

ON FORGETTING

*It is possible to live almost without remembering
and live happy, as evidenced by the animal,
but it is still impossible to live without forgetting.'*

Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*

ON FORGETTING

NEW WORDS BY JEN COMING ::

The 26th University of Canberra Faculty of Arts & Design Staff Exhibition

Generator Gallery, Belconnon Arts Centre, 118 Emu Bank, Belconnen ACT,
26 March – 9 May 2021

Find past exhibition catalogues at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/research/faculty-research-centres/cccr/resources>

All measurements are h x w x d in cms

If there are no measurements, the dimensions are variable.

All photography is by the artist unless otherwise credited.

Hakim Abdul Rahim

Monica Andrew

Rhonda Ayliffe

Dianne Firth

Caren Florance

U.K. Frederick

Katie Hayne

Kerry Martin

Fanke Peng

Bethaney Turner

Jen Webb, John White,
Paul Munden & Paul Hetherington

Jordan Williams

Short biographies

Hakim Abdul Rahim

.I Am.Plant.Am.I

2020. Collaborative performance with plant. Chairs, rug. Dimensions variable.

Artist statement

Evolving from Marina Abramović's 'The Artist is Present' (2010), this work explores engagements and encounters with our forgotten kin, plants. Often relegated to the amorphous green background, we are blind in the acknowledgment of our botanical brethren as not only living but as individual beings within our environment. What are plants and how do we know them? By inviting viewers to gaze upon their viridian partners it is hoped that participants can reflect and interrogate their relationship with the botanical world and come one step closer in understanding our chlorophytic relations.

Research statement

Wandersee and Schussler (1999) introduced the term 'Plant Blindness' to explain the human predilection for 'zoocentrism' in which we fail to notice that plants are alive, and are insensitive to the role they play in our lives, favouring animals and other humans. A notion that vegetative ecologist Francis Hallé shares where he states that people are "generally poorly acquainted with plants, looking down on them or simply ignoring them" (Hallé 2002). Yet plants permeate our lives and form the backbone of many ecosystems that exist on earth.

It is from this oversight and against the backdrop of the Anthro-Cthulhu-Capitalocene, that the work disembarks, attempting to navigate and explore the gossamer boundary between plant and human. Entangling the performative work of Abramović with the methods of plant ethnography as described by Hartigan (2017), the work explores the notions of encounters with, and the presence of the botanical being. By drawing the viewer into the company of the plant within this liminal space, what can we learn from this encounter?

Another point to note which is vital to the work is the acknowledgement of the vegetal collaborators that make this work possible. This is by no means anthropomorphizing plants but rather affirming their autonomous nature and removing them from the utilitarian nature that often afflicts them.

So, why don't you take a seat?

Hallé, F., 2002. *In praise of plants*. Timber Press.

Hartigan Jr, J., 2017. *Care of the Species: Races of Corn and the Science of Plant Biodiversity*. U of Minnesota Press.

Wandersee, J.H. and Schussler, E.E., 1999. Preventing plant blindness. *The American Biology Teacher*, 61(2), pp.82-86.

https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/marina-abramovic-marina-abramovic-the-artist-is-present-2010/



Monica Andrew

Don't Forget the Aral Sea

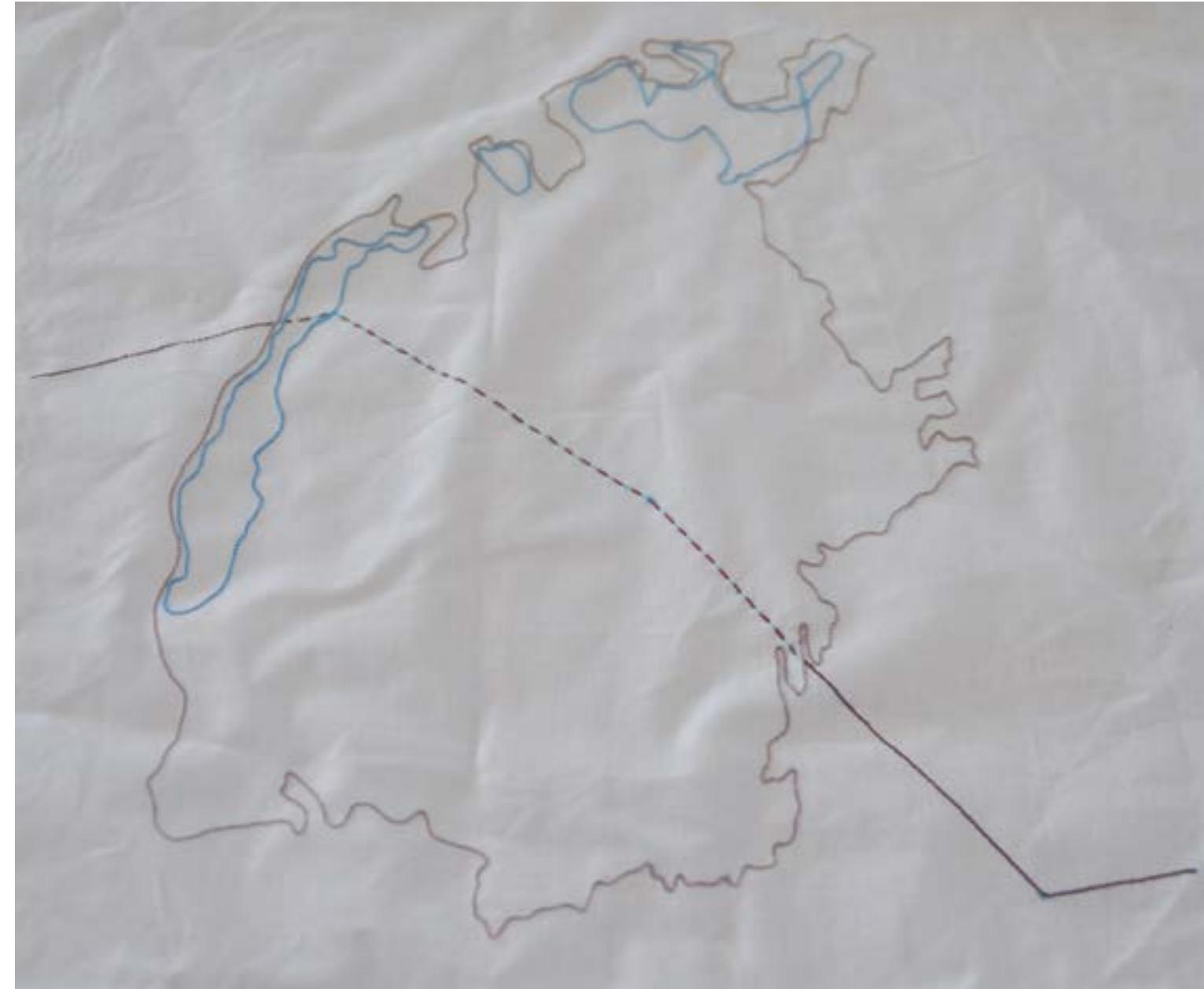
2020. Textile. 53 x 49cm.

Artist statement

While needlework skills have largely disappeared from school curricula, in the past they were an essential aspect of girls' education. Not only were girls taught to sew but they were taught other subjects, such as letters and numbers, through the medium of embroidery, and geography lessons included stitching maps. I have drawn on this largely forgotten tradition to highlight the plight of the Aral Sea; once the fourth largest lake in the world, it has been drastically reduced by diverting the waters for agriculture, particularly cotton.

Research statement

Monica Andrew is researching the potential contribution of needlecraft skills to clothing and textile sustainability. The rise of fast fashion has been accompanied by a decline in needlecraft skills, leading to a rapid increase in the volume of clothing and textiles going to landfill. Monica is exploring whether consumers would use clothing for longer, and thereby reduce its environmental impact, if they were able to access assistance with mending.



Rhonda Ayliffe

Fugue

2007-2021. Coptic-bound book forms created from decommissioned encyclopaedias. Dimensions variable.

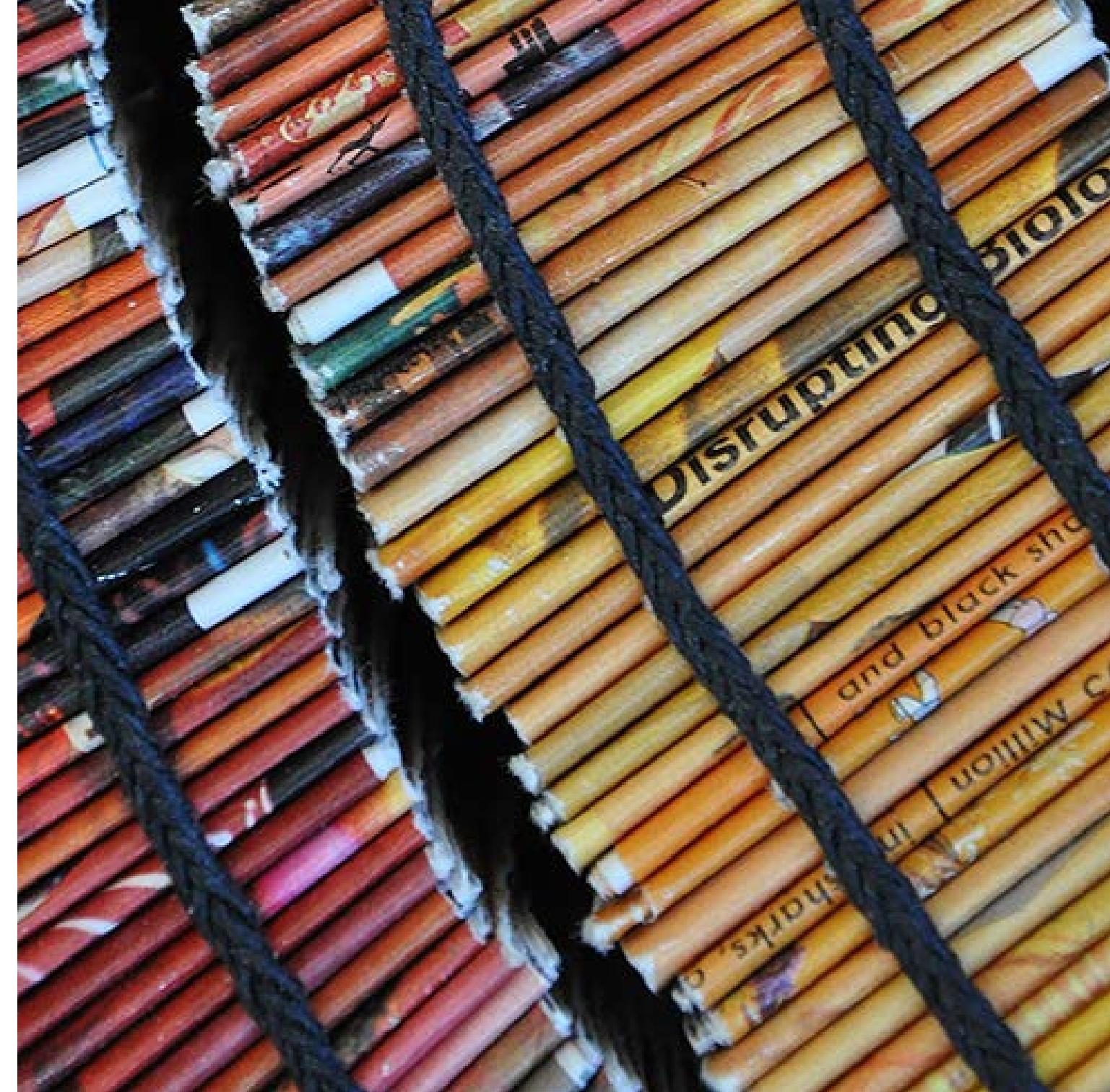
Artist statement

I don't know how I got here. The world is on fire. A swirl of confusion. Smoke, water, ash. I don't know how I got here. My cats are crammed in a cage. Complaining. Twisted piles of corrugated iron. A bloated charred dead horse. Ash. Tears. I don't know how I got here. Asbestos signs. Anger. Despair. Tents. Generators. Truckloads of hay. Tears. Meetings. More meetings. Ideas. I don't know how I got here. I'm sleepwalking in unfamiliar territory. I find a student card in my bag with my face on it. I don't know how I got here...

'Fugue' utilises Coptic bound book forms created by the artist over the past fourteen years to allude to the difficult space between the desire to forget and the need to remember; the need to forget and the desire to remember.

Research statement

Rhonda is a visual artist and PhD student in the UC Faculty of Art and Design. Her practice-led research project, 'Ash Alchemy', will be exploring how creative arts can assist in building community resilience in the aftermath of community trauma.



Dianne Firth

Dry Sclerophyll Forest: Fire / Regrowth

2012. Two companion textile works. 65 x 134cm each.

Artist statement

This pair of layered, stitched textiles were initially created for *Regeneration*, a juried exhibition at the Manly Art Gallery, NSW in 2012. They capture, in an abstract manner, the relationship between fire and regrowth in dry sclerophyll forests. The ideas were inspired by Mary White's, *The Greening of Gondwana: the 400 million year story of Australia's plants* (1986), where she describes the evolution of Australian flora and its adaptation to impoverished soils, arid regimes, and fire. We love our distinctive eucalypt forests and scrublands and have expanded to live within these fire-prone environments. It is easy to forget that dry sclerophyll forests are highly flammable and actually require fire to maintain forest health over time.

Research statement

Australians are constantly and often brutally reminded of the part that fire plays in the country's landscapes. Between July 2019 and February 2020 the NSW Rural Fire Service reported that over 11,000 bush or grass fires burnt more than 5 million hectares and destroyed almost 2,500 homes. Millions of animals were lost and smoke from the fires affected people across the eastern states.

It is not as if bushfires were new. Australia is one of the most fire-prone regions in the world. Aborigines used fire as a tool for millennia and we have two hundred years of records of major fire events across Australia. What is new is the recognition that human-induced climate change is making things worse.

All eucalypt forests depend on fire for regeneration. The seeds released from woody capsules fall onto nutrient-rich ash seedbeds where competition from other plants for light, water and nutrients has been removed, and plant-eating insects and organisms in the soil are reduced during the short but crucial early growth period. Other fire recovery traits developed by eucalypts include epicormic sprouting from the trunks and branch regrowth from basal lignotubers. Depending on the intensity of the fire a eucalypt forest can re-grow in five years.

Although the vast tracts of eucalypt forest that burnt over 2019-2020 may eventually regenerate, this could be compromised by predicted longer fire seasons as well as controversy over land use planning and forestry management practices. This includes controlled burns. Much more research is required.



Caren Florance

Remembering Herself

2021. Artist book: digitally printed pages, hand-bound. 14 x 14 x 1cm.

Artist statement

I've long heard of the power of music on memory. I experience it myself every day, and you probably do too. I collect lyrics that stick in my mind, and even reading them brings the music to life.

My mother is experiencing early-onset dementia, most likely hastened by trauma. At the time of writing this she recognises me and knows our relationship, but remembers very little of my life after I entered my teens. She remembers her own very early years vividly. Our best conversations are triggered by music. When the right song plays, she will not only sing along with the lyrics, but she will start talking about a memory with only a few prompts.

Research statement

The central core of my research interest is artists books: their materiality and history, their makers, and above all their incredible flexibility of purpose and capacity as a research tool. Over the past few years I have worked for a University of Canberra research project that helps trauma-affected people to use creativity as a coping and growth strategy. I've worked with two programs: ADF ARRTS (Arts for Resilience, Recovery, Training and Skills) which helps Defence personnel, and Regeneration, which focuses on fire-affected regional communities. These projects, and the experience of my mother's health deterioration has pushed me to contextualise and connect my work with people in more direct, personal and interactive ways.

When looking up research around memory and music, I found the Cochrane research network's ongoing investigation, 'Music-based therapeutic interventions for people with dementia' (most recent report: 23 July 2018). This report calls for more rigorous testing on this topic, as many researchers are attempting to find blanket solutions to apply to institutional care. Testing has been undertaken on many groups of dementia patients from all over the world but at no point anywhere in the very detailed report have they defined the type of music used.

'Music' is a contested term, often reserved for classical music. There is a huge difference between playing classical music at mealtimes and playing a tailored, subjective selection that relates directly to an individual's life. The Cochrane report made me think about our aged care industry in Australia, and how hard the industry strives for a 'one size fits all' cost-effective policy of care. The Aged Care Royal Commission's final report (2021) has exposed how badly this policy is failing our older generations.



'You don't own me,' she sings

UK Frederick

2 degrees C

2021. Earthenware. Approx. 100cm diameter

Artist statement

I don't want to forget that our world is heating inexorably, each day each week each year. But like most people I also don't want to face the harrowing reality of what this actually means. I inevitably turn away from the horrors that climate change is already bringing: the sight of starving polar bears, the extreme fires and winds, the creep of water, the intense heat. These signs are the tangible and intangible expressions of our carbon footprint leaving its impact on our planet. The work 2 degrees C comprises hundreds of earthenware impressions gleaned from the rubberized soles of shoes I know as well as those I've never met. They have been collected gradually, over several years, from the shoes of friends and relatives as well as from my own wardrobe and the underside of anonymously-worn sneakers cluttering up shop shelves. Each is subsequently kiln fired and painted in black earthenware slip. Together they stand in for the carbon footprint we are collectively making as a global community. They have been arranged in a manner that resembles both a globe and the Ishihara plates conventionally used to assess colour blindness in human beings. The number or letter in the centre of the design is there, whether or not we see it, and indicates the temperature rise and tipping point before climate change irrevocably alters life on earth—said to be 2 degrees C.

Research statement

Investigating the traces that human beings leave in the world is at the core of archaeological research. Much of the evidence the archaeological record comprises conveys information about the lifeways of particular cultures, societies and communities and to a lesser extent details the presence of individuals. For this reason, discoveries like the footprints preserved in the Laetolian volcanic tuffs of Tanzania or the sediments of Lake Mungo, are remarkable. Such direct indexical traces of ancestral individuals present a powerful connection between the past and present, and in progression, point to a future to come. They are also a poignant reminder of both our fleeting time on this earth, and the enduring impact our lives can have on our surroundings.

As an artist and archaeologist my research has long been focused on examining the marks of human activity, the material and immaterial signs of our behaviour and the roles we play in shaping the world. My interest in art and mark-making as a mode of expression enfold examples from deep time, such as rock art, through to the more ephemeral, such as graffiti or oil stains on the pavement. My practice is also influenced by environmental issues and the pressing concerns of the Anthropocene, which I regularly explore through the lens of the discarded and overlooked. As a creative-practice-based scholar I recognise the power of art to engage, educate and affect social change. The motif of the fragment, which often appears in my work, in this context refers to a process of gradual accumulation, the existence of the individual within the whole, and the visible evidence of inaction and uncertainty. It draws attention to the blind spots that exist not only in our capacity to see a future of shared responsibility but also a lack of willingness to work collectively as a global community to avoid catastrophe.



Katie Hayne

Urban Renewal

2021. Inkjet print. 130 x 29 cm.

Artist statement

I first began photographing my footsteps in the heaving tourist hotspots of London, Paris and Venice. Here I am at home in Canberra, walking the ground of an urban renewal site on Northbourne Avenue. As I walk, I contemplate what came before, what will come after and how we can reclaim our local histories.

The technique involves using the 'panorama' function on my mobile phone camera and its inability to automatically stitch complete images together as I move. The missed information and digital glitches convey an interrupted and incomplete experience of the world.

Research statement

For my postgraduate research, I have been investigating how painting and drawing can enable engagement with a local public housing undergoing urban renewal. This photographic work is part of a series connected to my painting practice through a painterly approach to photography. I interrogate how we experience places and the different ways an artist can reflexively insert themselves into an art work.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* Michel de Certeau provides a philosophy of space and how we can regain agency from the forces of neo-liberalism. De Certeau writes how this reclamation of space can occur by pedestrian movement through the city:

Their story begins on ground level, with footsteps. They are myriad, but do not compose a series. They cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation (20).

The disembodied footsteps in these photos trace a path through places and the space of the city.



Michel de C, 1980. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press..

Kerry Martin

Fear [when winners are losers]

2018. Cloth-covered MDF, ribbon, thread, mirror, acrylic. 40 x 75 x 2 cm.

Frustration [don't ask me] & Frustration [the truth hurts]

2018. Banners: fabric, applique, broderie perse, cotton tape. 225 x 94 cm each.

Artist statement

These pieces are part of a larger body of work titled *Thread Bare[ing]: a confessional response to witnessing dementia*.

I am a child of parents who were both diagnosed with, and subsequently died from Alzheimer's Disease. While statistics about genetic inheritance is inconclusive, and according to Dementia Australia, "having a close relative with the disease is not evidence of a genetic link", the fear that I may get this illness is nonetheless real and present. Because I live with this, I want to subtly confront viewers of *Fear* with the possibility that dementia might also be in their future.

My father died in December 2013 and although my mother was already showing some signs of dementia, this major event accelerated her decline. She had no memory that her husband of 65 years had died, and I was continually bombarded with queries regarding his whereabouts. *Frustration* is a confessional work consisting of large, visible questions and 'hidden', unsaid answers providing a glimpse of my frustration at questions that were impossible to answer honestly without causing harm.

Research statement

This research set out to explore, using textile techniques, the emotional impact of witnessing dementia. A key aim of the research was to make the private public, to generate discussion about the illness, and increase empathy for, and understanding of those experiencing it as either carer or observer. The overarching question is: *How can textile techniques be used to express the emotions raised by witnessing a parent's dementia?*

Although dementia was a significant protagonist in this research, the illness *per se* was not the main focus. Many of the main devices employed in making the work, including repetition and fragmentation, did however take their cue from the behavioural characteristics of the dementia sufferer. Given dementia's epidemic proportions it was important that the work struck a chord with viewers who had their own experience of witnessing the illness. In some small way, it also provides a window into the experience for those who have not.

Textile artist Sara Impey in her book, *Text in Textile Art*, notes that 'words [in art] draw people in ... they can make an instant impact, or ... demand a deeply thoughtful and analytic response'. Placing my work in the context of confessional art allowed the explicit use of text and strengthened my aim of clearly conveying emotion and making the private public.



Fanke Peng

Tracing Forgetfulness

2021. Digital print. 84 x 89 cm.

Artist statement

Forgetfulness is a normal part of ageing. As we get older, all functions of our body decrease markedly. Tactile and visual stimulation has been used to prevent or at least inhibit cognitive decline and produce a positive response. This research aims to explore the challenges that older people are experiencing as regards forgetting and visualize this transition via fashion performance, with smart textiles.

Research statement

It's hard, if not impossible, to meaningfully explain to others what happens to someone experiencing memory loss, especially for people with Dementia and such a challenge is most difficult for the sufferer. This artwork uses thermochromic textiles, a thermal sensation and colour responses material, to visualize the subtle transition and the struggles experienced. Body heat makes thermochromic cloth fade, which resonates with the memory loss process. A performer uses thermochromic material to cover a mannequin's head, a metaphor for people with memory loss. She/he tries to remove the fabric that blocks their vision and hearing. Her/His struggling is evidenced by all the colours fading and handprints left on the cloth.



Bethaney Turner

Forgotten Food or Becomings in Microbial Worlds

2020. Mounted photographs (30 x 40cm ea), garbage bin installation.

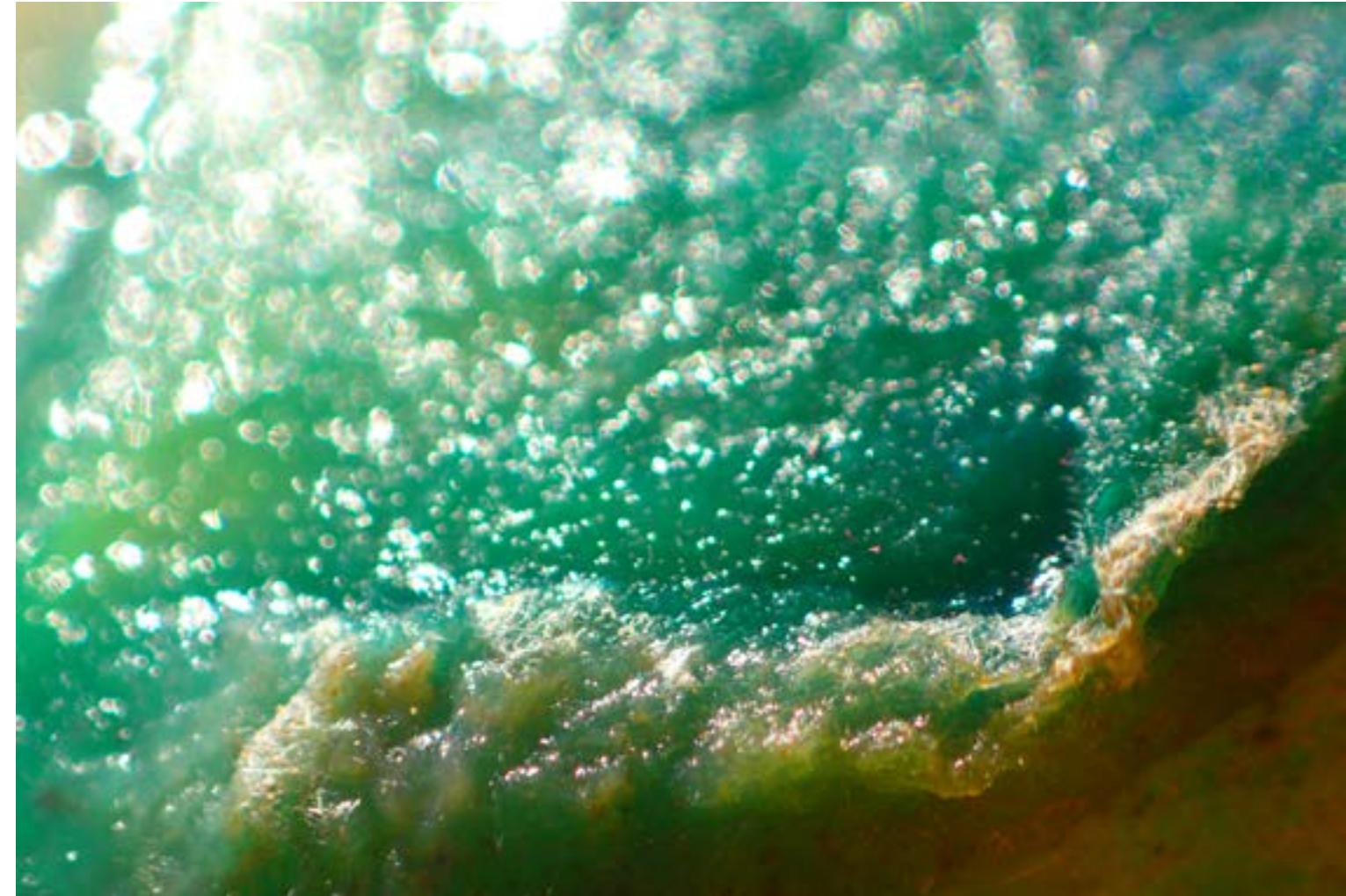
Artist statement

This work draws attention to the multispecies becomings of forgotten food by capturing images of the microbial worlds it enlivens. The forgetting of food and its discard are processes that draw sustenance from anthropocentric regulatory regimes of risk, local government service provision and infrastructure, and socially accepted rhythms of everyday life. Within these socio-technical fabrications, household bins become conduits of forgetting. For householders, this forgetting is commonly imbued with guilt and worry. Food that is binned, like the affective dimensions of the act of discard itself, continues to 'become'. Entombed in landfill, discarded food commingles with other forgotten waste inciting becomings capable of supporting the emergence of new microbial lives such as methane producing bacteria. These lively entities regularly breach human efforts to contain them, oozing through barriers to contaminate soil and water and off-gassing into the atmosphere. The photographs in this work capture bacteria grown on petri dishes inoculated with the residue from a week's worth of forgotten household food waste mixed with regular household rubbish. Here we enter into microbial worlds, tracing their movements, growth and becomings.

Research statement

In the majority world, most bodies have been habituated into everyday routines that enable and encourage the forgetting of waste. Landfill is the most prolific marker of these normalised ways of life. As Hird writes, "Western landfills are sites of forgetting made possible through legislative decision, regulative decree, risk models, community accession, and engineering practice" (Hird, 2013, p. 105). Households are enmeshed within these socio-technical practices in multiple ways through the provision of particular conduits that shape waste flows such as bins. Bins provide modes of habituating inhabitants into the rhythms of hiding, removing and forgetting waste in concert with the needs of service providers (Chappells & Shove, 1999; Hetherington, 2004). These dominant conduits of waste removal, however, obscure the ongoing becomings of waste. As Gregson and Crang note, waste "is a long ways from stuff that 'just is'... rather it becomes" (2010, p. 1028). The transition of goods to waste and their eventual disposal from homes are not inevitable processes, nor are they acts of finality. The becomings of waste are not stabilized when removed from homes and entombed in the earth. Compacted in landfill, organic waste feeds methane producing bacteria and numerous microbes that produce leachates that regularly breach human efforts to contain them, consequently entering soil and water sources where they can threaten the health and safety of many humans and more-than-humans.

This artwork builds on the artist's ethnographic research with householders and their encounters with food waste. Food waste and our management of it are multi-sensorial, visceral experiences with considerable affective force. Despite the apparent profligacy and associations with a 'throwaway society' mentality that are commonly connected to



Jen Webb and John White with Paul Munden and Paul Hetherington

'Fragments I have shored against my ruins'

2021. Jen & John: Installation of Shoji screens with objects. Paul & Paul: poems. Dimensions variable.

Artist statement

TS Eliot's long poem of loss, 'The Wasteland', offers as its last coherent line: 'These fragments I have shored against my ruin'. We respond to this image with a more optimistic vision, one that recognises the value of forgetting and views the fragments that remain in memory as curiosities; or, borrowing from Donald Barthelme, as 'souvenirs' that may 'merge, blur – cohere is the word, maybe – into something meaningful'. In this work we have attempted to mix up the 'souvenir' – in the form of aleatory objects – with more considered views of forgetting, articulated in that most aleatory form of communication: poetry.

Research statement

Western culture typically adopts a binary approach to memory and forgetting, identifying the former a value, the latter a loss (Dessingué & Winter 2015). Forgetting-as-loss is very evident in the the lives of those suffering such conditions as dementia; and even among those without neurological disease, forgetting can result in very negative outcomes. But memory can be equally damaging, particularly (the typically disordered) memories associated with traumatic injury (Brewin 2018). In this work we explore the relationship between these two elements, reading them not in oppositional terms but as factors that can be brought into connection: memory is, after all, dependent upon forgetting, and forgetting is an important factor in a healthy life. Drawing on Ricoeur, we consider the role of both 'external' and 'intimate' knowledge in productive forgetting (2004: 428) through the use of fragments. The installation combines decontextualized objects found in junk shops (traces of other people's lives), fragmentary poetic texts that draw on memories, and the traces in our memories of what has been forgotten to present a space for thought.

Barthelme, D 1966 'See the Moon?' in *The New Yorker* (12 March), pp46–50

Eliot, TS 2003 *The Wasteland and Other Poems* (ed. Frank Kermode), London: Penguin Random House

Brewin, P 2018 'Memory and Forgetting', *Current Psychiatry Reports* 20.87. DOI 10.1007/s11920-018-0950-7

Dessingué, A and JM Winter (eds) 2015 *Beyond Memory: Silence and the Aesthetics of Remembrance*, London: Routledge

Ricoeur, P 2004 *Memory, History and Forgetting* (trans K Blamey & D Pellauer), Chicago: University of Chicago Press



Jordan Williams

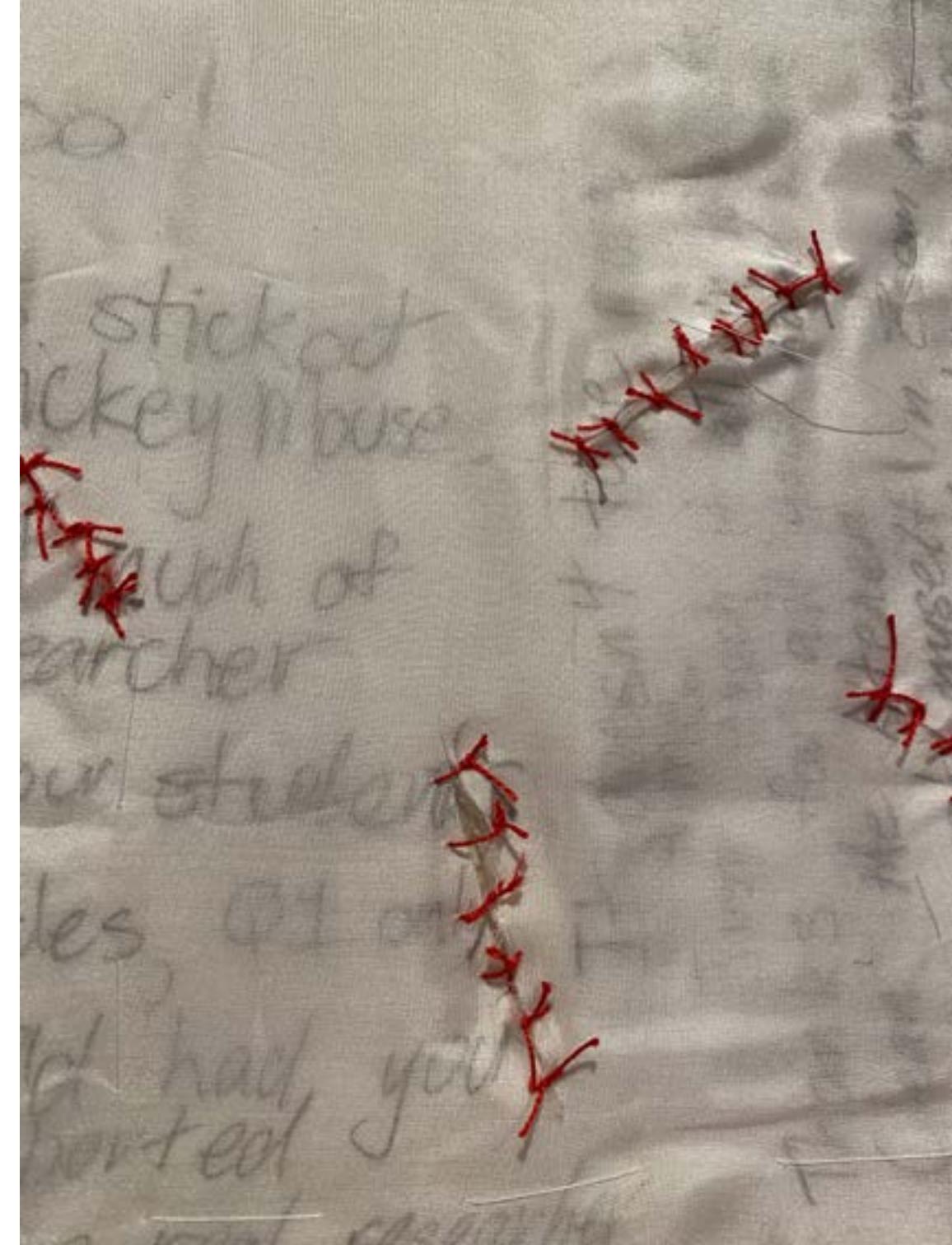
Picking, healing

2020. Digital poem on iPad, textile: silk, cotton, wool, pen. 100 x 100 cm.

Artist statement

TS Eliot's long poem of loss, 'The Wasteland', offers as its last coherent line: 'These fragments I have shored against my ruin'. We respond to this image with a more optimistic vision, one that recognises the value of forgetting and views the fragments that remain in memory as curiosities; or, borrowing from Donald Barthelme, as 'souvenirs' that may 'merge, blur – cohere is the word, maybe – into something meaningful'. In this work we have attempted to mix up the 'souvenir' – in the form of aleatory objects suspended out of full view – with more considered views of forgetting, articulated in that most aleatory form of communication: poetry.

Research statement



Short biographies

An accumulator of brooches, **Hakim Abdul Rahim** is the Conservation Lab Manager and doctoral candidate at the University of Canberra. He often gardens, sometimes crafts and very occasionally is a nuisance. He is currently Chair of University Museums and Collection Futures, ICOM-UMAC.

Monica Andrew draws on her lifelong experiences in sewing and textile arts to explore the potential contribution of needlecraft skills to clothing and textile sustainability. As part of her PhD research at the University of Canberra, she runs a weekly repair café to assist others with their mending projects to help keep items out of landfill and to reduce the environmental impact of clothing and textiles.

Rhonda Ayliffe is a visual artist and PhD student at UC Faculty of Art and Design. Her practice-led research project, 'Ash Alchemy', will be exploring how creative arts can assist in building community resilience in the aftermath of community trauma.

Dianne Firth OAM is a Registered Landscape Architect and Adjunct Associate Professor. The focus of her research is the designed landscape of Canberra and she provides advice to ACT and Commonwealth Governments. She is a member of the Historic Places Advisory Committee for the Cultural Facilities Corporation. Her textile work is inspired by her landscape work and can be found in major collections around the world.

Caren Florance currently teaches for UC Visual Communications. Her practice-led doctorate from UC explored the overlaps of visual poetry, text art and artist books through material collaboration with poets and artists. Her latest published work is *Lost in Case* (Cordite Publishing, 2019) and this year she was shortlisted for the 66th Blake Prize and was an acquired winner in the Northern Beaches Libraries Artist Book Awards.

UK Frederick is an artist whose practice often involves working with found materials, and responding to ideas and images that already exist in the world. Although she predominately uses photography, video and printmedia. Ursula

is a keen advocate of experimentation and regularly incorporates different techniques and media in her practice, according to what best suits the expression of her ideas. She is a Research Fellow at the CCCR, University of Canberra.

Katie Hayne is a research development officer and artist. Her art practice explores issues of gentrification, consumerism and the overlooked. She has won awards for her painting, photography and short films, and was a finalist in the Josephine Ulrick and Win Schubert Photography Award in 2017.

Kerry Martin is an early career artist, currently working on a PhD, after a long professional life in the private and public sectors. Her practice revolves around the visual portrayal of emotions that arise as a response to witnessing the human condition. Kerry works with textile, photographic and print techniques. Her work focuses on manual methods and she frequently employs the slow, repetitive and meditative process of hand stitching as a fundamental element of her work

Bethaney Turner is an Associate Professor in Arts and Communication. In a significant departure from her doctoral work on social revolutionary movements in Mexico, her current interdisciplinary research explores how more sustainable urban living behaviours can be developed and fostered in a time of human-induced climate change.

Jen Webb is Distinguished Professor of Creative Practice at the University of Canberra. A poet and cultural theorist, her most recent poetry collection is *Flight Mode* (with S Hawke; RWP 2020). **John White** worked as a museum curator in Victoria and the ACT for several decades; he is now collecting objects without provenance for his (tongue in cheek) project, the Giralang Folk Museum. **Paul Munden** is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Canberra. A poet and screenwriter, his poetry collections include *Chromatic* (UWA Publishing, 2017). **Paul Hetherington** is Professor of Writing at the University of Canberra, head of International Poetry Studies (IPSI), and joint founding editor of the journal *Axon: Creative Explorations*.

