

2021 ADELAIDE//INTERNATIONAL



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## INTRODUCTION

ERICA GREEN

### 2021 Adelaide//International

The Samstag Museum of Art takes great pride in presenting this *2021 Adelaide//International*. It is a culmination of three distinctly related projects timed to coincide with the Adelaide Festival over consecutive years, beginning from 2019.

The curatorial model of the *Adelaide//Internationals* has been experimental, thematic and intended to provide flexible frameworks by which the purpose of participating artists might be illuminated, and their ideas and issues revealed in a focussed way. And by placing Australian artists alongside their international peers, it was our hope to elevate their collective profile and affirm the global nature of contemporary cultural dialogue.

Of course, the pool of ideas in the ubiquitous world of the visual arts is bottomless, and can at times resemble social media's saturated ecosystem, where meaning is lost in the flood. There is for that reason, perhaps, a special obligation on public art museums to craft exhibitions that not simply reveal the rich diversity of our visual arts culture but also bring context to what is presented.

The original *2019 Adelaide//International* was a consideration of the past and its influence, manifesting as 'conversations' between participating artists as well as meditations on the love and recovery of Indigenous culture in a postcolonial world. Last year the *2020 Adelaide//International* celebrated architecture as a motif for the present, and as an ageless presence central to civilisation's modernity, history and evolution.

In 2021, under the pervasive continuing impact of the global pandemic, the world as we knew it has been paused, normalcy suspended, and the frailty of our social structures and human life starkly exposed. Uncertainty prevails; a dystopian world beckons and seems closer.

Speculations on the future—and how our collective actions are carrying us forward—are the subject of four exhibitions by Australian and overseas practitioners that comprise the *2021 Adelaide//International*. In their different ways, each of the artists is concerned with our human connectedness (and distance), the nature and equity of our societies, and, ultimately, the future as an as-yet-unmade shared space.

In her celebrated multi-media installation, *Tremble Tremble*—featured in the 2017 Venice Biennale—Irish artist Jesse Jones draws from Irish folklore to create a mythological giantess in the figure of a witch to proclaim a new feminist social order of rights and equity. Her work references a slogan chanted at women's protest marches across Italy in the 1970s—'Tremble, tremble, the witches are back'—that called for gender equality and wages for housework.

Fayen d'Evie's sculptural installation and performances, *Endnote: the ethical handling of empty spaces*, draw attention to difference, and consider how we might write language for future, post-human audiences through 'intuitive multi-sensory modalities'.

James Tylor's new work, *The Darkness of Enlightenment*, is a process of remembrance and action that retrieves and rediscovers Kaurua culture, country and language, mistranslated and lost through omission by European colonist documenting procedures.

## INTRODUCTION

ERICA GREEN

Taloi Havini's compelling multi-screen video installation, *Tsomi wan-bel (win-win)*, presents a meditation on traditional systems of reconciliation and justice in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. We witness victim and offender being brought together and mediated; we share and understand their human feelings and expressions of regret.

The *2021 Adelaide//International* has been a complex project and I express appreciation and respect to Samstag curator Gillian Brown for her significant accomplishment and leadership in producing such an outstanding exhibition. My sincere thanks go as well to all the Samstag Museum staff for their untiring support and capability, and for their professional enthusiasm which makes working at Samstag such a positive collegial experience for us all.

Works featured in the three *Adelaide//Internationals* have been selected for their artistic power, narrative strengths and social sophistication, and the artists have been well-supported by writers of insightful commissioned essays, for which we express gratitude. Over the three iterations, the writers are: Gillian Brown, Max Delany, Rachel Donnelly, Stephen Muecke and Irene Watson (2021); Gillian Brown, Andy Butler, Robert Cook, Ross Gibson and Rachel Hurst (2020); and Rhana Devenport, Erica Green, Georges Petitjean, Mikala Tai and Siuli Tan (2019).

Mosaic, as always, have provided us with technical expertise of immeasurable value, and we thank them for helping Samstag in realising the complex experiential audio-visuals of the *2021 Adelaide//International*. We especially thank Culture Ireland for supporting the significant international costs of *Tremble Tremble*, enabling its presentation at Samstag.

The confidence to plan, commit and undertake such an ambitious series of exhibitions as the *Adelaide//Internationals*, developed over the three years and more, would not have been possible without the generous and necessary support of the University of South Australia.

Finally, and most importantly, the Samstag Museum extends a massive thank you to all the *Adelaide//International* featured artists. Your significant, iconic work and your inventive practices and creativity have enriched the Samstag and our audiences. We acknowledge: Fayen D'Evie, Taloi Havini, Jesse Jones and James Tylor (2021); David Claerbout, Zoë Croggon, Helen Grogan and Georgia Saxelby, Brad Darkson and John Wardle Architects (2021); and Brook Andrew, Eugenia Lim, Lisa Reihana and Ming Wong (2019).

The *Adelaide//International* series of exhibitions has mapped fresh artistic and social perspectives across time, cultures and place. It hopefully encourages us to more thoughtfully experience the present, to (re)consider the past, and to speculate imaginatively on alternative futures.

We thank everyone involved.

Erica Green  
Director, Samstag Museum of Art,  
UniSA Creative, University of South Australia  
February 2021



## *The future is always being made*

GILLIAN BROWN

The *Adelaide//International* is explicit in its position; it has looked back, taken stock and now looks forward, always from a contemporary point of view. In its core organising principle, it has recognised the relativity of experience—that we understand a point in time in comparison to another. With that contingency in mind, how can its third and final chapter contend with the future when all we experience is in the present? How do you compare the yet-to-happen with the happened?

The future is a shared space, and if the preceding year has shown us anything, it has been the futility of counting on time to unfold as planned. We can be certain, though, that every action taken now affects a future outcome. So, rather than attempting predictions or presenting impossible utopias, the four discrete exhibitions of the *2021 Adelaide//International* look to the messy, difficult actions taking place in the present that carry us forward, for better or worse. By considering the processes, problems and (hopefully) changes underway, the exhibition artists—practicing across Oceania and Europe—are aware of the impossibility of a defined future but alert to the power of our constant influence. Together they highlight the ways in which we are coding the future in our systems and laws of communication and language.

An artist whose work often draws upon contested sites and histories, Taloi Havini's *Tsomi wan-bel* (*win-win*) is a meditation on methods of justice, depicting the margins of a traditional mediation ceremony in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, where the artist was born. An act of reconciliation and restorative justice that brings victims and offenders together, the ceremony shares its principles with similar rituals practiced alongside common (Western) law in several Pacific nations, including many of the First Nations of Australia. In Havini's three-channel moving image work, audiences observe a ceremony that facilitates the admitting of offence or wrongdoing. Through the shared rituals we see the necessity for all parties—mediator, victim and offender—to gather in expression of regret and to present offerings as a means of making amends. We see also the witnessing and celebration of this healing by the wider community, though the ceremony itself is never shown onscreen. Refusing such access is an important riposte to Western hegemony, as Professor Irene Watson comments in her accompanying text:

*'The colonial gaze often intrudes into the private spaces of colonised Peoples...but they do this often without authority. These are private ceremonies and there is no need to observe...for this is the law and justice way of the village.'*

Without subtitles, *Tsomi wan-bel* draws meaning from the expressions and interplay between participants. In allowing viewers to observe closely the reactions, movements and interactions peripheral to the ceremony, Havini's work communicates the complexity of reckoning with past actions while at the same time calling attention to the fact that alternatives to dominant Western law practices exist and have been practiced for a long time. Within the context of the *2021 Adelaide//International*, *Tsomi wan-bel* is emblematic of the difficult but necessary work to be undertaken before moving forward together.

## *The future is always being made*

GILLIAN BROWN

In *Tremble Tremble* (2017), Irish artist Jesse Jones similarly concentrates on the poetic and political potential of ritual and law. The work borrows its title from a slogan chanted by Italian feminists in the 1970s. Calls of ‘Tremble, tremble, the witches are back!’ echoed as women marched for access to abortion and wages for housework. An incantation against institutional injustice, their slogan invoked the power of ritual to assert change. It is this collective spirit and the broad history of feminist action that Jones draws from. In *Tremble Tremble*, she summons a feminist phantasm, a mythological giantess conjured from a giant of Irish folklore and the figure of a witch, who reads ‘In Utera Gigantae’ – the artist’s fictional law that proclaims a new social order from a female perspective.

Created at a time when a woman’s bodily autonomy was under debate in Ireland, the work connects ritual to legislative transformation.<sup>1</sup> For this presentation—its Australian premiere—Jones has extended the registration of her work to include a ‘counter totem’, a bronzed ceramic foot bowl standing as a reference to the parallel histories of Magdalen laundries in Ireland and Australia. These laundries, alternatively known as Magdalen asylums, effectively operated well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century as modern-day workhouses, with ‘fallen women’ working for board. The trauma experienced by these women—in conditions often harsher than those of prisons—continues to be felt today, and in recent years a growing movement for legal recognition of their ordeal has been building. Jones recognises this nascent struggle as part of the lineage of feminist activism. With this continuity in mind, the speculative ritual object in *Tremble Tremble* rebels against Christian and Patriarchal institutions, and reclaims the figure of Mary Magdalen as one of spiritual power and sacred femininity, to be called upon in the continuing march towards change.

There is common understanding between Jones’s exhibition and that of James Tylor in the use of objects as tools of cultural repair. In *The Darkness of Enlightenment*, we encounter 18 photographs captured on Kurna land, and 31 Kurna objects made by Tylor according to historical records. These artworks are the result of ongoing research by an artist who explores Australian cultural representations through the perspectives of his multicultural Nunga (Kurna), Māori (Te Arawa) and European (English, Scottish, Irish, Dutch and Norwegian) ancestry. Through attention to line, form and decoration—from which can be inferred a connection to country or an origin of use—Tylor’s contemporary objects assert the importance of nuance if we are to carry cultural knowledge into the future. Like the velvet voids cut into the photographs, here the black surfaces can be read as representative of the continued loss inflicted by unethical collecting practices of colonial institutions, and the incomplete historical record that has resulted. As a mediation, background notes for each photograph and object are offered in the exhibition, indicative of a pedagogical impulse common to much of Tylor’s practice and suggestive of the collective responsibility of care and correction.

The installation is soundtracked by two overlapping works by Koorie artist Anna Liebzeit – one capturing Kurna language and music by James Tylor and Jack Buckskin, the other conversations with Elders involved in the revival and continuation of the Kurna language and culture. Drawing attention to processes of omission resulting from European colonist methods of documenting culture—and the subsequent struggle to recover what was lost— Tylor and his collaborators highlight that what recovery is possible will be at the hands of a broad community. Both a remembrance and an action, *The Darkness of Enlightenment* is recognition of the powerful role recording our present holds in shaping our future.

## *The future is always being made*

GILLIAN BROWN

Fayen d’Evie is concerned with how to handle such records. Her exhibition, *Endnote: The Ethical Handling of Empty Spaces*, considers how we might write for a future audience. Recognising that the environmental and social urgencies of our world will echo forward, d’Evie engages in acts of speculative publishing, searching for accessible codes in which to safekeep our stories over time.

*Endnote* comprises parallel investigations—d’Evie refers to these as ‘essays’—exploring the ways messages might be written, performed and sensed. Fragments of stories are embedded in stone, marble, bronze and wood, acknowledging the role of tactility in non-verbal communication. A series of screen prints has its origin in a lexicon of performative gestures developed in collaboration with Deaf dancer and choreographer Anna Seymour, transcribed into typography by typeface designer Vincent Chan. The function of poetic typographies is explored through an essay written in movement with dancer and choreographer Benjamin Hancock: over two days the repeated performance of a single phrase—taken from text engraved into the granite monolith nearby—plays with the shape of letterforms and grammar, testing the potential of conveying the meaning and emotive content of a message through the body.

Stemming from an experience of blindness, d’Evie’s practice does not assume experience or prior understanding of a given language, and instead pursues universal communication through embodied knowledge. By considering how we transmit meaning through movement, sound and touch, the multiple essays of *Endnote* emphasise the future value of acknowledging other ways of being. A timely prompt to expand our parameters of consideration, it serves as a reminder that empathy, so important in storytelling, is an action and a process of great potential.

....

In the introduction to her recently published anthology, *Funny Weather*, writer Olivia Laing employs the idea of ‘reparative reading’ as a way of making sense of a world in which the speed of information can be overwhelming. In Laing’s summary of this academic theory—first put forward by American scholar Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick—, reparative reading is the thoughtful seeking of nourishment in the new and the possible, as opposed to the tendency towards voraciously consuming information without pause in an attempt to circumvent bad surprises (or ‘paranoid reading’).<sup>ii</sup> It is an attitude that embraces contingency of time and experience, and, in doing so, makes space for a multiplicity of perspectives on the future. In its focus on action and process rather than prediction, the *2021 Adelaide//International* ultimately chooses this reparative lens through which to consider the work of d’Evie, Havini, Jones and Tylor. Looking as they do at the alternative, the potential and the communal, their works recognise the challenges in front of us; with a reparative mindset, however, we can find hope for the actions that are carrying us forward – because the future is always being made.

1. *Tremble Tremble* was first exhibited in 2017, when the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution Act 1983 was under debate in the Republic of Ireland. This clause recognised the unborn right to life as equal to that of pregnant women, and effectively prevented safe and legal abortion to women in all circumstances unless they could prove that continuing with a pregnancy would put their life at risk. After a hard-won referendum, the amendment was repealed in 2018.
2. Laing, Olivia, *Funny Weather: Art in an Emergency*, Picador, London, 2020, pp. 3-5.



“The first place we have to be is in solidarity with each others’ bodies.”

This is the artist Jesse Jones speaking to me in December 2020. From Cork on the west coast of Ireland, her words reach me in Dublin on the east coast through Skype-y clouds of static. The sentence could be a tagline for 2020, a year that has starkly illuminated our global physical interdependence. But, of course, just as we’ve started to realise how enmeshed our bodily futures are, we’ve had to disentangle and distance our bodies from one another. Jesse’s words reach me but the microclimate of her body – its heat, smells, subtle movements, the inaudible echo of its heartbeat, the goosebumping of its skin, the whole unquantifiable physical presence of her being – does not.

I’m keenly aware of this absence as we talk, as it’s the importance of this unquantifiable physical presence that drives much of Jesse’s recent work. She has reflected on it in relation to witchcraft and the witch trials of the 16th and 17th centuries, and in relation to legality as it touches the female body. Her works explore how the interior, ambiguous, messy, emotional, porous reality of living bodies (especially female ones) collides with the rigid, external objectivity of law and the nation state. This question – of inner versus outer worlds, subjective experience versus objective measurement, living bodies versus inert data – has never been so pressing as now in the face of the multiple global crises we face, and our increasingly digitally mediated lives.

Jesse makes works that are embodied, and which move bodies. They are also works that use magic and ritual to pull at the hardened edges of legislation, to humanise it and bring the resonance of living, breathing bodies into its realm. Her 2016 work *In the Shadow of the State/The Touching Contract* (in collaboration with Sarah Browne) took the administration of a contract signed by audience members as its first act, followed by a performance based around touch, which was shaped by the contract. The work explored how women encounter the touch of the law every day, sometimes without consent. Her most recent project, *Syllabus* (2020), also hinges on a legally binding contract.

2016’s *No More Fun and Games (Feminist Parasite Institution)* at Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane explored collective memory, with a feminist curatorial group drawing together an exhibition of works by women from the Gallery’s collection, addressing (and redressing) gender imbalance in the canon. *No More Fun and Games* is linked to *Tremble Tremble* and *Syllabus* by a winding, ghostly presence – a huge, disembodied arm that floats through each exhibition. Printed on a diaphanous floor-length curtain that runs on a ceiling rail which allows it to move through the space, this gigantic arm both welcomes and warns, reshaping the architecture, framing other elements of the exhibition or guiding the flow of the bodies that are there. In each case, the arm printed on the curtain belongs to a different woman: in *No More Fun and Games* it’s Jesse’s mother, in *Tremble Tremble* it’s actor Olwen Fouéré, in *Syllabus* it’s Italian feminist activist Silvia Federici.

Federici’s 2004 book *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*—which deals with the witch trials, and female reproductive and domestic labour—was a central anchor in making *Tremble Tremble*.

“Silvia talks about the transition from feudalism to capitalism as being a time of extreme violence against women in the form of the witch trials and she talks about how capitalism is totally connected to the dispossession of women historically ... the people who protested about the enclosures of the commons were women and young men under the age of fifteen, because they had no access to private land. As soon as private property was invented, that was the beginning of patriarchal capitalism.”

The enclosure of the commons was an early step on a path of privatisation that has now breached the horizon of our very bodies – our physical landscapes are increasingly mapped through apps on our phones, and that data becomes a valuable commodity. I’m interested in the idea that this drive for privatisation also now extends to knowledge formation, especially to what are considered legitimate forms of knowledge, undermining embodied and intuitive ways of knowing typically associated with the feminine. It is perhaps no accident that this denigrated form of instinctive pre-linguistic knowing is something we hold in common in our bodies, and which requires no formal education to access.

With this in mind, I was particularly interested to speak to Jesse about her research methodology when creating *Tremble Tremble*. In interviews, she has referenced pulling Tarot cards and reading tea leaves as part of the process of making the work. These practices feel like a radical thing to talk about in the often hyper-intellectual context of contemporary visual art.

“At the time I felt so in the energy space of that artwork that I felt strongly I could say those things, but it was the first time I’d said them out loud. In terms of psychic material, I grew up in that – my mother was a tea leaf reader. I grew up in a household where we would read tea leaves and try to predict what would happen or have dreams that would then come true. It was part of my normal everyday life until I was in my twenties, and then I realised, ‘oh, not everybody has conversations with the dead’. When I came to the rational world it was through art school.”

This approach to conceiving *Tremble Tremble* renders it feminist in its very bones – not only is the content of the work focused on feminist themes and the female experience but the methods used to make it also draw on intuition and non-rational ways of knowing, a challenge to the prevailing scientific paradigm of knowledge. In researching the work, Jesse read texts and visited museums and watched films – she engaged in traditional language-based research. But she also tuned in to image and ritual to intuit aspects of the work, listening to her dreams, staying open to resonances. These are ways of knowing that arise in the body, out of its archive of sensual wordless experience.

“... the body and intuition and movement and instinct are so important to how we form knowledge in the first place. If you walk into a room, you feel the energy off the other people there, you decide who you’re going to become friends with, you know who to stay away from ... all of our space of collective and social production is based on the fundamental building blocks of our body and instinct. It’s just we forget that –we think it’s language.”

Ritual, magic and poetry speak to the body, activating our senses and therefore the full range of our cognitive capacities. *Tremble Tremble* is replete with ritual, from the research process to the ritualistic objects and performative gestures in the exhibition itself. Jesse extends each registration of the exhibition with artefacts arising from research in the local context. These artefacts act like talismans in the frame of the work, resonant objects that root it in its location. In its most recent registration, at the Guggenheim in Bilbao, she was inspired by a trip to the nearby Zugarramurdi Witch Museum. She also became fascinated by the Basque phenomenon of *etxekoandre*, the woman who was the head of the household and responsible for keeping the hearth, what Jesse describes as a type of ‘domestic shamanism’.

“One of the tools of this domestic shamanism is the *argizaiola* – it’s a candle-wax-wrapped piece of wood that you put on the ground and, when you light it, it creates a ritualistic portal which mimics where the ancestral body is buried, so you create this portal connection with the ancestor ... I had been very interested in the domestic space as a space of the housewife and social reproduction, but also as having this kind of magic to it or being haunted in some way by mystical practices.”

The body and ritual are also central to how Jesse thinks of film as an artistic form. *Tremble Tremble* includes sculpture and live performance, but it’s the footage of Irish actor Olwen Fouéré—navigating the ruins of a courthouse and speaking the words of real women who were murdered for practicing witchcraft—that forms what she calls the ‘psychic core’ of the work. The footage alone, however, does not mark the limits of the filmic in the work – the bodies of the audience in the space, as they’re directed by the footage, also become the site of the film.

“For me, it’s really important to think about the viewer in the space with cinema that happens in contemporary art as being a different kind of spectator, an embodied spectator, somebody who potentially can be physically moved around by the score of the filmic space or be touched by the performer ... these are all super important for me in terms of addressing the ritual of cinema in a way that is more connected to communal and affectual care communities ... The screen is not cinema for me; the body is the space of cinema that I’m interested in.”

The terrain of the body is a key site of struggle in the evolution of society, and most often these struggles happen within or over bodies that are non-white and non-male. Jesse set out to make *Tremble Tremble* against the backdrop of the landmark Repeal campaign, a movement that ultimately led to abortion being legalised in Ireland, giving Irish women the right to decide what happens inside their own bodies, within their own country. The Eighth Amendment to the Irish constitution, which had granted equal right to life to the unborn child, was repealed in May 2018, one year after *Tremble Tremble* had its premiere at the Venice Biennale, representing Ireland.

“I was making this artwork at the same time as there was this alchemic legislative movement [the Repeal movement] in Ireland. I wanted to deal with the fact that we were in this moment of legislative transformation, and to bring contemporary art ritual into the public affect of that. We’re so deeply entrenched in a system of class and economic discrimination that sometimes we don’t see the possibilities for change in anything else except for pieces of legislation, which is important, but it’s like we’ve mapped our political horizons so closely to legislative change that we have lost the capacity for producing shifts of reality in everyday life. It’s not enough to transform society just at the legislative level – we have to go deeper.”

*Bodily futures: witches, intuition and the commons*  
RACHEL DONNELLY



Image: Jesse JONES, *Tremble Tremble*, 2017, performance.  
Image courtesy the artist.

**Experimental Blundering and Embodiment:  
Fayen d'Evie's Intersensory  
Conversations) MAX DELANY**

A dancer moves around the gallery, embodying typographical form to translate the phrase, 'We called to you with vibrational poetics, and so the story carries on, and on, and on...' Cleaving letters from two into three dimensions, the dancer weaves around and through this virtual typography, articulating specific textual and foliate forms – historiated capitals, the internal volume of letterforms, the shape and tempo of apostrophes and ellipses, the curls of serifs and ligatures, and ornamental foliage. The sound of brushing taffeta amplifies bodily movement as the dancer, Benjamin Hancock, proceeds from micro-movements to gestural sweeping arabesques, physically imprinting a performative poetics originally conceived in response to resonant brass bells and gongs formed by blind sculptor Aaron McPeake. The choreographic loop—{~} ... , ... ; ... (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) 2021—is repeated over a two-day durational performance, with subtle variation. It recalls the reiterated interlacing of image and text and the conjunction of animal and vegetal forms, characteristic of the hybrid visual and literary form of the *arabesque*.

Choreographed by artist Fayen d'Evie and Hancock, these hybrid multiple formations of image, text, sound and movement are aligned with d'Evie's interest in the idea of embodied knowledge, carried and transmitted through multiple sensory and communicative modalities over time.

The body as sign and semaphore is also apparent in *Essays in Gestural Poetics {;;}* 2021, a new series of screenprints produced by d'Evie in collaboration with Trent Walter at Negative Press. Another newly devised form of typography is apparent in these drawings, which ingeniously register bodily movement as graphic score, creating a new lexicon or language read through gestural glyphs. Inspired by ancient rock carvings, the Lascaux cave paintings and contemporary sign languages, these glyphs—at once pictorial, literary, spatial and embodied—are a propositional response to the question of how movement and cultural behaviours might be archived and conveyed to future post-human readers. The image-texts are surprisingly intuitive and legible, even at first encounter, and are able to be put to the service of new texts and choreographies. They sit upon a pictorial ground abstracted from nature—leaf matter, plants, soil and rock from Dja Dja Wurrung Country where the artist lives—recalling plant as much as human histories, and reminding us of our interconnectedness with Country and our reliance upon nature. These background images are composed of bitmapped Ben Day dots which snap into resolution at specific distances, speaking to the specifics of context and contingency, and the situation of our bodies in relation to perception.

Elsewhere in the gallery, d'Evie presents a suite of accompanying sculptural objects – including a standing rock and a lying sarcophagus. They are fabricated from natural resources – from human skill and labour, and from 'other-than-human' materials such as granite, bluestone and mudstone, hardwood, marble and bronze, ochre, charcoal and gold leaf.<sup>1</sup> Sound emanates from the sarcophagus—the squeaking of a wheelchair, the tapping of a cane—as the materials are subject to audio description and technical experiments conceived with sound artist Bryan Phillips and dancer Anna Seymour, whose first language is Auslan.

**Experimental Blundering and Embodiment:  
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It is in the conjunction of these various sensory, performative, linguistic and sculptural forms that we come to understand d'Evie's works as texts and iterative tests which work together to resonate on multiple levels. Collected together as sensorial essays, d'Evie's polyphonic experimental forms encompass 'tactile', 'gestural' and 'vibrational' poetics.<sup>2</sup> Graphic elements and speculative typography function as expanded concrete poetry, as conjunctions of visual and literary material given a tactile third dimension in order to shimmer and dance across architecture and page. Sculptural and performative elements resonate through vibration and sound—as well as more tactile poetics related to touch, feeling and sensation—as much as they do through visual and literary means. As the artist notes: "The marks, rivulets, topographies are like a kind of typography or score, or a form of braille, with punctuation marks, nuances and crescendos..."<sup>3</sup>

Informed by the experience of vision impairment—or *blindishness*, as the artist suggests—d'Evie embraces blindness as a critical position against ocular centrism and normativity in favour of 'intersensory conversations' exploring 'the tangible and intangible, hallucination, uncertainty, the precarious, the invisible, and the concealed'.<sup>4</sup> As the artist notes:

Blindness is not treated as darkness or nocturnalism here, but instead introduces a complexity and diversity of embodiments and relationships to perception, imagination, and consciousness, that offer an array of alternatives to the ocular standard of 20:20 vision. Blindness may destabilise performer-spectator conventions, activate attentiveness and movement improvisations, and innovate methods for sensing, archiving and conserving performative artworks.<sup>5</sup>

With linguistic playfulness and poetic intuition, d'Evie has referred to 'blundering' as a favoured research and performative methodology – to stumble blindly, deliberately blundering, handling obstacles, grasping contours, reading myopically, listening for resonances.<sup>6</sup> This stumbling relates to the artist's concept of 'sensorial wayfinding', countering understandings of blindness as ignorant or lacking knowledge, as oblivion or deficit, in preference for more complex realms of experience, feeling, sensation and affect. D'Evie's sensorial wayfinding also relates to conceptual and etymological concepts of 'beholding' (to guard, preserve, maintain, take care) as much as it does to the question of doubt and critical thinking (and the example of Saint Thomas the Apostle—the Doubting Thomas—who couldn't believe his eyes, plunging his fingers into the body of Christ, touching wounds for evidence and proof). Through texts co-authored with conservator Sofia Lo Bianco, d'Evie reflects on the shifting materiality and semantics of her works as they resonate within and outside the museum over time.

**Experimental Blundering and Embodiment:  
Fayen d'Evie's Intersensory  
Conversations) MAX DELANY**

Fayen d'Evie's projects inevitably resist—or at least decentre—spectatorship in favour of multisensory modes which register at once through sight, hearing, touch, text, choreography and embodiment. As a polymath artist, publisher and teacher/academic—activities which she conducts alongside and integral to her role as a disability advocate and curator—d'Evie is interested in complementary ways of sensing, feeling and understanding the world. Her work is inherently collaborative, resisting the singular originating authorial voice in favour of experimental forms and dialogic structures which encourage reciprocal encounters between bodies—human and material—whilst blurring the relations and power dynamics between artist, audience and performer. With an earlier education and practice in physics, climate change and international peacebuilding, d'Evie's art practice is alert to the movement of matter through time and space, to ecosystems and the dynamics of energy and environmental sustainability, and to questions of justice, ethics and development in social and non-human relations. Inevitably, the encounter with Fayen d'Evie's work becomes an exercise in learning and unlearning, an education—for this writer at least—in multisensory communication, knowledge and perception. It is equally a practice of exchange and reciprocity, iteration and difference. In conceiving of her work, d'Evie is unconstrained by the 'narrow idea of a normative perceiving body'. As the artist contends: 'I intend a blatant political position – an insistence that more can be done to offer diverse perceptual entry points into our creative conversations'.<sup>7</sup>

- 1 Fayen d'Evie, Lizzie Boon and Sofia Lo Bianco, *Essays in Vibrational Poetics*, 2019, video essay, 17:29 min, commissioned by the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, at: <https://vimeo.com/416621511>
- 2 Fayen d'Evie, Lizzie Boon and Sofia Lo Bianco, *Essays in Vibrational Poetics*, 2019, video essay, 17:29 min, commissioned by the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, at: <https://vimeo.com/416621511>
- 3 See Fayen d'Evie, Lizzie Boon and Sofia Lo Bianco, *Essays in Vibrational Poetics*, 2019.
- 4 Fayen d'Evie, Bio: <https://fayendevie.com/bio>
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- 6 Fayen d'Evie, Artist talk for *Art Club*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 22 October 2020. See also: Fayen d'Evie, 'Orienting Through Blindness: Blundering, Be-Holding and Wayfinding as Artistic and Curatorial Methods', *Performance Paradigm*, Issue 13, 2017, at <https://fayendevie.com/blindness>
- 7 Fayen d'Evie, 'Holding Eva Hesse [Treatment]', *UN Magazine*, vol.14, no.1, 2020:

*Experimental Blundering and Embodiment:  
Fayen d'Evie's Intersensory  
Conversations*) MAX DELANY



Image: Fayen d'Evie, Anna Seymour, Vincent Chan and Trent Walter, 2021,  
*Essays in gestural poetics* {;} Endnote: *The ethical handling of empty space.*  
Photo by Matthew Stanton.

*Kurna miyurna, Kurna yerta, ngadlu tampinhi.*<sup>1</sup>

We could just walk out of the white cube, or rather this white rectangular prism, go up the road to Ivaritji—what they call Whitmore Square—and maybe greet the Countrymen and women who sometimes occupy the place that was named for Ivaritji, the famous Kurna matriarch and fluent Kurna speaker who died in 1929.

You find out about things by walking. ‘Ivaritji’ is the word for the gentle misty rain that characterises *kudlila*, winter. People of the Plains love that gentle misty rain that you don’t really find so much elsewhere.

Walking is an important part of James Tylor’s practice. Let him be your guide in *From an Untouched Landscape*, from the white cube and through the lens of his camera into Kurna Yerta to places that he knows, that he has inherited the permission to visit. Sure, the camera viewfinder imposes rectangular views. But don’t forget: we got to that place by walking.

*Nietzsche (from the days when philosophers used to walk): ‘All truly great thoughts are conceived while walking.’*

We only got there by walking. Look right around: what they call 360 degrees. Look close up and far away. Listen to all the sounds, all around, near and far. It’s all there until you look through the rectangle and shoot. *Guniya* (whitefellas) have been dreaming in rectangles for a long time: timber frames for houses. Doorways. Windows. Nice perspectives (landscapes) onto the Country that they think they have captured, and now feel possessive about.

Rectangles, circles and squares are devices for precise geometric capture and possession. But James leaves them blank. They have no content. Pay attention to these modes of erasure, then look beyond them, near and far and all around simultaneously. Listen up. Listen to the flow of words coming back, thanks to Anna Liebrecht’s soundscape, like rain filling the crevices of our thought, where a seed starts to swell. *Wirtuti*, springtime: equated to *the eagle’s foot*, the Southern Cross.

See, already your thought is starting to *derectangularise* that simple formal attribute, the frame, that offers the affordance of rectangular pictures within it. It was consolidated by European perspectivalism in the *quattrocento*, which not only had the rectangular frame but also further rectangles diminishing to a point in the distance. This had the important effect of setting the viewer up as the person privileged to have that perspective.<sup>2</sup> In that sense it invented a particular kind of subject and a particular kind of object, quite different to a walking aesthetic which easily—rhythmically—defamiliarises the rectangle. Western artists have experimented with doing away with it, but it is hardwired into millions of artworks, not to mention all cameras and AV screens. You might be tempted to say that it is a way of looking at the world, this kind of freeze-frame.

Far from being a natural state of affairs, or a normal way of seeing the world, this represents an effort of *redistribution*. It is not a way of looking at the world at all, because it *constitutes* a world. With this particular mode of world-building, Europeans have been working hard to put Nature *over there*, as they invent a kind of subjectivity *over here*. And there are good reasons for doing this; for instance, to do with property and exploitability, as John Berger showed years ago with his analysis in *Ways of Seeing* of Gainsborough's Mr. and Mrs. Andrews: a landscape and its aristocrats pictured *for each other*.<sup>3</sup> The exploited and the exploiters.

Nearly every snap taken on our phones obeys the rules of renaissance capture and hence orients the viewers towards eventual rectilinear capture of the actual Country: this is being done simultaneously through survey lines, grid patterns, blocks with boundaries and fences, states and frameworks—eventually—for buildings. Every snap that is retained and then reposted on Facebook or shown to friends has had an aesthetic judgement made about its form and content. The renaissance inventions of perspective are still in there, like an algorithm running through the perceptions of this human swarm, creating a distanced 'Nature' and a dream of future buildings, beachside properties with 'picture windows.' The rectangle is a kind of knowledge valve<sup>4</sup>—something that only allows knowledge to go one way—that can be decolonised with a different kind of visual art practice, like James Tylor's perambulations in Kurna Country, his participation in language revival, his explorations of Kurna technology. These are all ways of getting close, looking around and listening carefully.

I like the way the artist built a camp and started a fire in his 2013 hand-coloured digital prints *A-frame hut* and *Dome hut with stone wind break* from his *Un-Resettling (Dwellings)* series. Having been trained in carpentry, James experimented with these traditional architectural forms in specific places on Country, and must have been entranced, as we are, by the lure of the tactile and material. As he says, it "is about learning my Kurna Heritage through making Kurna cultural material and architecture in the Adelaide area."<sup>5</sup>

This is literally taking art out of the gallery. James says, "...I practise culture not art. Culture is the experience of everything from knowledge, philosophy, food, music, dance, song, ceremony, performance, language, history, landscape, architecture, art and so on. I think the modern framework of the museum/gallery has limitations when practising culture because culture has no boundaries."<sup>6</sup>

This is a powerful statement about not sequestering art in galleries or reducing Aboriginal experience to 'cultural beliefs'. But let's not denigrate galleries altogether! Let's agree that they are there to encourage us to imagine outside of the square (or cube, or rectangle, or circle), to imagine things both as they might have been and might yet be in the future. Time is not on a line. Look right around, look near and far, listen: that might be an aesthetic of the camp, a Kurna Yerta aesthetic. Can you smell the eucalyptus smoke rising from the campfire?

To make art and culture gel in the future in Australia, so that it has foundations in the Aboriginal civilisations that history and justice tell us to honour, we need a conceptual architecture in place. We have to agree: 'culture has no boundaries'. It is multiply ontological: art, to really work, has to resonate with philosophy, with history, with food, with performance. If it does end up in a gallery, we have to immediately imagine it in multiple elsewheres, and this will be its virtue and its power.

*All around, near and far*  
STEPHEN MUECKE

It won't just happen by itself. A bit of violence—*un-resettling*—might be necessary. In *Whalers, Sealers and Land Stealers* (2014) Tylor pierced some daguerreotypes by shooting them with 12-gauge shotgun pellets. Other photographs have those geometric windows that he invites us to imagine ourselves through. They do violence to the rectangular plane by introducing this third imaginative dimension: *what could have happened here?* we ask ourselves, and then: *what might this be like again one day?*

And what might we be like? You come back in here, to this white cube, refreshed with multiple Kurna perspectives. Did you let your imagination wander? If you have changed just a bit you may not be the kind of subject for that Country that colonialism had forged for you. You might be less the possessor and more the guest. Or less the dispossessed and more the perpetual sovereign subject. The art is not just art for the gallery, but it seems to be getting into everything: the knowledge, the architecture, the music, the language. Perhaps when you walk on the Plains one cool evening and feel that gentle misty rain, you might remember its name.

<sup>1</sup> Kurna people, Kurna land; we recognise you.

<sup>2</sup> Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, Trans. Catherine Porter. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017, pp. 16-17.

<sup>3</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Muecke and Paddy Roe, *The Children's Country: The Creation of a Goolarabooloo Future in North-West Australia*, London, Rowman and Littlefield International, 2020, pp. 53-54, 68, 101-2, 139, 156.

<sup>5</sup> James Tylor, 'An Unresettling History,' *NGV Magazine*, May/June 2018, p. 68.

<sup>6</sup> 'Returning the Gaze: Hayley Millar-Baker and James Tylor in conversation,' *Art Monthly*, 311, August 2016, p. 34.

*All around, near and far*  
STEPHEN MUECKE

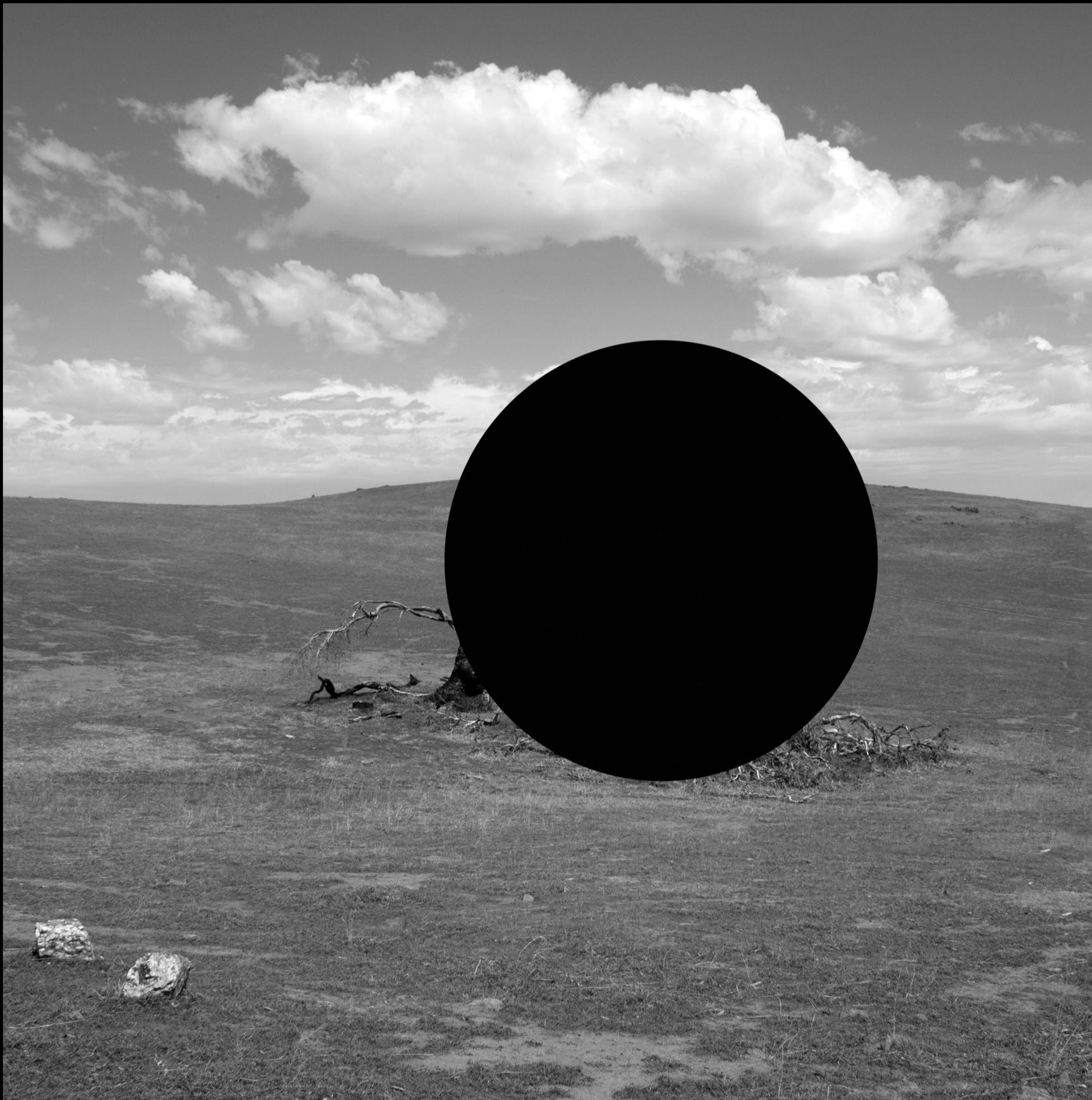


Image: James TYLOR, *Vanished From an Untouched Landscape 6*, 2018.  
Inkjet print on void, 25 x 25 cm.

***Tsomi wan-bel (win-win): Taloi Havini***  
**IRENE WATSON**

The art of Taloi Havini and her kin provides a record of how the Bougainvillean Peoples see and practice justice, a justice embedded in ceremony, centred and core to the people of the village. This text engages the work of Taloi and her Nakas (my tribe) kin in the hope that our relationship will form a rupture to the colonial record. This rupture could form a decolonial track, and become one which shares colonial experience and an opening for the viewer to know more of their own colonised selves.

At the beginning of this art installation we meet the gaze of three persons and we enter a relationship. How much time will we give it? How long will you stand and meet the gaze – for the duration of the footage, or do you move quickly once you have docked the picture?

How long will you engage and what might you feel?

Relationships, time and how we feel is embedded in the making of this collaborative work. For the three people whose gaze we meet, they know something of the viewer. They are Taloi's own kin and have worked in the making of this art installation. They have collaborated in how the work is framed and presented, and why the work was created.

In yarning with Taloi we spoke about the importance of working with others.

*In my family we don't do anything alone. I share my practice, we do things together, it's fun, it's a collective experience. It was fun to see taro, pig and sweet potato, we film and look at each other, and they look straight into the camera, they are active in the participation in the making of the film.*

I gaze at the screen and am drawn to what I don't know. I don't understand the words and the language that is spoken, for there are no subtitles that introduce the work. There is no translation of language, history or culture.

Will the viewer ask for more to explain the work? Or will they instead watch, listen and feel?

The three faces gaze confidently, holding the centre – a centre they belong to, and that holds them and their worlds collectively together. In the ways of my ancestors I learned that it was important to know where to sit, and that we can't take the centre when the centre doesn't belong to us or isn't our story. I was taught the importance of thinking about—and knowing when and where—authority is held. In looking on from the outside and removed from the centre, Taloi offers the following:

*It is like windows, at the edge of the building, people looking in, you get the outskirts, accessibility no hiding out in the open I am allowing people to see snippets from the margin, but they don't get access to the centre.*

In the ways of my ancestors I learned that it was important to know where to sit, and that we can't take the centre when the centre doesn't belong to us, or isn't our story. I was taught the importance of thinking about — and knowing when and where — authority is held. To know where to sit is important, and First People from country hold the centre and authority, in my learnings.

**Tsomi wan-bel (win-win): Taloi Havini**  
**IRENE WATSON**

As the image changes we move onto the daily rhythm of food – food security to feed the people, the ebb and flow of life. Village court speaking of restorative justice, cup of tea, cooking and waiting for food, hand-shaking, happy and quiet faces, the land and the sea. All in relation, free and moving together.

I know something of the issues raised by Taloi Havini's work; mostly we can share a conversation about the dominance of colonial understandings of what is justice. My Tanganekald Meintang Bunganditj ancestors live justice and law. What the coloniser saw as native savagery we knew and lived as a loving and deep obligatory relationship to country, 'ruwe' or 'mraad' as the ancestors named when speaking of country.

Evidence for the strength and resilience of our culture is in the diversity of our peoples, stories and languages, law and culture. We were many Peoples and we are still today.

I have come to understand that the word 'tsomi' in the Hako Peoples' language of North Bougainville translates in English as 'sorry', but it means more than this. It means to act:

*...to go beyond the word 'sorry'. Those acts include paying back, committing to no more harm, keeping relationships intact. It is these obligatory acts which create the peace.*

I have also learned that the word 'wan-bel' spoken in Tok Pisin translates as a 'win-win' situation, or where freedom from conflict and the settling of conflict in communities has occurred. My ancestors also have ways of knowing the world and keeping country settled and alive and free from conflict.

The loaded word 'reconciliation' is applied to ceremonies where saying sorry is encouraged between individuals and clans or groups who are in conflict. These are ancient ceremonies known to all the people of the village. Taloi reflects:

*I never filmed the ceremony because it is private.*

The colonial gaze often intrudes into the private spaces of colonised Peoples. This is simply because they have the power to do so, but they do this often without authority. These are private ceremonies and there is no need to observe the perpetrator, victim and adjudicator, for this is the law and justice way of the village. The people of the village hold the centre and determine what that centre is for now and moments in time to come.

*These are my kin and each of us have been through a sorry-reconciliation, during a ceremony you have to face each other, the length and duration of looking into the eyes of each other it is personal for each of us in the village. It is to face each other and an acknowledgement. It is time to take slow time to chew beetle nut and have a cup of tea.*

Yet in this art installation Taloi and family have created space for the decolonial. The generosity of this work enables the viewer to stand with the three persons, until it is time to move onto the ceremony.

Taloi spoke to me about the 10-year war with PNG, and the peacekeeping process which followed and involved the UN, Australia and New Zealand. At the time the UN and the participating peacekeeping member governments congratulated themselves for a well-earned peacekeeping mission. However, through the lens of Taloi we hear the truth.

*...we said no guns, we said that, but the coloniser took the credit for the peace process. It is our inherent customs, which comes from the centre of our ways and customs, that said you would not bring guns.*

*This way of keeping peace comes from our court systems, it is about justice. We take away the victim and perpetrator and the binary positions of good and bad. When we go through our justice and court system we can go through freely and get on with our lives.*

*We still hurt, but there are no prisons where we come from, it is a more holistic way of dealing with conflict.*

Time is different for life in the village. Time is taken to make the ceremony.

*Aunty Jane chewing beetle nut can be confronting, but it is a ceremonial food that we have and we include the process of chewing beetle nut together. The pig and the ceremony, the cooking, the garden the collective labour, we come together for the wrong doing and making the peace.*

The colonial gaze is mostly voyeuristic, detached, constructing a colonial record that is representative of a white gaze. How we might look at a process of *reconciliation* from the centre is the gift of this collective work.

*The work I have done is for art. I am not going to do subtitles. I want you to hear the difference in language. I wrote a description to look at separately but not to be included on the screen*

There is great strength and potency in leaving blank of explanation those uncomfortable spaces where we look deeply at each other. What do you feel? How might you know?

*If people spend enough time with my kin, they then move into the work*

What might we learn of justice?

*Whatever the wrongdoing, the response is to have the village come into witness. The western system is easy the village court is challenging. It teaches humility. I am learning and these are our old customs and sense of justice and harmony, when something is not right we make an effort to get it right. We care about each other enough to move forward and move to serenity to move on. It is our own sense of justice and I celebrate that, and it is why I did it. If you can't forgive and heal with our bodies together, without structures, buildings and prisons than who are we?*

***Tsomi wan-bel (win-win): Taloi Havini***  
**IRENE WATSON**

This is generous work, and requires an act of reciprocity, an equal response from the viewer – particularly so when you meet the gaze of the three from the comfort zone of a white gallery. This project challenges you to come to know more about your colonised self.

*It is generous on our terms.*

*To learn to become more human, bodies and relationships moving forward as a collective always moving forward together.*

This work is an opportunity to engage and to think about the colonial project which we are all—colonised and coloniser—still immersed in. There is learning about how we might interrupt colonial desires to be explained to, but in being explained to there is often no proper listening. Instead what occurs is the taking of our knowledges, which is then interpreted and reconstructed within the territories and power of the coloniser – that is, reproduced as an explanation of who we are.

The work of Taloi and kin opens up the opportunity to observe, listen and feel the world that is.

*Tsomi wan-bel (win-win):* Taloi Havini  
IRENE WATSON



Image: Taloi HAVINI, *Tsomi wan-bel* (still image), 2017,  
3 channel video, 9.42 mins

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