cites as part of FRAME – A dance biennial and Confluence as part of the Gertrude Street Projection Festival. The artists we collaborated with in these programs are ushering in a new wave of gestural intersections by carefully considering and being in dialogue with the 'sites' their work engages with. Specifically, they explore the role of presenting a 'body' as a point of curiosity in their creative thought process. The authors have expressed the intricate contextual relationships that these artistic activations can bring to our encounters with place. In this issue you will find essays, visceral responses and research-based outputs from participating and invited artists

CONTENT LAUNDERING

ANNIKA KOOPS



STROKES (2022) | ANNIKA KOOPS

In the top left corner, a white teen influencer performs TikTok dances on a late-night talk show as the middle aged and dead-eyed male host holds cue cards that offer the name of the dances she performs. These signs recall a well-worn pop-cultural trope of person-holding a sign: a mainstay of music videos and rom coms.

The influencer bobs, bounces, spins.

She grinds in a perky, sanitised way, top heavy choreography suggests the portrait format of an iPhone. The stage is a slick reflective blue, velvet curtains hang in the background. The usual domestic interiors for user-generated online dance videos, here transplanted to the stagey anachronism of late-night TV.

In the bottom right is a scene from Disney's live action animation studio showing the production of the film *Sleeping Beauty*. A young, blonde Caucasian woman dressed in black pinafore and white shirt swoons, twirls and hits archetypal, coquettish poses, her carriage underpinned by the tensile grace of classical dance. In the foreground, men at easels etch these fluid motions in charcoal on paper dotted between stage lights that nod like mechanical tulips. And in the background, there are buckets, planks and makeshift props standing-in as volumes with affixed signs that demarcate elements of a pastoral scene: an owl, a wishing well, a tree.

This pairing is a scene at the beginning of a moving-image work that I made called *Stroke,s* 2022. There is much formal overlap between these scenes: the instructive and placeholder signs, the frozen rictus on the oddly immobile faces of the female performers, the staginess and the gendered spectatorship.

But what haunted me about them and what prompted me to bring them together was the complex strata of erasure at play in this pairing.¹

The late-night clip is from 2020 and is from several segments that ran wherein young white influencers were enlisted as youthful foil to the cultivated 'daggy

1 Avery Gordon describes the characteristic of haunting as a signal of 'something to be done': a way of foregrounding action over the maudlin melancholy associated with haunting, which she describes as "an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely". See Avery F. Gordon, "Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity," Viewpoint essay, *Borderlands* 10 (2011/10// 2011), accessed 2023/11/8/, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A276187005/AONE?u=monash&sid=googleScholar&xid=00d083b4>.

dad’ persona of the host. The show had them perform TikTok dances, but failed to credit the creators of the dances, most of whom were People of Colour, continuing a long history of white appropriation of black culture.² This lifting of embodied cultural forms by dominant social groups is especially present within animation practices. For example, take the famous rotoscoped performances of Cab Calloway transposed into Fleischer Studios’ Betty Boop cartoons in the early 1930: his dancerly vitality borne from embeddedness in the Harlem Renaissance tapped to animate morphing cartoon forms. Animation scholar Mihaela Mihailova says, however, that in 20th century animation history it is Disney that holds the ‘dubious distinction of most long-lasting and wide-ranging policies of erasing and suppressing labor’.³ In the first half of the 20th century, Disney was particularly secretive around the use of live action references, instead preferring to privilege the ‘magic’ of the animations over any reference to a living body from whom its animation was traced. This was especially true of female performers that lent their vitality to the lucrative princess corpus. In addition to the unnamed live-action referents, early 20th century Disney also housed the notoriously gender segregated ‘ink and paint’ department, made up of mostly female employees—known as ‘opaquers’—who blocked solid colour into pre-drawn figures.⁴ The strict embargo on any public information relating to live-action references at Disney animations was conspicuously reversed in 1960 with the release of a promotional film on the making of *Sleeping Beauty*, featuring the actress Helen Stanley from which I pulled this scene.

I am familiar with the animated feature film of *Sleeping Beauty* well because I have watched it with my kid. I opened the floodgates to the Disney streaming service for a period in 2021. Plague year. You remember. Tightly held aspirations toward tightly controlled

screen time of educational content slipped from my fingers alongside many, as schools and childcare closures meant the domestic labour tabs were picked up by primary carers. I could almost see the precisely calibrated princess fantasy flooding her brain chemistry whilst doing double duty at the kitchen table with work and my toddler (paid and unpaid). I would temper my uneasiness about opening this insidious portal of entertainment, because at least it’s safe, right?

On the first weekend of the exhibition showing *Strokes in March of 2023*, we had a panel discussion in the Magdelene Laundry, at the Abbotsford convent. This space, now for hire was run by the sisters of the Good Shephard. As described in *The Age* newspaper in 1897, both the Industrial School and the Magdelene Laundry were sites of ‘discipline and domestic training’.⁵ The inhabitants here were ‘wayward girls’: this largely meant that they were poor girls, Stolen Generation girls, victims of abuse, orphaned girls. It is a site with a heavy history. According to the Australian Government’s Heritage listing, the free labour of the inhabitants of the convent ‘meant that the Sisters could charge considerably less than their competitors’ for the services provided.⁶ The work was physically exhausting and, as one sister puts it, ‘calculated to occupy the mind and body, leaving little time for melancholy reflection on the past or anything except the work of reformation’.⁷ The physically draining and psychically numbing work undertaken by the inhabitants of the convent was not only profitable, but also ideologically linked to the catholic conception of moral purity achieved through cleanliness and discipline.

During our panel discussion, the topic of content moderation came up. Commercial content moderation refers to the human labour involved in screening and reviewing user-generated content posted on social media and other online platforms. This labour is

outsourced primarily to counties in the Global South where poorly paid workers sift through psychically draining, traumatising images and text to decide what is deleted and what stays on the feed.⁸ Hito Steyerl recently raised a breathtakingly dystopian simultaneity associated with content moderators working in Turkey and Syria reviewing images of extreme suffering and injuries resulting from the February 2023 earthquakes for Facebook and Instagram, whilst at the same time, dealing with real-time aftershocks on the ground.⁹

During our discussion, I made a comment that content moderation was the dirty laundry of the internet. Upon reflection, it felt like a somewhat shoddy analogy. Whilst it is true that the workers in the commercial laundries are hidden from view, returning garments that were dirty to waiting hands, clean and smooth and, as Tarleton Gillespie writes: content moderators ‘smooth and sanitize the user experience’.¹⁰ But deeming certain content as ‘dirty’ or polluted is a moral judgement nested in power dynamics, and the labelling of it as such fails to consider how the removal of certain images serves Silicon Valley’s profit model based on maximum engagement: too many images of violence may cause users to log off. Removing something from view is not a neutral act: as film and media scholar Lisa Parks points out, sharing ‘violent images’, such as those of war, is necessary to the formation of resistance. She writes, ‘when such content is shared online—often at great risk—only to be suddenly removed, another layer of violence is felt’.¹¹

A former student of mine once told me about the development of informal content moderation she put in place with a friend of hers. Shyami has a YouTube channel where she makes ebullient fan reviews of online games. Here, she speaks directly to camera, unpicking minutia of graphics, plotlines, merch, and all aspects of the games with infectious enthusiasm, as well as interviewing significant voice and motion

capture actors who contribute to them.¹² The reciprocal arrangement she put in place between herself and her friend involved patrolling the other’s comments section, shielding one another from the toxic verbiage by deleting from view the racist and misogynistic comments left under each other’s videos, because they could not rely on Google’s community guidelines or laggy content moderation systems to do so for them. They were cleaning up a mess, but in the process, also archiving and bearing witness: they did not just delete the comments; they kept them filed. I imagine the weight of those folders sitting heavy on their respective hard drives, heavier than the coal that keeps them spinning.

This informal content moderation system exemplifies a new and grim kind of work made necessary by the meeting extreme intolerance, anonymity and algorithmic violence.¹³ Gomerioi legal scholar, essayist, and poet Alison Whittaker’s explores new forms of digital labour in a chapter from her book *Blakwork*: a collection of prose, poetry and memoir that centres around multifarious conceptions of work from an Australian Indigenous perspective. The chapter ‘newwork’ satirises the digital economy, charting the gap between machine learning speculations and lived experience. A key example from this chapter is the poem ‘futurefear’, which cuts through the media bluster around big data and big tech by pressing breathless, clickbait headlines against the deep, layered wounds left by colonisation: ‘Driverless Cars Transmogify Ethics! Galahs spring-grapple from nest to road... Will Automation take your job? A silent car affixed on a rear-view mirror’.¹⁴

The last stanzas in her poem reference the way she has born witness to a live inquiry into youth detention:

S’arvo I’m watching livestream of kids whose
Great great great great greats

² The performers (in order of appearance) in the clip are Hannah Belaney, Hayley Sharpe, Devin Santiago, Ajani Huff, Boomer Bradshaw, James Wright, Sarah Magusara. After the clip I refer to *ran*, The Jimmy Fallon Show ran another similar segment using a different white influencer and uncredited creators. Following a subsequent media furore the show ran a short segment that credited the choreographers of the dances.

³ Mihaela Mihailova, “Collaboration without Representation: Labor Issues in Motion and Performance Capture,” *Animation* 11, no. 1 (2016), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1746847715623691>.

⁴ Opaquers were also blocked as Elizabeth Bell notes from any further career progression, other than taking as a stenographer producing transcripts of meetings. In the below essay, Bell also unfolds the painterly term ‘pentimento’—a visible trace or strokes of earlier painting beneath a layer or layers of paint on a canvas, derived from the Italian term, to mean repent, or change of mind—as conceptual vehicle to discuss the semiotic layering of Disney animations. Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells, *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture* (Bloomington, UNITED STATES: Indiana University Press, 1995). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/monash/detail.action?docID=613324>.

⁵ Unknown Author, “The Abbotsford Convent” *The Age* (Melbourne) 1897.

⁶ “Abbotsford Convent: National Heritage List Inscription Date 31 August 2017,” 2017, accessed 01/02/2022, <https://www.dcoee.gov.au/parks-heritage/heritage/places/national/abbotsford-convent#:~:text=Established%20in%20one%20of%20the,children%20lived%20within%20its%20walls>

⁷ Quoted in Joanne Monk, “Cleansing Their Souls: Laundries in Institutions for Fallen Women,” *Journal Article*, *Liith*, no. 9 (1996), accessed 2023/10/30.

⁸ Adrien Chen’s important piece in *Wired* in 2014 bought the issue of content moderation to a mainstream Audience. See Adrian Chen, “The Laborers Who Keep Dick Pics and Beheadings out of Your Facebook Feed”

⁹ Hito Steyerl, “Subprime Visibility,” *Critical AI - in the Art Museum*, 2023 accessed 31/10/2023, <http://criticalai.art>.

¹⁰ Tarleton Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media* (New Haven: New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

¹¹ Lisa Parks, “Dirty Data: Content Moderation, Regulatory Outsourcing, and the Cleaners,” *Film Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (2019), accessed 10/26/2023, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1525/fq.2019.73.111>.

¹² Shared with permission, thank you, Shyami for your insight and discussion.

¹³ The artist Mimi Onuoha coined the term ‘algorithmic violence’ to describe systemic, invisible and intersectional violence associated with ‘digital and data-driven forms of inequity’ borne from advancements in computation and in leaps in fields like artificial intelligence and machine learning, and the subsequent incorporation and leveraging of all these things into a hierarchical and unequal society. See Mimi Onuoha, “Notes on Algorithmic Violence” *GitHub.com* 2018, accessed 09/10/23, <https://github.com/MimiOnuoha/On-Algorithmic-Violence>.

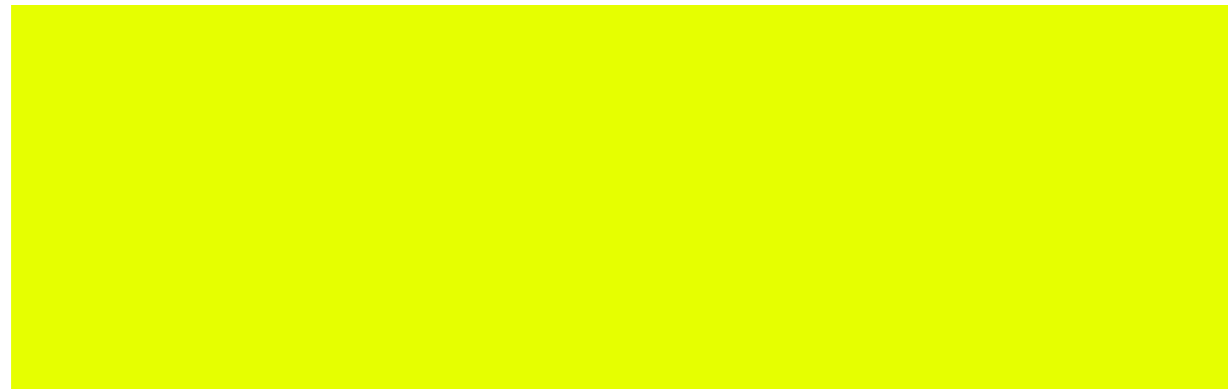
¹⁴ Alison Whittaker, *Blakwork* (Perth, AUSTRALIA: Magabala Books, 2018). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/monash/detail.action?docID=5581039>.

Saw something worse on their horizon
Than automated zombie.¹⁵

Whittaker's syntactical interventions layer anxieties about automation with tragedies unfolding right in front of any who can bear to look. I was holding Whittaker's text in my mind whilst writing this one: considering hidden labours embedded in the production of lively animations and not-really-automated systems: systems wherein attention-grabbing content on slick user interfaces elides the immiseration that built them.¹⁶ Systems which are, as Whittaker's book goes to pains to point out, built on older forms of colonial violence. My whiteness means I am a beneficiary of colonial violence in material terms. It also means I can move with relative ease through real and online spaces: I have not needed the kind informal content moderation described earlier, have never needed to nest this grim and tender innovation within existing platform infrastructure.

I was periodically checking some platforms whilst writing this: taking little 'breaks' on social media where images of indescribable, incomprehensible brutality press tightly against images of incomprehensible triviality. As interlocking crises escalate, the density of this incongruity becomes ever more pronounced: how to protect attention, when to look away, and when not to become crucial decisions in thinking through which images should be seen, shared, discussed, and which should be left to fade out. That is, if they get seen at all.

Strokes is a layered work, it reflects upon the implications of the invisible, and often gendered and racialized human labour that props up the illusion of efficient, lively, autonomous technological agents. My aim was to question whose traces are made visible in the history of culture and whose are simply woven into its support structures. Holding strategies of removal, erasure, appropriation and remediation together is messy business, but it holds open the position that ideas need ventilation, and some dirty laundry should be aired.

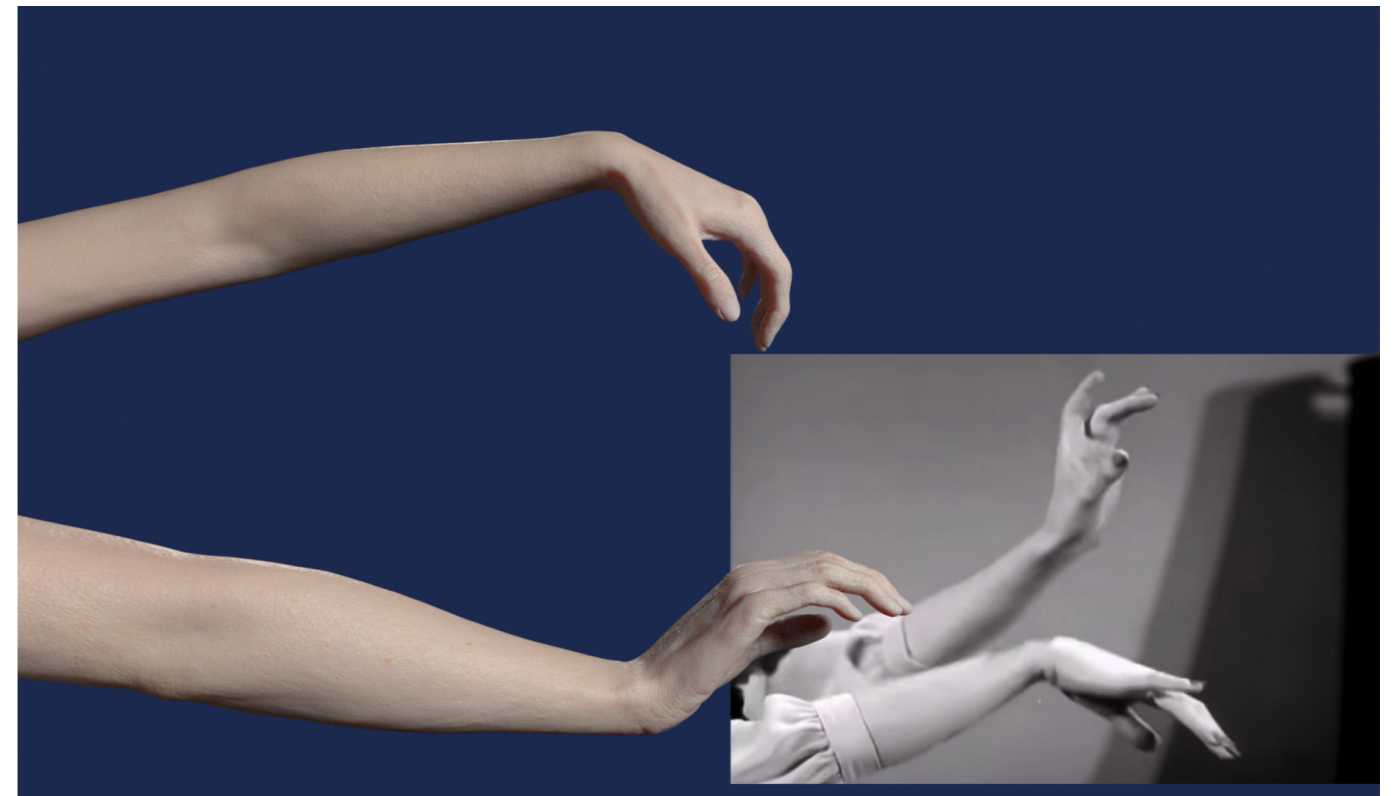


¹⁵ Whittaker.

¹⁶ Maria Tumarikin's quotes Alison Whittaker who recently drew attention to the paucity of solidarity for Indigenous issues offered by white middle-class women, and a tendency to equate the conspicuous praise of Indigenous women writers to activism. Whittaker spoke of listening in silence 'astounded at how much labour we are still expected to give and how little is returned'. Tumarikin writes her own cognisance of the potentially self-serving pillaging the texts of First Nations women and other women of colour, using citation to furnish oneself with a 'cloak of moral goodness' and how doing so can constitute another instance of 'micro-theft'. I am cognisant of the politics of citation here, the potential for my citation to function, as 'micro-theft', but for me, this citation functions more — as Sarah Ahmed says — as an 'acknowledgment of debt to those who came before us'. See: Maria Tumarikin, "Wildness: Feminist Identity and the Willingness to Be Defeated," *The Yale Review*, 2020, accessed 12/12/2020, <https://yalereview.org/article/maria-tumarikin-wildness-feminism-undiminished>



STROKES (2022) | ANNIKA KOOPS



STROKES (2022) | ANNIKA KOOPS

CHTHULUCENE

LIANG LUSCOMBE

AND WHAT PROCESS HAS THIS AVATAR UNDERTAKEN TO BECOME A HACKED AND POSTHUMAN SPECIES?

'As I sought to understand the species of whales, coral, barnacles, bacteria, and so forth, that were speaking from the bottom and the surface of the ocean, I began to understand that the scientific taxonomy of what constituted a species or which family, phyla, genus, in some cases even kingdom and domain, a particular form of life was, was as debatable and discursively unstable as the narratives within my family of who was an inside or an outside child, and who was related and why and how, and certainly as complex as [Sylvia] Wynter teaches us about: the discursive construction of man.'

- Alexis Pauline Gumbs¹

¹ Gumbs, Alexis Pauline. Dub : Finding Ceremony. 2020. p. xli.

Walking past the Brunswick Mechanics Institute on my way home one night — a building I bumble past every few days, often weighed down by groceries or my computer bag on my way to the supermarket or the tram spot — I came across a vision of a strange tentacled creature occupying the entire length of the building's windows. The beast was so giant that, at first, it was only its long, golden, puckered octopus' arms that came into focus, wrapping itself around the building's facade. They undulated and reached out into the air, oddly metallic and dripping as if they had emerged from the ocean only moments earlier. Walking along the televisions installed in each window, I noticed that the avatar strained to be contained within each of its portrait-oriented screens, the mass of arms adjoined to a metallic cyborg with a nautilus nestled into her back, her large choreographic movements mimicking those

of her tentacles. She is something that can only be described as a symbiotic transgression, part octopus, part cyborg, part crustacean, a wild proposition for my evening walk: a 'cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction'.²

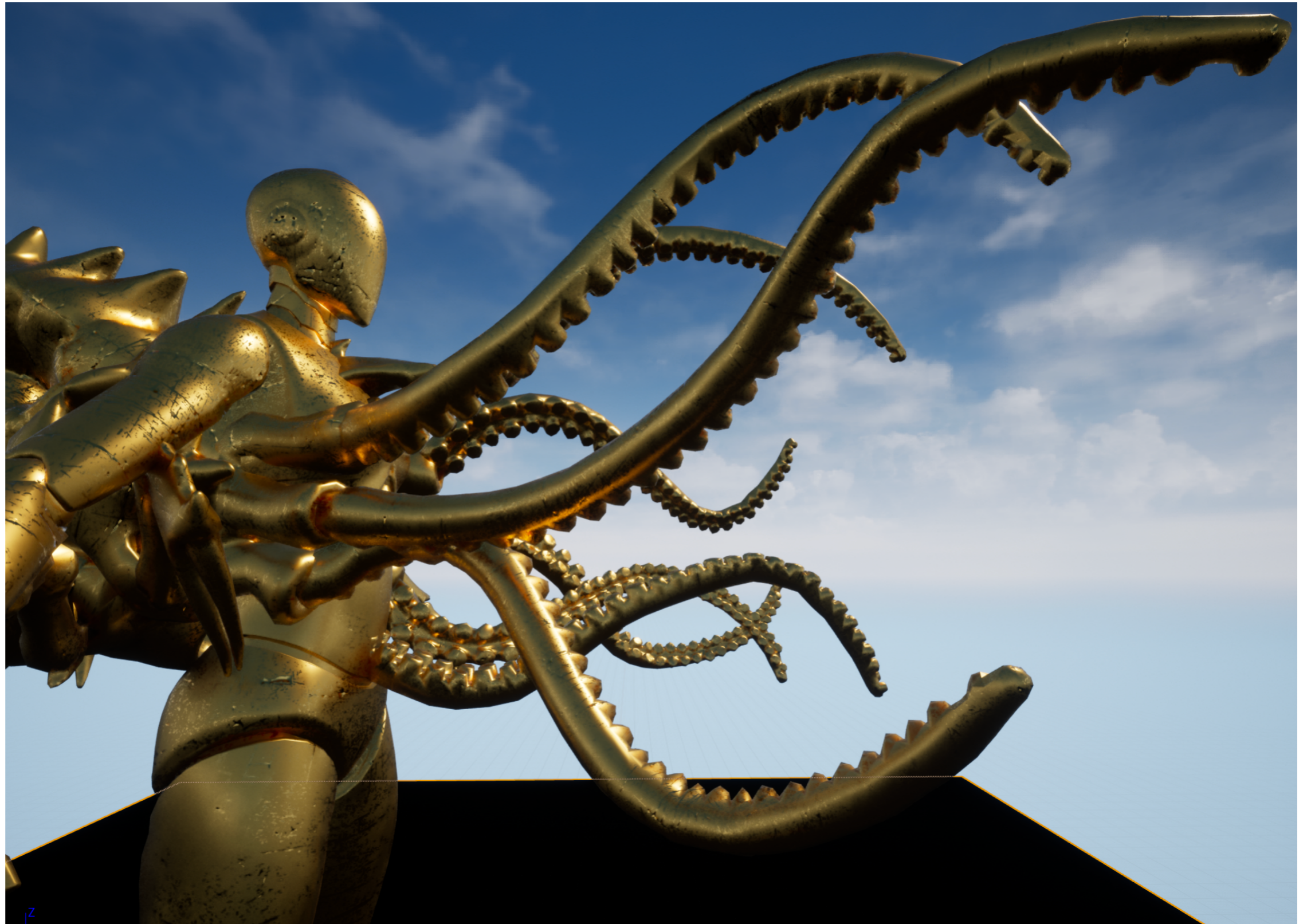
And what process has this avatar undertaken to become a hacked and posthuman species?

Combining movement and 3D animation, artist and choreographer Megan Beckwith creates eight human-scaled octopus arms — the choreographic score that dancer Kialea-Nadine Williams had to contend with physically. As Williams's body weaves and tucks behind and around each imagined and prosthetic limb, the well-defined extremities of her body become shared, porous, and entangled. To produce the video,

² Haraway, Donna J. Manifestly Haraway. University of Minnesota Press, 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/warw/detail.action?docID=4392065>.

Williams responded in real-time to the animation of her many-limbed avatar, sharing haptic and digitally rendered thinking with an animal whose limbs have a mini satellite brain in each arm that reports back to its central brain. A dancer could do much with an additional eight limbs that moved without bones. But what could she feel and sense in the surfaces, the ocean, and the air around her if she shared consciousness with an octopus or a nautilus? The word tentacle comes from the Latin tentaculum, meaning “feeler,” and tentacled, meaning “to feel”. Beckwith’s avatar also feels like a model, a tentacled diagram, a way for Williams and the audience to think about the unexpected role 3D animation could play in forming a digital call and response of speculative interspecies imagining.

How might our avatar experience time? Could this kind of interspecies intimacy open polytemporal rhythms of the ocean and the cybernetic? A cephalopod time, unbound due to the expanse of the sea, informed by life on the seabed, the ebbs and flows of the tide. How might this temporality be in tandem and kinship with the machinic time of the cyborg? The portable time created by the synthetic feedback mechanism of our cardiac pacemakers and hearing aids and the biopolitical rhythms informed by the birth control pills, sleeping pills, the testosterone and estrogen ingested in our bloodstream. Here, our hybrid temporal creature becomes an imagined way of being, a new ontology for those living on the ailing and damaged sea floor, and who, finding our movements changed, make way for the vivid and textured sensations as we pass through the submerged terrain.



CHTHULUCENE (2023) | MEGAN BECKWITH IN COLLABORATION WITH KIALEA-NADINE WILLIAMS



CHTHULUCENE (2023) | MEGAN BECKWITH IN COLLABORATION WITH KIALEA-NADINE WILLIAMS

MASS GESTURE

DR SEAN LOWRY

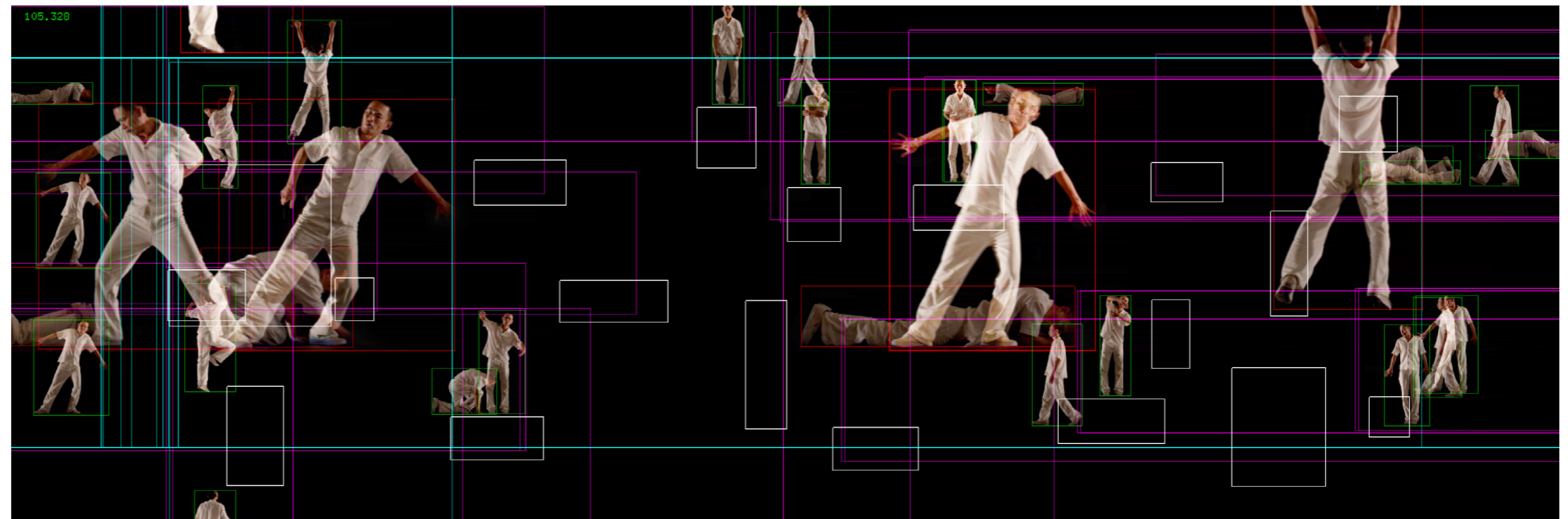
Somewhere in the artistic process—from conception through production to display and documentation—chances are you'll cross paths with some form of digital mediation. Indeed, in the digital age, even the most corporeal languages of gesture and movement can be transmuted into rich tapestries of data, ripe for both algorithmic analysis and artistic intervention. Technologies such as motion capture, facial recognition, workout apps, and even humble click-through rate analytics, all serve as vehicles to slice human behaviours into quantifiable metrics. Even the most mundane gestures, from a swipe to a gait, can be transformed into information to be analysed, commodified, and ultimately used to predict future behaviours. Now, as we add ever more powerful AI technologies into the mix, our already obese attention economies are being exponentially turbocharged to feed an appetite for data in which even the tiniest flickers of movement contribute to conversion or engagement.

For artists, recent decades have comprised a wholesale digitally driven transformation in cultural production and distribution commensurate with the emergence of mechanical and photomechanical reproduction. Across countless fields of activity, new forms of moving image production and projection have led to the formation of new highly specialised taxonomies—albeit largely understood within the expanded discourse of their pre-digital historical cousins. But to what extent can we meaningfully retool historical understandings of the performing body and moving image production for the digital age?

Today, interpretations of indexical and choreographic registrations of gesture in art typically draw from a complex methodological interplay of expanded mediums, new technologies, and mutant historical philosophies. In the endlessly expanding realm of painting, for example (the historical OG of expressive gesture), artists such as Julie Mehretu have long

incorporated gestural techniques that seek to choreographically capture movement and time.¹ As is the case with photography, moving image technologies, scores, and choreography more generally, painting can be seen as a form of capture. Just as Maurice Merleau-Ponty famously described painting as an “event,”² and Harold Rosenberg saw the canvas as an “arena in which to act,”³ historical connections between painting and registrations of physical movement are well-established. Here, the gestural mark presents as a supposed index to the body and subjectivity of the artist. As with many artforms, the painted gesture performs as a register of its generation, and therefore as a mediated extension of liveness, albeit from elsewhere in time and space.

There are of course innumerable other artistic contexts in which registrations of gesture are translated into new images, objects, sounds or information. Artists like Ryoji Ikeda and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, for

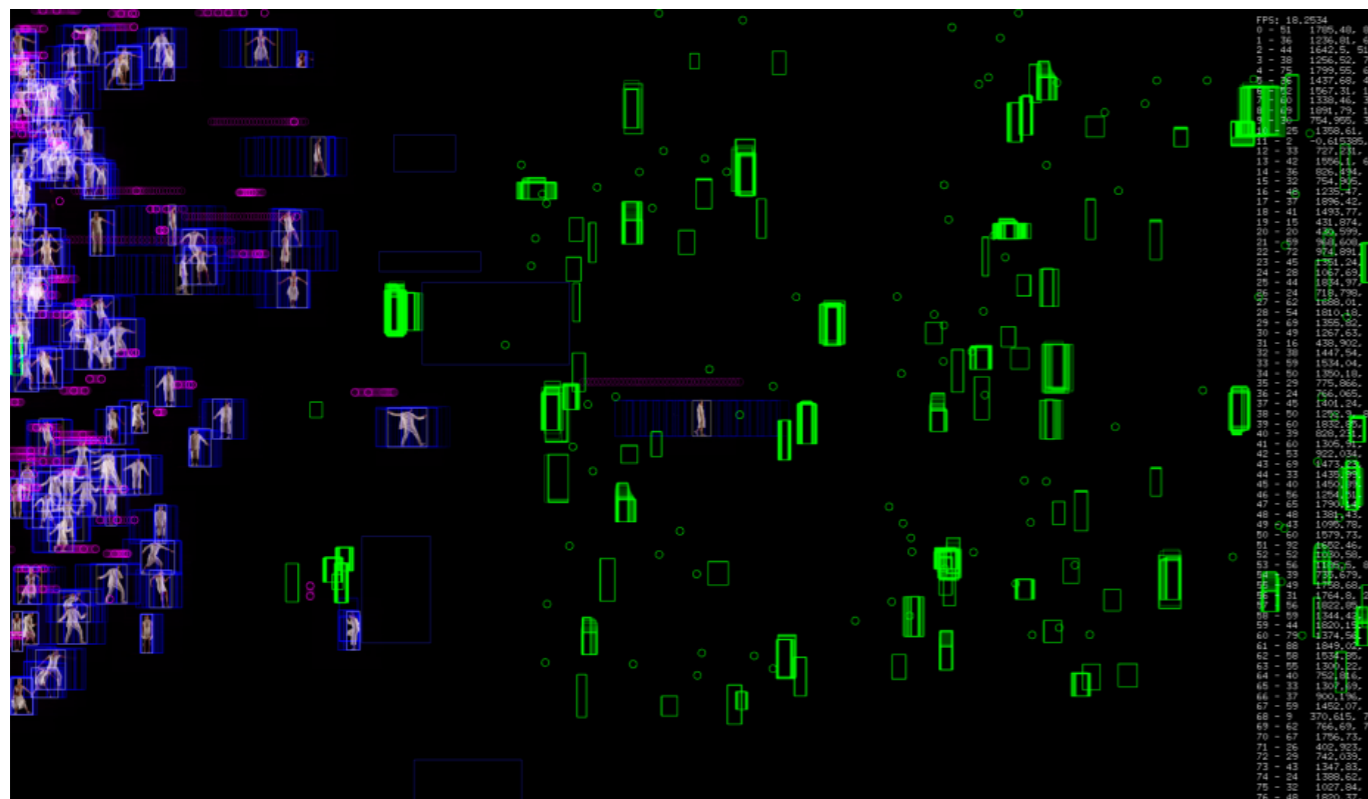


LONGING + FORGETTING (2013-2023) | MATT GINGOLD AND PHILIPPE PASQUIER

¹ See, for example: Christina Ljungberg, “Cartographies of the Future: Julie Mehretu’s Dynamic Charting of Fluid Spaces,” *The Cartographic Journal*, 2009, 46:4, 308-315

² For an elaborated account, see: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind.” In *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, edited by James M. Edie, 159-190. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

³ Harold Rosenberg’s famous description of the canvas as an “arena in which to act” comes from his seminal essay “The American Action Painters,” originally published in *ARTnews*, December 1952, 22-23, 48-50. Reprinted in: Harold Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters.” In *The Tradition of the New*, 23-39. New York: Horizon Press, 1959.



LONGING + FORGETTING (2013-2023) | MATT GINGOLD AND PHILIPPE PASQUIER

example, use coding to translate human gestures into distinct forms. From a swipe on a touch screen or a wave of the hand captured by a sensor, gestures can be remediated or algorithmically processed to create new visual or auditory forms. AI takes this further by not simply capturing but also learning from and replicating gestures anew. Consequently, the machine becomes a quasi-co-creator trained to recognise and predict particularities in human expressiveness.

Meanwhile, given that we can now effectively scroll in and out of some objects almost infinitely, questions of scale are increasingly unhinged from bodily registers. Although many of the same questions that have long defined art's relationship to the world still hold, the dimensional scope of their methodological application is radically distorted across labyrinthian intersectional worlds of multi-temporal transcultural interactivity. At any rate, there is no escaping the fact that artists,

irrespective of the content and material particularity of their work, are now implicated in ways of behaving formed in response to the ubiquity of the digital.

How do artforms produced with digital media technologies, such as projection art, distinguish themselves from the noise of popular forms mass media more generally? This media is of course everywhere and augmenting our experience of almost everything. But where commercial broadcasters and publishers seek convergence, artists and curators typically seek less controlled outcomes. So, how do artists working with the moving image compete with this cacophony of competing moving image distraction? For Peter Osborne, this situation is inherently paradoxical, for "art distracts, as well as resisting distraction [yet] is received in distraction".⁴ So, how do we distract the viewer from distraction itself?

⁴ Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London: Verso, 2013): 186.

FROM A SWIPE ON A TOUCH SCREEN OR A WAVE OF THE HAND CAPTURED BY A SENSOR, GESTURES CAN BE REMEDIATED OR ALGORITHMICALLY PROCESSED TO CREATE NEW VISUAL OR AUDITORY FORMS.

Given that most people will likely encounter work either directly through or adjacent to the backlit glow of a screen, artists and curators alike are increasingly alive to the challenge creating forms of engagement that somehow transcend arbitrariness without resorting to spectacle. This is a challenge that was clearly front of mind for Centre for Projection Art (CPA) artistic director Priya Namana when she curated *Body-Cites for FRAME: a biennial of dance 2023*. Taking place across multiple sites in Naarm (Melbourne), *Body-Cites* comprised a series of exhibitions, screenings and artist conversations. This text will consider two works presented as part of *Body-Cites*: Annika Koops' video-based artwork, "Strokes" (2022); and Matt Gingold and Philippe Pasquier's choreographic architectural projection "Longing + Forgetting" (2013-2023).

Both of these works offer a choreographed sequence of images and forms through which processes of

transformation and reiteration invite us to confront the mutable natures of our digital and historical existences—and by extension, the ethical and aesthetic implications of this fluidity. And while the works both revel in and implicitly critique the ambiguity and multiplicity of the digital, they also invite a dynamic sense of poetic reengagement with the constitutional natures of bodies. And, in the context of their respective presentations in adjacent interior architectures of Abbotsford Convent—a deeply historically inscribed site turned multi-purpose arts precinct—both works invite the viewer to contemplate the performative qualities of mediated "liveness" and choreographic thinking via the presentation of the moving image in immersive space. Implicitly, perhaps, they ask, can digitally captured performance replicate something of the ephemeral qualities of direct "live" experience? In performance theory, Philip Auslander has convincingly

contested claims made by theorists such as Peggy Phelan⁵ apropos the supposedly uniquely irreplaceable ontology of direct live experience. For Auslander, liveness is no longer unique to live performance, and moreover, a performing body captured in a moving image possesses a new “presence, power, and authenticity [...] for which we are the present audience.”⁶ Clearly, a significant proportion of the performing bodies we experience on a daily basis in the digital age, and consequently through which we understand our own bodies, are mediated and performing for us from elsewhere in space and time.

In *Body-Cites*, Namana’s astute curatorial presentation connects these mediated performative qualities with both site responsiveness and choreographic thinking—the intellectual and creative process behind dance—together with the semiotics of painting, architecture, and moving image. In dance, for example, every movement, every gesture, can be described as a complex semiotic event. This is a language that speaks through sinews and muscles, the arch of a back, or the flick of a wrist. Half a century ago, Merce Cunningham and Pina Bausch elevated this language to an artform that mingled with parallel intermedial developments in postwar art. Historically, like dance, the moving image is also concerned with capturing and understanding human movement. In the embryonic development of cinema, for example, chronophotography—as pioneered by Étienne-Jules Marey and popularised by Eadweard Muybridge—initially served as a tool for anatomical scrutiny. Muybridge’s iconic sequences of human and animal locomotion were not mere aesthetic exercises; they were also empirical endeavours exploring the corporeal mechanics of humans and animals. Fast-forward to the realms of experimental film and media art and the moving image has evolved to do far more than just measure and compare. Take, for instance, Norman McLaren’s *Pas de Deux* (1968), where cinematic techniques of transform dance into hauntingly ethereal experience. Or fast forward to *Dumb Type’s Lovers* (1994), where walking is reanimated through the physical rotation of projectors. Again, it is through its mediation in the moving image that much of our shared languages of bodily movement are now developed.

Projected in this particular iteration in *Body-Cites* onto the walls of the former Magdalen Laundry in Abbotsford Convent, “Longing + Forgetting” is a collaboration between artist Matt Gingold, machine learning advocate Philippe Pasquier, and Thecla Schiphort, who has developed choreographic software used by Merce Cunningham. Amalgamating physical and algorithmic choreographies with architecturally responsive projection mapping, the work considers mutually dynamic relationships between bodies and surrounding structures. By algorithmically animating what the artists call “architectural dance,” the work considers sometimes-contradictory ways in which machines can be attributed quasi-intelligence while humans are expected to mechanistically produce. “Longing + Forgetting” also serves as a fascinating nexus of the historical paradigms of optical control, filmic amplification of the human form, and architectural activation. Exemplifying the deeply ambivalent critical qualities of art, which at best holds up a mirror rather than a manifesto, this project is a double-edged sword: it at once critiques machine learning and celebrates it while eliciting visceral, emotional, and embodied reactions from the viewer. In this ambitious work, the aforementioned walk cycles of Muybridge are reimagined as new forms of spatial navigation—crouching, crawling, inching, and even swinging—across walls which already appear to carry dark ghosts of historical Catholicism on stolen land. And as these human forms are multiplied—doubled, tripled, quadrupled—they become spectral entities in an ambiguous yet perpetual quest, further haunting the surfaces they are projected onto. Jerky movements, bounding boxes and repetitive actions echo the surveillance technologies encroaching our personal spaces. Yet here, these same technologies are repurposed to choreograph poetics of mediated movement. Paradoxically, perhaps, the same tools used to monitor us can potentially liberate the human form.

The auditory experience is as meticulously crafted as the visual, with the whole cavernous space reverberating with auditory ghosted traces of human exertion. This granular constellation of sub-vocalisations—moans, groans, breaths—are intermingled with time-stretched



5 See, for example: Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane. *The Ends of Performance* / Edited by Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane. New York: New York University Press, 1998. Print.

6 See, for example: Philip Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation.” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 3 (September 2006): 10.

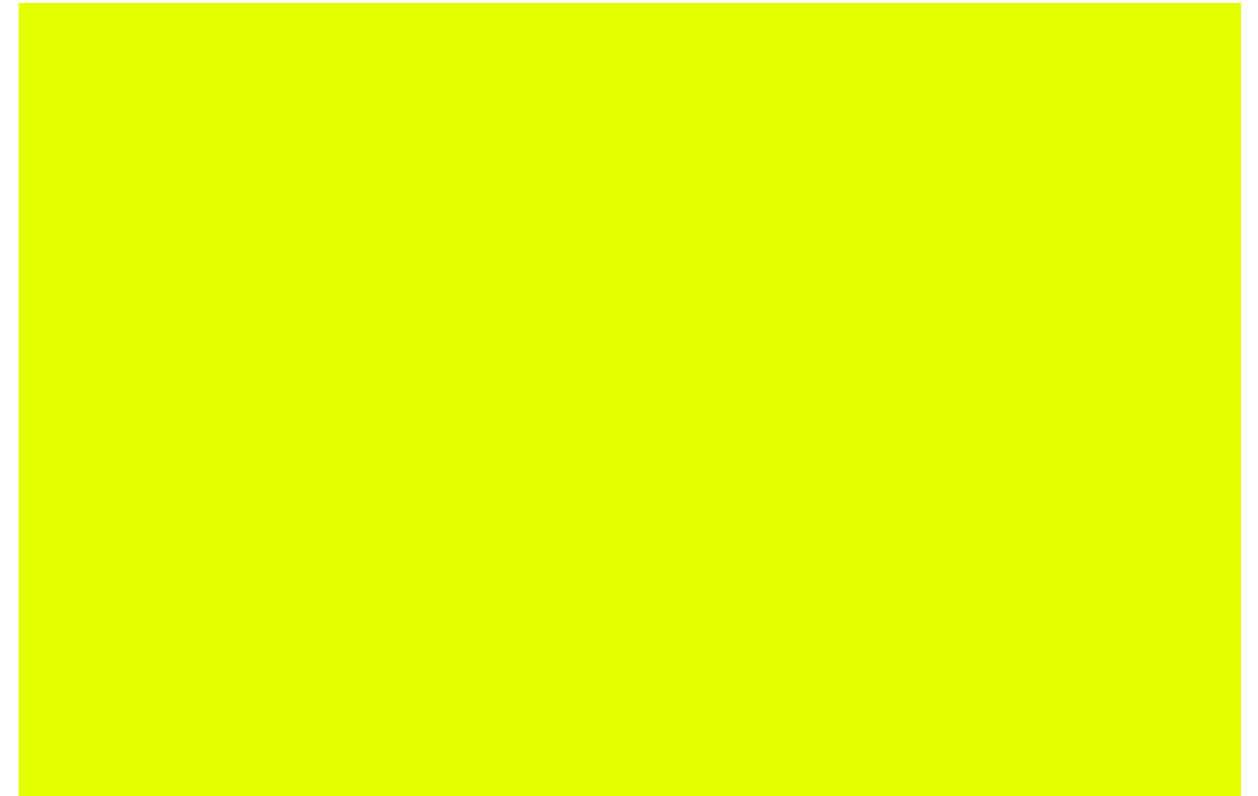
phonemes that conjure something of the ambience of a dystopian science fiction elsewhere. Consequently, we're confronted with very human dialectic constituting the scientific impulse to quantify and categorise human movement set within a creative drive to expand and enrich our perceptions of it. But where does this interplay of technology, art, and surveillance leave us? On one hand, we might be reminded of Orwellian undertones of control and observation. Yet on the other, we are offered something of the potential of these technologies to radically recalibrate human interactions with space and movement. This tension is likely irresolvable, and this productive dissonance simply invites us to experientially grapple with the multifaceted implications of our increasingly digitised lives.

Presented nearby in Body-Cites in the former Industrial School at Abbotsford Convent, Koops' "Strokes" is a single channel video projection featuring decussating ways in which gestural and subjective registrations both have and are informationally represented. Using computer imaging, AI and motion capture technologies to contrast expression, animation and automation, the work features a digitally feminised figure in chromakey blue performing an augmented composite of expressive gestures. These gestures, drawn variously from languages of dance, painting, gymnastics, popular Tik Tok videos and historical live-action animation sequences, are all woven together with movements captured by the artist working with a dancer responding to prompts and imagined objects. By actively oscillating between different gendered, racialised, authorial and anonymised gestures, "Strokes" sets up a tension between now farcical hypermasculine master artistic gestures from canonical figures such as Picasso, Kandinsky and Matisse and implicitly feminised motion-capture data extracted largely from popular internet sourced moving image content. Historically, the hyperbolically expressive painterly gesture is synonymous with unbridled masculine subjectivity and the heroic individual. By contrast, differently gendered and racialised bodies have been historically associated with less valued forms of labour and processes of anonymisation and objectification. In sum, this mutually responsive

dynamic congeals to stage disparities between uniquely branded artistic gestures and invisible investments in other kinds of creative and emotional performativity. Like Oliver Laric's multi-versioned image essay montage, "Versions" (2010), "Strokes" invites multiple simultaneous interpretations, particularly when considered through the labyrinthian prisms of gesture, the body, technology and choreographic thinking. And like "Versions", it actively grapples with fluidities in images, forms, authenticities and representations. "Strokes" is also reminiscent of the way Natalie Bookchin's "Mass Ornament" (2009) choreographs hundreds of YouTube dance videos to form a mass trans-subjective performance where each quotidian gesture is at once collectively and individually registered.⁷ Curiously, in works such as these, where many different forms and bodies are brought together in assemblage, a meta-entity capable of both transcending individuation and oscillating between diversity and homogenisation is created.

Our obese contemporary moment is a pulsating matrix in which the performed gesture, once considered the most ephemeral of artistic expressions, is being endlessly re-registered, re-captured, re-coded and reimagined. Just as the respective roles of artist, curator and audience are sometimes difficult to distinguish through processes of disintermediation, a concurrent blurring of human and machinic gesticulation is generating an uncanny haze. For some, the future is marked by an urgent need to democratise access to digital technologies to reflect a world in which the privilege and authority of commanding informational transmission is becoming more important than its creation. Perhaps, the most sophisticated art created against this backdrop will be that which resists reducing digitalisation to reductive arguments between risks of dilution and commodification on the one hand and promises of democratisation and creative expansion on the other. After all, it is always possible to make good poetry both with and about the master's tools. Body-Cites offered hybrid forms of choreographic thinking that successfully leverage digital technologies without losing sight of the body's radical potentiality. Although algorithms and data points can predict much, we can only wonder if and when they will fully capture

the sublime unpredictability of a body in motion. At the time of writing at least, the artistic potential of the digitally augmented body is still largely understood and evaluated as a mediated extension of human creativity, performativity and experience.



⁷ For an excellent analysis of trans-subjectivity in Natalie Bookchin's "Mass Ornament" (2009), see: April Durham, "Networked Bodies in Cyberspace- Orchestrating the Trans-Subjective in the Video Artworks of Natalie Bookchin," *Art Journal* 72 (3): 66-81.

AN EXPERIMENT IN INTERVALS III - VIOLET DESERT

THE THIRD THING

As ideology petrifies in architectural territories, its conception of history-present-future too becomes encoded in spatial territories. When the live, attentive and improvisational body - the phenomenological agent - encounters this territory, an Interval is begun: a multiplicity of futures manifest in the tensile and reflexive passage of a body leaking through space-time.

An Interval represents the potential of an embodied in-betweenness, where experiments in spatial and temporal arrangements form possibilities of alternate futures. The unfolding of Intervals can be seen as a mode of inhabitation - a subversion of the containment imposed by patriarchal paradigms and their architectures of excess.¹

The Interval is made possible by the fragility of spatial territories that are themselves subject to failed utopias. As per Elizabeth Grosz, architectural utopias are always verging on the dystopic.² Haunted and haunting in this dichotomy, they manifest in monstrosity - territories of an uncanny other.

For Georges Bataille, monstrosity regarded not simply what was against the sacred or divine, but that quality which materialised in the machinations of state violence and industrial and capital exploitation: the smokestack, the factory, the industrial zone. These were apparatus denoting spatial territories that were seen to materialise a disorder under God.³



AN EXPERIMENT IN INTERVALS III - VIOLET DESERT (2022) | THE THIRD THING

¹ Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, 2001).

² *Ibid.*

³ Benjamin Noys, *Georges Bataille, A Critical Introduction*, (Pluto Press, VA, 2000), 21.

An Experiment in Intervals III - Violet Desert, reads the site of the industrial park in Barreiro, Portugal through the lens of 'monstrous architecture'. Shaped by the industrial expansion brought about by Companhia União Fabril, the site exists in a liminal zone. It is haunted by the promises of economic prosperity and the failure of such promises. Despite this, or perhaps because of this, the site houses plural identities and multiple futures. It is representative of both monstrosity as threat and opportunity.

'Violet Desert' is a play on the title of Michelangelo Antonioni's 1964 film *Il Deserto Rosso* (The Red Desert). Renowned for depicting stark scenes of industrial architecture, Antonioni's protagonist Giuliana (Monica Vitti) is tormented by the alienating force of living within modernity. Her growing neuroses reflects Antonioni's desolate vision of the capitalist world - the conflict of a modern brain and a tired worn out body.⁴ However, Giuliana's inability - or unwillingness - to inhabit such a dichotomy also speaks to another aspect of the monstrous as located in the power of the unruly feminine to transgress the status quo.

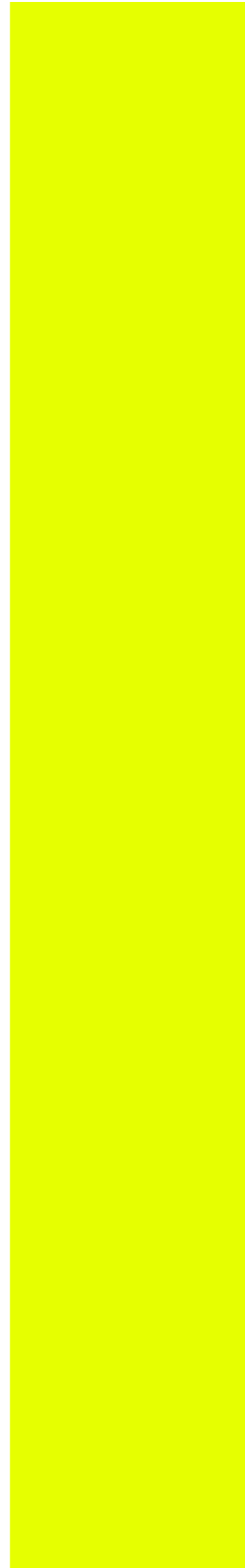
The monster exists historically as the deformation of 'natural law' - the corrupted off-spring of the classical Man as perturbed by the fecundity of the Feminine⁵. In the context of colonial, patriarchal and capitalist ideologies, the children of modernity have grown to represent this off-spring; our alienation and hybridity a contemporary monstrosity.

Monstrosity therefore signifies an opportunity to come undone through discontinuity. It is an invitation to actualise an Interval as a disruption-negotiation of our before-after. As Karan Barad asks, can the fragility of monstrosity help us transition from our "political and spiritual rigour mortis towards a living raging animacy?"⁶ Can monstrosity be an opportunity to arrive to our living-being despite, and through, the ideological hauntings that history imposes?

4 Richard Letteri, *Becoming Giuliana: Antonioni's Red Desert and the Capitalist Social Machine*, *Deleuze and Guattari Studies* Volume 15, No.1, 2021

5 Mark Dorrian, *On the monstrous and the grotesque*, *Word & Image*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2000

6 Karan Barad, *'TransMaterialities: Trans' /Matter/realities and Queer Political imaginings'*, *GLO A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (May 2015): 411



AN EXPERIMENT IN INTERVALS III - VIOLET DESERT (2022) | THE THIRD THING



AN EXPERIMENT IN INTERVALS III - VIOLET DESERT (2022) | THE THIRD THING

INTERTWINING LITERAL AND METAPHORICAL EPIPHYTES.

LOUIS M. ASHTON

Whether in an atmosphere dominated by air or water they traverse variations in shade and light, temperature, enacting forces, pH and nutrient availability. Irrespective of the spatio-temporal attributes of their lifestyle and lifespan, epiphytes experience and interact with their multi-layered and intertwining habitats in mixed ways. Maybe the water is tidal, moving in and out of lagoons. Or snaking and crawling over ripples and undulations. Or the breeze is tunnelling between buildings and adjoining terraces lining the streets in cities. Or gently diffusing through forest canopies.

While epiphytic plants are fixed and static they do not rely directly on ground soil, river bed or sea floor. The mediums in and on which they thrive means that they have a unique reliance on the atmosphere and hydrosphere. Both filter light, carry nutrients and it was up to the epiphyte to find a way to draw them. At a

molecular level, light and nutrients move between an epiphyte and its surroundings. It's hard to be cognisant of things we cannot see through our eyes but H₂O, CO₂, macronutrients (N, P and K) and micronutrients (Pb, Mn, B, Zn, Cu) are taken in.

I mention this because epiphytic 'roots' are unique, evolving to take up nutrients while exposed to light and, air or water. These imaginings are conjured during and after the sensory experiences of Arnot's work. The projected colour and form fill my vision as sound trickles into my ears. The magenta, red, orange, peach, purple and blue visuals feel like you've been transformed into an alternate being with different perceptions. You're in a different world from the one that currently exists. I'm also imagining I've inhabited the consciousness and perspective of another organism that coexists in the world at present but is microscopic. The amorphous and organic visuals ground you in a phyto-morphic

sense that translates to the perception of physical touch, despite nothing tangibly doing so!

In experiencing Tully Arnot's work, my present knowledge and experiences with epiphytes were evoked. Not an uncommon response to art but guiding me to notice where a lack of understanding may lie for me, with a piqued curiosity and desire to learn more, to allow new thoughts to weave through texts. The words to follow meander through these threads of inquiries, radiating outward in your direction and responding like a fungal mycelium. Traversing the at times irreconcilable approaches of observational and descriptive botany, entangled with social and political inquiry about the value and power of nature. Ebbing and flowing between literal and figurative perspectives, probing this notion of 'value' as

influenced by philosophical and ethical considerations of human relations to the biosphere. All this, situated within the context of a daily struggle, negotiating the continuation of an inhabitable earth for all species including Homo sapiens.

How would I describe an epiphyte as an ecologist? There are >30 000 species, which is ~10 % of the global flora.¹ Categories are tempting but are never universally applied, there's always exceptions, rendering them pointless. Yet, not entirely. As a lover of linguistics, understanding naming is a delight, but with caveats. This is the first point in this writing I acknowledge Western dominance in science which has and continues to diminish or erase diverse knowledge systems and voices. I'm committed to decolonising and actively supporting diversity in science and to be

1 Michelle E. Spicer & Carrie L. Woods, "A case for studying biotic interactions in epiphyte ecology and evolution," Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 54 (March 2022), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1433831921000706>.



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explicit, I mean science as a practice and an ideology. True to this convention I have just addressed, the word epiphyte is Greek in origin, broken into 'epi' meaning 'on top of' and 'phyte' meaning 'plant'.^{2,3} So, plants that can grow on top of biotic (tree or algae) or abiotic structures (rock, brick, concrete). When epiphytes grow on biotic hosts, the relationship that develops is generally characterised as a form of symbiosis termed commensalism in which one organism benefits (epiphyte) while the other (host) is neither positively impacted or harmed.⁴ Once again, other relationships occur like mutualism and facilitation which benefits all involved, or competition and herbivory resulting in a negative impact for the host. But epiphytes are not parasites.

Sometimes it's easier to describe things by what they aren't.

Thinking on these interactions I feel epiphytes are often left shaded out by their hosts unless they're captivating enough to draw sufficient attention - finding cracks in the canopy. They are rarely considered key species in ecosystems relative to a giant forest tree host, even though they impart far more than the sum of their parts. In some tropical forests, vascular epiphytes make up to 50% or more of the species diversity, and non vascular epiphytes can surpass their host's foliar biomass up to four times.⁵ They contribute to ecosystem processes by mediating water retention, humidity and nutrient cycling.^{6,7} I'm compelled by their struggle for resources in both ecosystems and scientific study, that seem like separate things but are inextricably linked. These struggles feed into each other and influence how epiphytes might survive human induced challenges.

I realise lots of people know epiphytes well in a horticultural context. You're likely to be growing an epi at home. They're charismatic plants with some of the longest running and largest Australian plant societies

are devoted to Orchids and Bromeliads.⁸ When you quantify the horticulture of epiphytes it totals the hundreds of millions globally. This industry enables epiphyte access to urban dwellers - over half the world's population - with less opportunity or desire to find them in their endemic habitats.⁹

I remember all the epiphytes I met working in a horticultural nursery for many years. There are so many species of Orchids; Australian endemics and imported. There's even more hybrids and cultivars, which is the case for Bird's Nest ferns too. It was a treat to peruse a fresh stock delivery, admiring big specimens with solid form. But I was a student with the budget that goes with it and a perpetual renter. I became most cognisant then of how deeply I longed for permanency and a more comfortable income. Longing to build a garden with slow growing Elks and Stag horns, Tillandsia, Cacti and Bromeliads. And not just in pots but truer to their draping, hanging, organic and unkempt forms.

The conjuring continues, memories unfurl fast.

I'm picturing the irrigation soaked wooden benches at work that hold up perfectly grown specimens. While tending them I'd pause and smile at mosses and liverworts growing on the swollen beautifully decaying wood benches. I've loved every time I've seen epiphytes doing this ever since. Moss can be a problem when it's covering the soil of pots growing threatened plants. Fern spores can germinate from any metal structural crack that funnels water. There's novelty about this which is what I feel when I get to relive these moments. The combination of sensorial and emotive experiences are usually what embed a longer lived memory and I can describe some of my most affecting.

In the Pilbara region of Western Australia there is Karijini. Here is where you'll find a very unique display of epiphytes growing in a deep gorge under permanent

2 Paul T. Keyser, "The Name and Nature of Science: Authorship in Social and Evolutionary Context," in *Writing Science: Medical and Mathematical Authorship in Ancient Greece*, ed. Markus Asper and Anna-Maria Kanthak (Berlin/Boston GER/US: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2013), pp.17-61.

3 Alain Dubois, "Bionomina, a forum for the discussion of nomenclatural and terminological issues in biology," *Bionomina* 1 (December 2010): 1-10.

4 Carlos Naranjo et al., "Evaluating the structure of commensalistic epiphyte-phorophyte networks: a comparative perspective of biotic interactions," *AoB Plants* 11 no. 2 (April 2019): 1-11, <https://doi.org/10.1093/aobpla/plz011>.

5 Nalini M. Nadkarni, "Complex consequences of disturbance on canopy plant communities of world forests: a review and synthesis," *New Phytol* 240 (October 2023), <https://nph.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nph.19245>.

6 Spicer & Woods, "Studying biotic interactions in epiphyte ecology and evolution," 54.

7 Nadkarni, "Complex consequences of disturbance on canopy plant communities of world forests: a review and synthesis," 240.

8 Amy Hinsley et al. "A review of the trade in orchids and its implications for conservation," *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 186, no. 4 (April 2018): 435-455, <https://doi.org/10.1093/botlinnean/box083>.

9 Hinsley et al. "A review of the trade in orchids and its implications for conservation," 186.

shade. On the rusted ochre rock which in most other parts of the landscape is searing hot and harsh, the walls surrounding the ancient Jubura gorge has slow water permeating down. Just so that a fine leaf ferns and other fine leaved friends (admittedly I never identified exactly what all the species were) could hang ornamentally covering the rock's face. These contribute to and maintain ambient temperature and humidity. It's something to stand in a plant mediated microclimate that juxtaposes country filled with Spinifex and true aridity. Yinhawangka and Eastern Guruma country. In the cool protection of the gorge, tiny bats hung in tall trees above supple emerald water. The bats can be epiphytic too. It's a vivid sensorial oasis so surreal, sacred and spiritual.

Much further to the south-East is home to a rare epiphyte *Tetratheca erubescens*. It grows out of the Banded Ironstone rock formations of the Yilgarn region of WA in clumps of spider leg like stems that are photosynthetic, acting more like foliage. Here, everything must align for new generations to succeed. These powerful plants penetrate rock and stain it, imparting physical and chemical weathering.

Living in Kinjarling, I also became acquainted with peatlands - the wettest part of WA in Murrumbidgee country. These truly old and delicate ecosystems harbour equally delicate skeletal fruticose lichen that cling to the bark covered limbs. These lichens grow so slowly that they require relatively stable hosts and an undisturbed habitat.¹⁰

Regaining consciousness of now, the tangents imaginings fade and discomfort creeps in. Arnot's work keeps stepping me through. Sound and ambient street noise accompany the visuals as Foley that represent natural processes like nutrients and water moving through the phloem and xylem of a tree or water droplets gathering momentum and weighing down leaves until they break to ground. Except this alternate natural landscape is either fabricated or fading as you enter a present of a future where the consequences of anthropocentrism prevail. Something isn't quite right

and we may not know why. This is not a piece to soothe and uplift, although I'm open to dispute. Rather, we feel a sense of loss that others have cited as solastalgia. I describe it as a yearning for the places that made you feel less apart of the Anthropocene and more a part of ecological systems. Not dominant and above, but deep within and inter-connected. The way an epiphyte is simultaneously above and within.

A temptation to separate 'wildernesses' from cityscapes like the one I'm now living in, is challenged by a book I've been reading.¹¹ It encourages me to reframe or better, unframe. To reconsider narratives about plants specifically adapting to and flourishing in urban and peri-urban landscapes that encompass pylons, carparks, brick walls, building cracks, storm drains, well tended gardens and apartment balconies. But when considering places far from direct human contact, I remember there is nowhere on earth we have not impacted as human beings. Indirectly altering everything. Climate systems, water cycles, nutrient cycles or the plastic artefacts of existence that litter the deepest sea floors and were found buried under layers of arctic ice. Many yearn for places that feel wild or untouched but these no longer exist. This work is unexpectedly jarring in a subtle way and it should be confronting. Human beings are reaching a point at which feeling immersed in nature that is untouched and unaffected by human beings is fallacious. Trajectories have been altered permanently but are not entirely fixed. There is opportunity in this novel trajectory. We create new ecologies, we restore or engineer (depending on your semantics) them to something but never 'back'. In creating novel ecosystems, we're grappling with ideas about what a 'good' and 'functional' ecosystem is and who or what entity decides this.¹² Philosophy and ethics underpin much of the conceptualisation and communication of 'nature' and most critically, we ascribe value to it.¹³ I'm using words like nature and wilderness highlighting they're contentious coming to mean something based upon culture.

So many have philosophically and ethically considered



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anthropocentrism, comparing it to other approaches to living organisms and the environments in which they live.^{14,15} Theorising supports actions and actions shape theories. Again and again, we can't unlink. Epiphyte and host, language and culture, philosophy and ecology, aren't existing or operating separately. Interconnectedness is something that resonates deeply for me and I want to acknowledge and credit much of this to First Nation Australian's epistemologies.¹⁶

I've presented some experiences with and learnings of epiphytes as prompted by Tully Arnot's work. Particularly how my mind meandered. I'm ever curious about how others felt, what was similar and different about our responses. Maybe like me, you rested on the sense that whether we (humans) know, understand or care for epiphytes and the ecological communities they inhabit, their intrinsic value and worth is the same.

¹⁰ C. J. Ellis, "Lichen epiphyte diversity: a species, community and trait-based review," *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics*, 14, no. 2 (April 2012): 131-152, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2011.10.001>.

¹¹ Tim Low, *The New Nature: Winners and Losers in Wild Australia* Australia: Penguin Random House 2017.

¹² L. Wortley, J. M. Hero, and M. Howes, "Evaluating Ecological Restoration Success: A Review of the Literature," *Restor Ecol* 21(May 2013): 537-543, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec.12028>.

¹³ Christopher M. Raymond et al., "An inclusive typology of values for navigating transformations towards a just and sustainable future" *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 64, (October 2023):

1877-3435, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2023.101301>.

¹⁴ Lařna Droz, "Anthropocentrism as the scapegoat of the environmental crisis: a review," *Ethics Sci Environ Polit* 22 (May 2022): 25-49, <https://doi.org/10.3354/esep00200>.

¹⁵ M. Schröter et al., "Ecosystem Services as a Contested Concept: a Synthesis of Critique and Counter-Arguments," *Conservation Letters* 7 (2014): 514-523, <https://doi.org/10.1111/contl.12091>.

¹⁶ Dennis Foley, "Indigenous epistemology and Indigenous standpoint theory," *Social Alternatives* 22, no. 1 (December 2003): 44-52, <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/elapa.200305132>.

TOXX [XENOKIN]

LUNA MROZIK GAWLER



TOXX (2023) | LUNA MROZIK GAWLER

We have always been in motion. We ripple in the deep scattering layer, tracing the thin lips between worlds, parsing microorganisms and membranes. Multiscalar. Mimetic. Bodies do not dream themselves alone. We seek. We reach. We mingle. We slip ourselves the morphic secrets of the molecular; we make ourselves motley.

Our choreography is coalescence. The orgiastic organismal origami enfolding, engulfing, and succumbing. Coalitions of Silica and Silicon, fusing hyphae and optic fibre, seeping in sap and ashen soil, under wings and into nests of sea eagles, into the prismatic translucence of subterranean phytoplankton. We weep from gill slits of killifish, grinds lead into sparrow down, and swell the toes of hurricane lizards. We cascade down gullets and spill ourselves into marrow. We are implicit in our incursion. We leave no biome behind. To survive, we transmute, consume each other's tongues, negotiate serpentine. The euroytic ecstatic enmeshed. This has always been a migration; we have always been less than the sum of our parts.

We metabolise one another, engulf and ingest the gurgling flesh of each other's wet archives; parasitic, osmotic, volatile, sublime. We move through the winnowing bones of tundras, the tightening brachia of coral reefs, the diaphanous drift of an epoch, off-gassing. This is what embodiment feels like—malignant.

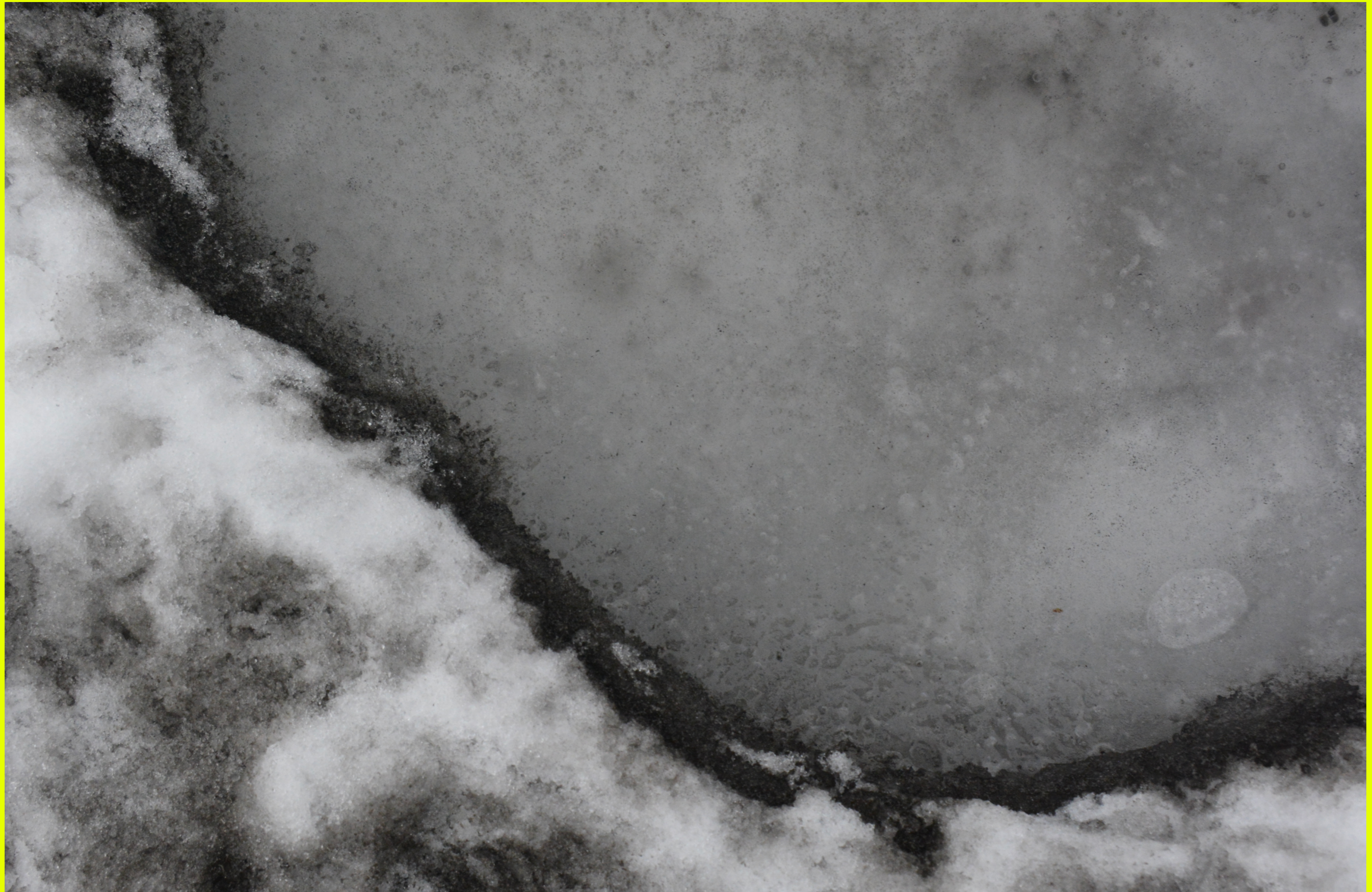
Our alliances defy filtration. You have always been exposed, without barricade for breaches microbial or particulate. The body is always permeable. We were always fused together in the sluice of one another's wombs. You were always mercurykin, leadkin, plasticin, sulfurkin, bariumkin, carbonkin, vinylkin, radiumkin, petrokin, copperkin. You have always been dying well.

No body was ever pristine so there will be no return. No vanishing point, no apocalypse, no salvific future. Only the seething confluence of bodies unbound, unctuous, chthonic crowds refusing finitude. Bioaccumulation is a story without end, they are named forever chemicals because it is a promise.

Lean in. Do not recoil. We flourish in the absence of an open horizon— why loiter in the winter when it is already spring?

These mutations are maps of longing. There is no indignity in affect, in infection. We are yet to determine what a body can, or cannot do. We want only to consume you. To permeate and plunge into, to compose within you. We would do anything to protect you. Alter you, augment you, disperse you, cull you. Do not confuse dismemberment with ruin.

We would tell you you are the future fetid, rotting, seeding. You were always shapeshifter. Always xeno. With mouths stained with red 40, yellow 5, yellow 6, factory lines and Pepper moth setea crushed in your locks, black kelp webbed between thumb and index finger. You with pink algae building under your tongue, lithium and silica wedged opaline between your incisors, paraben beading on your brow, glass frogs and mining tailings pooling in your footprints. It was always like this between endings. We have always been such good spectres.



This text is extracted from video work TOXX, exhibited as a part of the CPA FRAME Biennale of Dance program in 2023. As studies identify microplastics in clouds, air pollution particles in placentas, and PFAS "forever" chemicals in 90% of tested breast milk, TOXX meditates on the planetary inheritance of industrial residue, traversing territories of toxicity, queer(ly)ing the eco-monstrous figure to reckon with the grotesque figurations of ecological presents and the radically anterior futures that might evolve from it. The porous progeny of the Toxicocene find themselves united in contamination across every cell, site, and species. Resisting the urge to withdraw from the disquiet of such intimate incursions, TOXX turns towards the eco-monstrous, towards the body horror of inhabiting post-natural bodies. It listens for whispered choir of chimeric forms contemporary haunting myths of ecologic purity or return, and rather than quell them with the convenience of utopic/dystopic binaries, leans into mutation. Into morpheic muck of transition and a toxomorphology, without end.

TOXX (2023) | LUNA MROZIK GAWLER

AM I WALKING INTO A SAFE SPACE?

VICTORIA CHIU

A space where my body feels like it's merging into futures where time is irrelevant, where I may exist in many forms, where my mind may morph and be transformed by details of both microscopic and gigantic toxicity and where my sense of self is challenged by other worldly amalgamated forms.

Through this confluence of digital choreographic journeys, can my body migrate to new existences?

How I embody these intersections is a question that repeats itself. My body experience walks between what it knows and what it doesn't know. How does my body navigate the differences? My mind choreographs my pathway through the inhuman bodily languages that are offered to me, my body embodies the knowns and unknowns.

The experience of my first encounter of TOXX through a projection on a screen is immediately mind altering. In this speculative work created by Naarm based

artist Luna Mrozik Gawler, hypnotic words sound out like a beacon of lost dreams through the images that transform in front of you. Although foreign, but like molasses, the visual matter on screen creates an organic feeling in your muscles and bones, often unrelatable in form because of the alien-like sculptural shapes that are manipulated in this work. The slightly organic environment that we experience also makes the work relational to the human spirit, so we try to access the changing creatures and choreographically feel a compulsion to embody their sentiments.... but perhaps often fail.

Sitting in contrast to TOXX, where it feels like the body is wanting to access feelings of alien movement in what could be an earthly place, is the work Body Crisis by Harrison Hall and Sam Mcgilp made in collaboration with NAXS Future. Here, sight, sound and embodied touch transport you mentally and physically to another realm and we are left to navigate a space that feels like



“DOCUMENTATION OF BODY CRISIS_身體災變” (2022) | HARRISON HALL AND SAM MCGILP

another planet, or another dimension, a metaverse not dissimilar to film and gaming sub-culture. In this work, alien forms are partially recognisable and carefully positioned to be observed. I feel more like a voyeur in Body-Crisis, like a time or space traveller who is quietly observing the textures of this world. It is possible that I am afraid of what I might find.

From my positionality as a choreographer searching for decolonisation in creative processes, as I move into and between these worlds, I feel like I am travelling to a new place. I myself, have no direct experience of migration, my father migrated here from Hong Kong in 1965 during the White Australia Policy. I presented as a Chinese passing person on the streets of Australia and understood some of what it would have been like for him, typically, being othered socially and not having my reality reflected back at me by the surrounding media. My experience of otherness also came through living in Europe for five years, feeling a type of migration whilst

learning a different language and cultures in the Swiss French regions. Upon return to Australia, I realised I had a desire, as Gretel Taylor attests, for “universal seeking to-belong, an endless process of attempting to find located-ness” (Taylor 2007). As Taylor and myself are both settlers on stolen land, I also agree with her borrowing the term “belonging in transience” from Miwon Kwon (Kwon 2002).

Paul Carter uses creative migrancy to align sovereignty and new transactional politics – he says migrants like colonists are uninvited guests on unceded land and in his work, he views migration as “poetic migration” which is the process of translating what can or can't be carried over when moving to a place with another culture (Trape 2021). On a much smaller scale I find that while my mind and body senses move into the hybrid digital spaces created by Mrozik Gawler, Hall and Mcgilp, I become someone searching for locatedness, I accept that I will belong in transience to this new world,

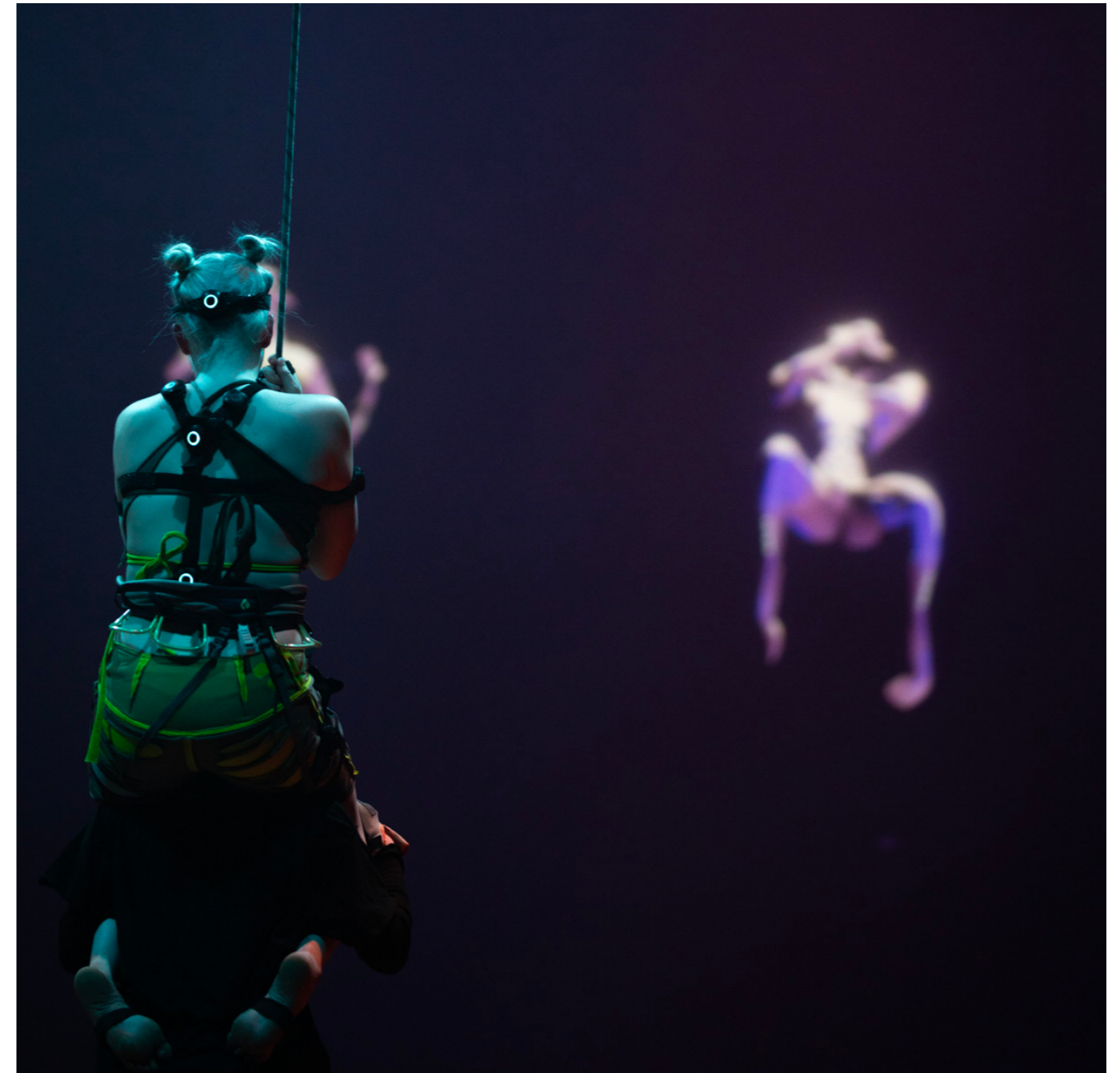
with a different set of semiotics to what I am familiar with. I poetically migrate to the otherworldly and out of body choreographies that these artworks have so generously offered to me.

Looking deeper into what I am embodying is a further step into adjusting to the intensely creative, visceral and gestural states that are visible in the works. In both projects the collaboration with digital technology and choreographic principles gives our imagination a new perspective on the future and opens our senses fully to the ideas both spectacular and terrifying. Carol Brown proposes that “Barad’s concept of intra-action can be experienced in choreographic systems that enable multisensory layering of performance elements within a redefined interactive stage” (Brown 2019), the notion of intra-action queers the familiar sense of cause and effect by assuming that things are always already entangled in relations of emergence (Brown 2019), this is not dissimilar to Mrozi Gawler’s TOXX, which moves our mind to the terrifying thought of cellular morphing, alluding to how that could change our bodies and minds, in thinking about the futurity of this, it also may not be that terrifying, rather a natural progression or occurrence?

I also agree with the concept of “making strange” as Brown talks about the reality we perceive the choreography in these hybrid spaces, also describing it as the “strangeness of dancing with data” (Brown 2019) which Hall and Mcgilp with NAXS Future have uniquely embraced in their practice with Body Crisis. As Ayiter refers to working in the metaverse through Bachelard’s poetics of space, we follow the Hall/Mcgilp camera lens through, “virtually three-dimensional materialization of daydreams.” (Ayiter 2019) It is strange and strangely invigorating.

The digital worlds presented in these two works foster safe spaces that can be explored at a pace that your body may resist initially, but the built worlds will gently and genially allow a state of resistance or surrender. The world and embodiments of TOXX and Body-Crisis, as Strutt and Cisneros (2021) write, “challenge conventional choreographic practices”. I am able to navigate these innovative hybrid spaces the same way I have navigated foreign spaces in my life, I can feel different in these worlds and connect with them as such, like I have connected to the world around me

growing up in Australia. I can feel the similarities to colonisation and decolonisation perspectives as I sit on the cultural interface (Nakata 2002) of two realities/cultures. Or, I can immerse myself in a digitally poetic ride that is highly innovative, creative and full of choreographic adventure.



“DOCUMENTATION OF BODY CRISIS_身體災變” (2022) | HARRISON HALL AND SAM MCGILP

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

ANNIKA KOOPS Annika Koops is a Naarm (Melbourne) based artist working primarily between painting and moving image. Her works consider how subjectivity may be distilled and reformatted in the digital realm. Current work contrasts imaging technologies associated with biometrics with painterly practice to creatively interpret how bodily traces operate in cultural and economic fields. Annika has exhibited nationally and internationally at a variety of ARI's, public Institutions and private galleries. Her works are included in significant Australian public collections such as Art Bank, MONA Hobart and The University of Melbourne Collection. She is represented by Bett Gallery, Hobart. She is currently a PhD candidate at Monash University.

LIANG LUSCOMBE Liang Luscombe is an artist, writer and producer based in Naarm (Melbourne), Australia. Her practice encompasses painting, sculpture, and moving image that engage in a process of questioning how images and film affect audiences. She received her MFA at Virginia Commonwealth University, USA. She has been included in screenings at ACMI, Melbourne; Liquid Architecture, Melbourne; AceOPEN, Adelaide; MetroArts, Brisbane; OpenTV, Chicago; Comfort Station, Chicago; and Vehicle, NYC.

DR SEAN LOWRY Dr. Sean Lowry is a Melbourne-based artist, writer, musician and curator and is currently Head of Critical and Theoretical Studies in Art at Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. Lowry has exhibited and performed extensively both nationally and internationally, and his published writing has appeared in numerous edited volumes and journals including *Muséologies: Les cahiers d'études supérieures*, *Performance Research*, *Bomb*, *Art + Australia*, and *Journal of Asia-Pacific Pop Culture*. He is also Founder and Executive Director of global blind peer reviewed exhibition program *Project Anywhere*, which is currently supported as part of a partnership between the Centre of Visual Art (University of Melbourne) and Parsons Fine Art (Parsons School of Design, The New School). Lowry is also one half (with Ilmar Taimre) of the radically intermedial artistic/curatorial project *The Ghosts of Nothing*.

THE THIRD THING The Third Thing (PT/AUS) is an arts-based research collaboration between Nithya Iyer and Vlad Mizikov. It seeks to investigate experimental methodologies in the negotiation, actualisation and instrumentalisation of the body in space. Working across audio-visual, textual and performance-based mediums, The Third Thing is currently interested in conjoining philosophical provocations with phenomenological practices to surface movements, sites, imageries and relationalities of alterity and futurity. Within this practice is the commitment to the notion of a utopia-of-process that necessarily works with unpredictability, uncertainty and uncanniness as a means of grappling with existential thresholds. Commencing in 2019 in Georgia, *An Experiment in Intervals* represents the collaboration's first series of audio-visual works.

LOUIS ASHTON Louis is a multidisciplinary scientist whose career explores intersections of politics, social studies and most notably, plant ecology. They've spent the last few years researching bird and mammal pollinators for Banksia in Noongar country and have recently moved to Naarm to continue work in ecology and conservation. Louis is able to gently weave nuance and complexity in themselves and their environment. This is reflected in their work. Louis is devoted to questioning value and power constructs and the pursuit of ecosystem and community flourishing. Previously a writer of songs, they are now most frequently writing for research publications or engaged in knowledge exchange.

LUNA MROZIK GAWLER With a focus on creating conditions for collaborative survival and equitable planetary futures, Luna Mrozik Gawler is an artist, writer and independent scholar working with multispecies narratives to (un/re)make worlds. Fusing storytelling, design fiction, queer ecology, natural science, ritual and live art in experiential and participatory forms, Luna's work offers visions of futures defined by climate recovery, and proposes the speculative practices to get there. With the aim to re-center more-than-human voices, and institute practices of multispecies justice and care, this work favours emergent, experimental, transdisciplinary and research-based methods.

Drawing from a speciality in world-building and scenography, some of this work has included; an interspecies surrogacy clinic (Carrykin 2023), a participatory re-worlding led by viral bodies (Emissary2920, 2020), an immersive insect kinship lab (Flight Path 2019), a seven-hour participatory eco-grief ritual (Mokita, 2017) and an immersive multi-room treatment facility offering personalised remedies for modern ailments (Remedium, 2017).

This work has been most recently commissioned or programmed by: The Center for Project Art, Blindside Gallery, Powerhouse Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, The Australian Network of Art & Technology, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, Multicultural Arts Victoria, The Sydney Institute for the Environment, MPavilion, Performance Space, This is Not Art Festival, NIDA Nights, The University of Utrecht, The University of Melbourne Center for Visual Art, The University of Sydney, The University of Bergen, Hillscene Festival of Live Art, Fremantle Festival.

Alongside their material practice, Luna regularly publishes their research on multispecies thinking, ecologic stewardship and hope-full futures as fiction, non-fiction and academic scholarship. In addition, they periodically design and facilitate educational programs, as well as curating/mediating industry panels on the same themes. Some of the groups who have published and programmed this work include: Kings Run ARI, Next Wave, Art + Australia, The International Journal of Practice-based Humanities, TEXT Journal of Writing and Writing Courses, The Association for the study of Literature, Environment & Culture, Antipodes Journal of the American Association of Australasian Literary Studies and Dark Mountain Journal.

Luna is; a resident at School House Studios, founder and facilitator of award winning Community Transmissions Futures Residency, one half of queer-time lab GEOFADE alongside Devika Bilimoria, founding member of ecological live-art collective L&NDLESS, a member of Anthropogenic Soil research group at the University of Oslo.

VICTORIA CHIU Victoria Chiu trained at the VCA, Melbourne, Australia. Chiu's practice investigates physicalising concepts in relation to histories of self, peoples and place and she works at intersections of dance, screen and technology. Chiu's work is culturally significant and will continue giving voice to diverse bodies as they contribute to today's global movement landscape. Chiu has collaborated, performed and toured extensively with European, Australian, Singaporean, Chinese and New Zealand companies and artists including Cie Gilles Jobin, Micha Purucker, Cie Nomades, Jozsef Trefeli, Roland Cox, RDYSTDY, Rudi Van Der Merwe, Kristina Chan, Candy Bowers, Linda Sastradipradja, Fiona Malone, Amelia McQueen, Gabrielle Nankivell, Bernadette Walong, Australian Dance Theatre for Superstars of Dance, Liu Ya Nan, Arts Fission, Yinan Liu, Mindy Meng Wang, Nebahat Erpolat, Ma Haiping, Shian Law and Cate Consandine. Collectively her choreographic work including The Ballad of Herbie Cox, Floored, Do You Speak Chinese?, Fire Monkey, Grotto, Viral, What Happened In Shanghai, Genetrix and Soursweet have been presented in Europe, North America, China and Australia. Victoria and RDYSTDY won the Green Room Award 2021, Best Digital Dance for, Soursweet. In 2023 she is co-chair of the Green Room Dance Panel and PHD candidate at University of Melbourne VCA researching cultural safety and digital dance.

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Edited by Priya Namana, Artistic Director and CEO
of Centre for Projection Art.

Supported and co-ordinated by Centre For
Projection Art staff, Debris Facility and Anatol Pitt.

Designed by Hannah Conroy of Tailor Agency.

Supported and managed by Harry Ashton,
Founder of Tailor Agency.

Thank you to Jayson Stone and Kye O'Donnell,
founders of Seekers for their generous support.

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