



**Notes from *Constellations: Dream Work* event
2–4 February 2023
Contemporary Art Tasmania**

Public event: from 5.30pm Thursday 2 February
Exhibition: Friday 3 – Saturday 4 February
Guest provocateur (closed sessions): Friday 3 February

The ***Constellations: Dream Work*** event included: artist talks, presentations, performance and public conversations alongside an exhibition of video, sculpture, drawing, jewellery and sound work.

Notes from **Constellations: Dream Work** 5.30PM 2 February 2023

PRESENTERS: Aleks Crossan, Nani Graddon introduced by Lucy Bleach, Claire Johnston, Bobby K, Richard Langley, Peter Maarseveen, Lila Meleisea, Sarah Rhodes, Bianca Templar in conversation with Gabbee Stolp, Rory Dick and Jonny Scholes.

WELCOME: Kylie Johnson opened the event by acknowledging the first peoples of nipaluna/ Hobart, the Muwinina. She introduced Constellations as a program centred on critique, connection and development opportunities for artists. The Dream Work event is an occasion for artists to share ideas, introduce new work or work in development and to connect with other artists.

Peter Maarseveen artist talk with recent photographs exhibited. Peter began his talk by describing his practice and the experimental analogue techniques he employs. He references an old glass plate from approximately 1905. Peter is interested in the old huts on kunanyi mountain in Hobart with the Ferntree Hut being his current focus. The Ferntree Hut now only remains as a pile of rocks. Using an analogue camera from the early 1900's, Peter is employing the technology of the time that the huts were built and combining it with technology of today, including 3D printed adapters. He is replicating the decay and destruction of the huts within his artistic process, playing with the 'light leaks' of the camera, and burying the films for a period of time on site and then recovering and processing them. In this way he is 'letting nature take over' and partly destroying the images. Peter plans to continue with this way of working, to see how far he can take the process.

Richard Langley's new and in development sculptural assemblages presented in the gallery. Richard creates mixed media assemblages through a process of thinking-through-making and chance. He uses found materials that are arranged into new forms with reference to their past. The work is often imbued with humour.

Bobby K's recent text, photographs, sculpture and found objects presented in the gallery. The ordinariness of parking tickets and found objects are given special significance in the work presented in the gallery. The artist formed the work through a process of miniature rituals and quiet rites. Bobby is known for being in bands such as RABBIT, his zine work and interventions on public walls around Hobart. He is also a wine maker and part of the People's Wine Co-operative, a no profit organisation. The People's Wine rosé was available throughout the event.

Nani Graddon's looped video, *Perpetual rain and moving landmarks* was exhibited. Nani's Constellations mentor, **Lucy Bleach** introduced the work and spoke briefly about the prefab, readily available, and mass-produced objects Nani has been investigating. Nani uses these objects to contemplate expanding urban Australian landscapes. Lucy described how Nani is exploring what a landmark might be and then she read rain part ii (nipaluna), one of Nani's three texts that accompany the video work. An excerpt from the transcript –

a drizzle not a downpour. 'A cool change (in the middle of a heatwave)' – Floorplan Studio.

a blanket of fog or mist, a damp cloth.

Nipaluna sits under an easterly fog, less intense than Sydney's downpours although coupled with an abundance of deciduous trees, leaves, lichen and damp come together to cover ground, to settle in a similar sticky sludge. Cloud cover becomes a backdrop for a new landscape to form.

Lila Meleisea delivered *Resonance Mapping Works: Developing a Methodology*, an artist talk with slides. Resonance mapping is a concept that has been emerging within Lila's practice over the past nine years, influenced by her background in music. It relates to sound, vibration and connecting to the natural environment. Lila described resonance within her practice as phenomenological; experienced through the senses. She discussed past works: *Studying Landscapes*, which mapped the flora of an

area around Winifred Curtis Reserve in Scamander, Tasmania; and Blue Tier Forest and Highlands, which maps a central cosmos, rivers and mountains, and acknowledges Aboriginal cosmology. The works take the form of mandalas. Lila acknowledged that the mandala represents unity and wholeness in many indigenous cultures, simultaneously representing the macro and micro.

Lila is currently researching Samoan Tatau and its history. She is creating a mandala that follows this story, and the Tatau practice, from the centre of the mandala outwards.

As a part of the artists Constellations mentorship with Loren Kronemyer she will be working with resonance mapping in Queenstown, Tasmania, mapping the landscape and experimenting with her baritone saxophone. This exploration will also likely involve a return to the graphic score.

Rory Dick and **Jonny Scholes** presented *Vibrance: Staying afloat as an arts organization*, a talk with slides. Rory Dick opened the presentation by describing Vibrance as a multi-arts organization, which presents a festival for street arts in collaboration with Hobart City Council (HCC). The organization, established in 2017, initially ran out of a residential garage, hosting independent events, working with businesses, artists and other arts organizations. Vibrance is currently the only organization in Tasmania representing street arts and graffiti artists as their key practice. Vibrance consists of a core staff of two people, each working multiple roles in order to survive.

Vibrance festival began as a small 2-day event with art and music, and is now a 14-site, 7-day cultural event. Vibrance now has a paint shop to meet local demand and has moved from the residential garage to a commercial space. They are working to establish a gallery space, that will provide opportunities for artists to show that may not find other galleries to present their work.

Part II: Johnny Scholes spoke about how Vibrance evolved from conversations with other artists, noting that there was a desire from artists to paint large scale murals but they felt that they were missing out on public artwork opportunities. They recognised the need to reduce and adjust the application process and make it more accessible to street artists. There is also a continuing gap between businesses or building owners and artists. A part of Vibrance's role is to educate the building owners on 'cultural property' – understanding that streets and building facades belong to the community. Sites of historic street art are being lost through property development.

Vibrance prioritises freedom of expression within all of its projects. This requires trust in the artist. Vibrance does not take on projects or work with those that insist on an artist brief. They do not stick to a formula within the artist selection process, instead applying bespoke selection criteria for each project. Broadly, they look for artists already painting on the street who are ready to push their work further, or studio artists who have independently made steps to work large-scale or on the streets.

Claire Johnston presented a talk on her practice with slides. Claire began by discussing the process of preparing for the presentation and the reflection that went into this, identifying that musicians often don't talk about what they do as a 'practice'. Claire asked 'where does the practice occur as a musician? People often consider music to be a 'bit of a hobby'. Claire's early experience of music was shaped by institutional learning, having attended various conservatoriums of music. This experience has left her with anxieties around performing and practicing music. She stopped music for a time at the age of 18 and became involved in radical politics, as well as writing for the anarchist publication *Mutiny Zine*. At that time, Claire did not see the arts as a transformative or radical space. After moving to Lutruwita in 2013 she became a member of the band Slag Queens as a way to connect with people around politics and for her to reconnect with music. 'You can be bad at your instrument – you don't have to be perfect to play in public'. She has also worked as a musician in other bands such as RABBIT, Lucinda Shannon and Joel on Joel. Slag Queens was mentioned in *Tempered Magazine*, illuminating a network of musicians and groups on the same journey.

She spoke about her involvement in Rough Skies Records – a joint project with her friend Julian Teakle, which began in 2018. Rough Skies Records is a platform (DIY record label) that aims to connect listeners from around the world with unknown bands, and to connect local bands with the world beyond Tasmania. Claire works with artists on press releases, strategizing and planning record pressings, and more. Claire concluded by emphasising the importance of sustainable and democratic practices. She then shared a sound piece created by listening to voice memos of band practices and conversations with friends about politics. This was played during the break.

[REFRESHMENT BREAK]

Bianca Templar spoke about her practice in front of her exhibited wearable cultural objects. She was then joined by her Constellations mentor **Gabbee Stolp** in conversation. This occurred with a time-lapse video of both artists in Gabbee's studio projected in the background. Bianca introduced herself as a Tasmanian cultural woman who practices cultural crafts - women's business, including shell necklace making, rope making and weaving. Bianca's grandmother grew up on truwana / Cape Barron Island, which has led to Bianca's rich cultural practice. Working with her hands and drawing became Bianca's primary point of creative output following long periods in hospital as a child. Her motto is 'bringing my mind to life'. Her business, takamuna rrala (Stand Strong Designs) was named in defiance of those who said she 'couldn't do it'. She is inspired by the symbols that appear in petroglyphs carved into rocks – such as those at preminghana/ Mt Cameron, which were cut out and removed from the site. Bianca strongly believes in sharing the imagery of petroglyphs, even if their meanings have been lost. This exploration first came through clay but following Denise Robinson's suggestion to 'make it bigger', Bianca began to work in metal – primarily recycled and discarded metal, to work outside of consumerist cycles

Within their mentorship Bianca and Gabbee focused on working with materials that are being lost through climate change, but working them into, or reproducing them in, metal. *The following transcript from the conversation has been summarised by the notetaker. Direct quotes are indicated by quotation marks.*

Gabbee Stolp: Bianca, your practice is broad, combining cultural or traditional methods with contemporary methods. Why is this important?

Bianca Templar: It is a way to continue the culture that resonates with me. At one point everything was contemporary - one of these new methods could one day become tradition. This is how I can continue cultural practices sustainably, without continuing to extract natural resources. I might one day pass this new knowledge onto my own grandchildren.

G: What is it about contemporary jewellery in particular that interests you?

B: Traditional shell necklaces can break very easily. They are created through months of work but are easily broken. I have looked for new ways of creating to avoid that cycle of frustration – the making and remaking over again. 'Contemporary materials allow me to wear culture in a way that I don't have to worry about it'. That's how it began, then it evolved through encouragement from the community.

G: Can you tell us about your work at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG)?

B: The exhibition [*taypani milaythina: Return to Country*] concept began ten years ago within the First Nations Advisory Committee, who worked to have internationally dispersed cultural items returned to Tasmania for exhibition. This process cost thousands of dollars and was endless work. Following this there was confirmation that items would be loaned. The question was 'what else can be added?' The contemporary element of *taypani milaythina: Return to Country* invited artists to respond to the returning items. My piece is a resin King Mariner necklace, inspired by an image of King Mariner

necklaces housed at the Chicago Museum. It looked like it had blood on it. I made King Mariner resin moulds, and inside them are Mariner shells from across Tasmania. They go from uncleaned shells through to broken shells with red paint/red 'blood' to symbolise the 'bloodshed of colonisation and the broken aspects of our culture'.

Bianca concluded the conversation by imploring the audience to see the TMAG exhibition: 'you need to know the history of the country you are living on'.

Sarah Rhodes spoke about her practice accompanied by a slide presentation. Her pigment print work *Aman*, was exhibited in the gallery. Sarah is fascinated by the way in which an island is isolated, but connected by the sea, as well as the 'islands within the island' – exploring the effects of physical and geographical isolation and psychology. This has led to Sarah photographing people who were isolated - physically or socially – as well as interviewing them about their childhood living on an island. '...when it's just you looking at something, then the world opens up, and that's when your imagination happens... Living on an island is a launchpad for your imagination.'

On an island, you are often in nature. Sarah became interested in this two-way relationship and dialogue that people have with nature, as a way of understanding the self. In Queenstown, Tasmania it became obvious to the artist that the project should also include people who were new to the island and who made the choice to live there. Sarah asked people why they had moved to Queenstown, and received responses in which people compared themselves and their trauma to the tortured landscape of the area. The regeneration of the Queenstown mining landscape gave them hope for themselves. The atmosphere of the place became another key area of interest for Sarah, including how you might construct atmosphere, ie. making a fire, the smoke adding atmosphere to the image.

Through isolation we feel connected to nature, and through this connection we feel a sense of belonging, and in turn a part of a shared island community or identity. Sarah is involved in a project to be presented at the Venice Architecture Biennale, which has the theme 'decolonisation and decarbonisation'. The group's project is *Unsettling Queenstown* – looking at Queenstown in Tasmania and Queenstown in Port Adelaide, and a fictional Queenstown.

Aleks Crossan performed the work, *Funnel* live in the gallery. The work encompasses improvised and choreographed movements as performative drawing. *Funnel* has been developed by Aleks during her Constellations mentorship with Trudi Brinkman. In the performance the artist moved across the gallery wall through various choreographed and improvised movements drawing on the wall with charcoal. The music *Dust*, by Donovan John Szypura accompanied the performance, acting as prompts for the mark making.

[PROGRAM END]

Much conversation ensued over pizza and other refreshments.

Notes compiled by Hannah Foley and Kylie Johnson

Further information:
Kylie Johnson
kylie@contemporaryart.org.au

contemporaryarttasmania.com

