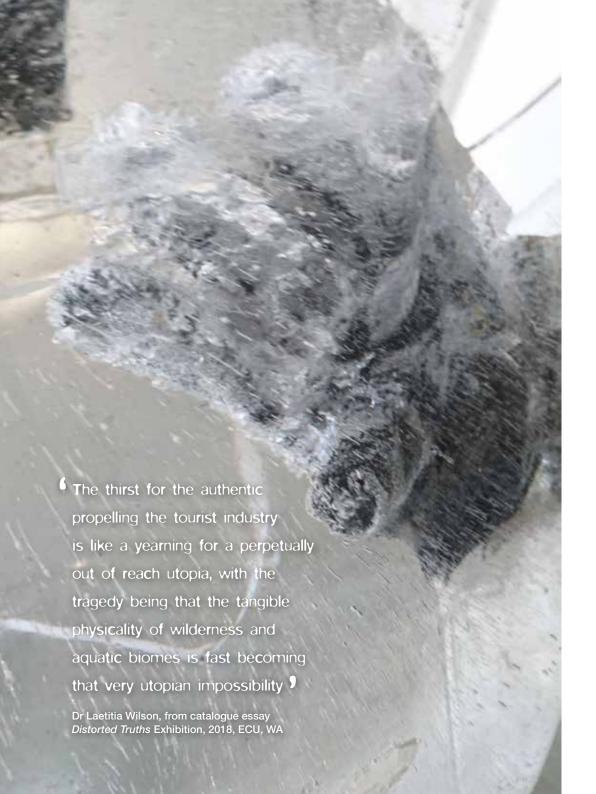
This Ain't No MIRAGE

LEA KANNAR-LICHTENBERGER

QC^ Galleries

7th February to 2nd March 2019



LEA KANNAR-LICHTENBERGER

This Ain't No MIRAGE

Curated by Jan Guy





Isolation 2019,

5 Slab constructed, 20 wheel formed high fired ceramics with text. Individual size up to 75D x 65W x 45H cm installation size 300 x 400 x 70 cm

TAKING UP ANCHOR AND DROPPING OUR ILLUSIONS

An Essay by Jan Guy on the work of Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger

Environmental art is often thought of as a contemporary genre. The notion of the artist as activist and the instigator of conservation, is considered a modern view linked to scientific data on climate change.

But environmental art has a much longer history than one might think. The way Early Europeans Australians perceived the environment is contested and artists did have a role to play. As Warwick Frost points out in his article, 'Did They Really Hate Trees? Attitudes of Farmers. Tourists and Naturalists in the Rainforests of Eastern Australia' perceptions of the environment ranged from satanic and threatening to written descriptions of its awe-inspiring beauty. It is estimated that along the Eastern seaboard and hinterland between 2-5 million hectares of rainforest were cleared between the early eighteenth century and the 1930s in the newcomers attempts at 'civilising' the land.1 In hindsight, if they were not blinkered to the living Earth perspectives of the long established Indigenous communities, such devastation might have been avoided. The intermittent pockets of rainforest we still have today can surprisingly, be partially explained by the work of early European landscape artists such as Eugene von Guerard and later. Arthur Streeton. It was the sublime beauty of von Guerard's painting Ferntree Gully in the Dandenong Ranges (1857) that

resulted in many visitors to the area and eventually its establishment as a National Park and the emotive titles of Streeton's work that attempted to alert his audience to the consequences of deforestation.² But contemporary art historian and environmental lawyer, Tim Bonyhady also shares accounts of how many early artists and photographers while creating images of great beauty for their appreciative audience were ironically, not disinclined to taking their handy axes to a tree or two to make the view in front of them more formally picturesque.³

With the invention of the aeroplane and then fifty years later television, the tourist's wanderlust has grown. Before the twentieth century, it was only the truly brave, foolhardy and adventurous who would travel to lands afar of their own free will.

Today with spare time and money each of us can see an inviting destination in the morning paper accompanied by the obligatory latte and within a few minutes have our next

¹ Warwick Frost 'Did they Really Hate Trees? Attitudes of Farmers, Tourists and Naturalists towards Nature in the Rainforests of Eastern Australia' *Environment and History* Vol.8 No.1 (February 2002), pp.3-19.

³ Tim Bonyhady 'Artists with Axes' *Environment and History* 1 (1995) pp.221-39.



Gagged 2015, 3 channel video and sound installation 14:00 looped, performed by Molly Morphew, choreography and directing by Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger with written text by Carl Safina 2015, size varies

holiday booked. It is one of our greatest pleasures. There are very few places in the world to which humans cannot buy a ticket.

At home I rarely think about the refuse my consumption produces – in the garbage, in the recycle (plastic, plastic, paper, plastic...). It is just part of the daily routine. But when I travel, deprived of this routine and exposed to different cultures, these seemingly mundane concerns can come to the fore. Hotel rooms provide small bins that fill quickly with the remainders of daily meals and shopping. Parts of Asia, where there is no government sanctioned recycling. are a strange combination of lip service to reduction and greening and the bright poppy lure of abundant consumption. In Australia, for many years, much of our recycling has been shipped overseas to countries like China and Malaysia, but in 2018 both of these countries banned the import of many waste materials.4 Our recycle waste is now at a crisis point and with warehouse stocks and landfills now overflowing, we will have to immediately devise a homegrown solution and change our feelgood attitudes to sorting trash. We are all as responsible as the colonial axe-wielding artist, whether at home or abroad.

Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger is a traveller, an artist, and an environmentalist. She understands the import of our everyday actions to sustaining the global environment. Islands are often fragile environments and the first to reveal the dire results of careless human habitation.

This exhibition, *This Ain't No Mirage* is both a diary of her visits to four islands – Antarctica,

the Faroe Islands, the Galapogos Islands and Lord Howe Island – and her commitment to sharing the consequences of our rampant hedonism produced both through tourism and scientific pursuit.

The work, *Gagged* (2015) is a video of a choking, distressed young woman consciously shot in the Western tradition of the bust. It is accompanied by an extract of text from the scientist, Carl Safina.

The extract describes a large bird no longer able to feed because of the human debris blocking its throat. The artist pointedly creates a disturbing empathic moment where our thoughtless actions will result in our own demise, as well as that of the environment. The gag, the joke is on us.

Since Kannar-Lichtenberger began directing her practice towards a dialogue of environmental issues, with each new exhibition artworks often reappear combining in different ways to renew or refocus a conversation with their audience. *Corpses of the Everyday* (2015) is such a work. In its first showing it acted as a divide between works that presented the evidence of environmental pollution and its consequences. A simple curtain made of transparent builder's plastic adorned with handprinted text, it evokes many aspects of life where clearly, we are culpable.

The artist has visited Lord Howe Island (LHI) many times with her late husband, Jens and still makes an annual pilgrimage.

⁴ James Massola and Amilia Rosa 'Malaysia bans Waste Imports as Australia faces Recycling Crisis' Sydney Morning Herald 22/10.18 https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/malaysia-bans-waste-imports-as-australiabattles-recycling-crisis-20181019-p50atm.html

Apparitions of the Everyday 2019, hand stencilled text from Corpses of the Everyday in acrylic on walls, size varies

LHI is advertised and thought about in the Australian public's imagination as a getaway, a pristine escape, and in many ways it is. But as the years pass the artist has seen changes to this island brought about by the ever increasing tourist trade; more tourists means higher water usage, more sewage, more refuse. Our waste becomes the corpses of the everyday and small island communities such as Lord Howe cannot adequately cope with this debris. It goes beyond 'essential' waste to the multiple plastic objects and fragments carelessly dropped by beachcombers and boats alike along the island's coastline. It drifts in and out of sight on the daily tides eventually finding its way into the gullets of marine life and majestic ocean birds or nestled among sand and seaweed washed up to the high tide line. The seemingly endless black text of the work, Corpses of the Everyday that hangs from floor to ceiling like an oversized shower curtain, is a running and repeated list of refuse the artist collected from the shoreline of LHI. A cold, pragmatic catalogue of the collected items sorted only by colour as one might gather flowers or a painter might arrange their palette. At first glance, the lines of text appear only as formalised pattern – a device of abstract painting layering and perhaps, framing the view beyond the transparent curtain. However, just as our awareness of the degradation of a specific environment often only arises when we have spent some duration in close proximity to it, it is only when we come close to this work that the ordinary descriptions become detailed and overwhelming. They literally obscure our view of the everyday.

The animated film *Happy Feet* by George Miller was a global success.⁵ It told the story of its Emperor Penguin hero Mumbles who was born unable to sing his 'heartsong', but who could tap dance. Needless to say there are dangerous encounters with Leopard Seals, plastic rings, research scientists and captivity, amidst much jovial and celebratory dancing. It ends happily with the world of humans making the right decision and fishing being banned in the waters of Antarctica and more celebratory dancing. When I saw that one of the titles of Kannar-Lichtenberger's artworks was *Unhappy Feet* (2018), I viscerally cringed and wanted to immediately erase it.

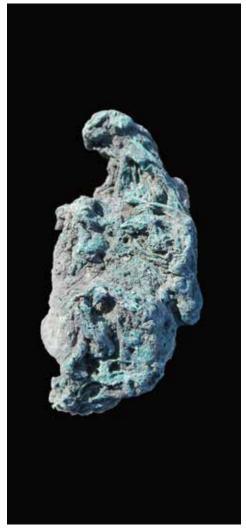
However, the artist has cleverly used the joyous, utopian cultural memory of this children's film in direct contrast to the unfolding horror of what is represented through the work.

Unhappy Feet consists of two large photographs with ambiguous masses floating in black voids. The unanchored forms appear as if melting stone deities from some forgotten civilisation; perhaps, our own? Their source is far more tragic: consolidated blue fishing net found in the stomach of a penguin that, no longer able to feed, has starved to death. These stark remainders of a slow death are strengthened by the unconscious echo of Mumble's happy tap.

The suggestive figuration of *Unhappy Feet* is reflected in the work, *Distorted Truths* (2018). Consisting of an oversized Petri dish and a block of ice approximating the size of an adult penguin, this work is one of duration. Buried within the ice is debris

⁵ Miller, Bill, George Miller, Doug Mitchell, Elijah Wood, Brittany Murphy, Hugh Jackman, Nicole Kidman. Et al. 2007. Happy Feet. Burbank, Calif: Warner Home Video.







Left: *Distorted Truths* 2018, Perspex Petri Dish 120 cm diameter x H12 cm, block of ice H100 x 50 x 40 cm, plastics collected from Deception Island, with projection video Distorted Truths, size 120 x 120 cm



Unhappy Feet II 2018, Pigment print on archival photo paper 200 x 110 cm



Deception I Berlin 2017, Runtime video 01:00 sec looped Runtime sound 03:00 sec Sound by Maria Alfonsine and Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger Projection of Berlin street scene onto melting glacier Deception Island, South Shetlands Islands, Antarctica, size varies from past humans who have visited the Antarctic's Deception Island that was once a whaling station, but now doubles as scientific research centre and tourist destination. The presence of the ice gives the gallery space a felt cold edge, and the slow visible melting mimics the disappearing polar caps that are burnt into our mind's eye as collapsing ice shelves. So, too, the frozen block finally collapses, setting free the debris and revealing the cause of its extinguishment.

While there is a general expectation for the possibility of change embedded in Kannar-Lichtenberger's art, there is also a sense of lament in the recording of specific environments; it is as if the artist is documenting something because it will soon disappear. In works From the Bow (2018) and Isolation (2018), the artist seems to be archiving the loss of place, but within each work she uses very different approaches. From the Bow gives a series of realistic views of the Galapogas Islands' coastline rendered in graphite. These are views perhaps, similar to those of Charles Darwin's first sightings of the place that would come to represent his radical theories of evolution. Each drawing is matched to a watery, subterranean abstraction made of lava salt. This alchemical ambiguity acts like an ominous threat to the delicately drawn visions of land. Isolation, on the other hand, is a ceramic simulation of a geographic formation, a cluster of rockpools. The natural has been replaced with the artificial; the original is lost.

In the contemporary art world the environmental artist is no less conflicted than the early colonial artist. The work of Ken Yonetani, *Sweet Barrier Reef* (2009)

was a critique of the thousands of tonnes of pollutants that are produced by the sugar industry and flow directly into the Pacific Ocean, bleaching the coral reefs.⁶ But with each version of this work more than one person's lifetime consumption of sugar was used in its installation, as well as hostesses offering cakes to the work's audience. We might ask, is it not hypocritical to contribute to the problem one is trying to address? In this exhibition, This Ain't No Mirage, the artist, Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger uses many materials and methods that produce waste and toxins in the environment - plastics, water, inks, photographic chemicals, ceramics, air conditioning, refrigeration, video and aeroplane fuel.

But perhaps, the artist's individual impact on the environment needs to be weighed against the great and subtle changes in attitude of the audience exposed to these works.

I doubt von Guerard thought his painting would result in significant conservation. Social change does not only come about through violent revolution, but through quiet ripples of awareness and conversation. The work of Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger contributes to these ripples by presenting us with images of beauty bound to visceral shocks of realisation. The complexity of the problems creating climate change has become overwhelming for all of us. The artist has directed us to the difficult acceptance of the reality that it is our presence that leads to degradation and extinction and that it is our wilful absence that will allow these islands to thrive.

Jan Guy is an artist, writer, and academic at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney.

⁶ Ken + Julia Yonetani website http://kenandjuliayonetani.com/en/works/sweetbarrierreef/



Above:

Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger onboard the Johanna, in the Faroe Islands 2016, photographed by Mahri Law

Top right:

Peregrinate 2019,

Runtime 00:01:15 sec looped, time-lapse of journey from Hvalba to Vagur Faroe Islands

Bottom right:

From the Bow 2018.

12 drawings Galapagos Islands 12 salt works, graphite and salt (Sydney beach and lava salt) on drawing papers 30 x 10 cm

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

I am an artist who explores the connections that surround human impact on islands. My degrees in fine arts an MA and MFA University of Sydney (Sydney College of the Arts) were pivotal to my current art practice. Since 2014 I have been investigating, with onsite research, small islands and isolated environments. Including the Galapagos (Ecuador 2014), Faroe (North Sea 2016) Lord Howe (NSW 2015 ongoing), Venice (Italy 2017) and Deception Islands (Antarctica 2017). Examining through immersive residencies as artist/tourist, traveller, observer, I look beyond the rhetoric to create artworks and installations that examine the impact of the Anthropocene and consumerism on the Utopian destination. My interdisciplinary vision embraces all mediums including printmedia, photography, drawing, new media, video, sound and installations. With highlights of my video artwork Gagged opening the keynote address of Associate Professor Monica Gagliano at the 2016 Jane Goodall Foundation Symposium Brussels. Since 2014 I have been delivering and publishing papers relating to my research and resulting artworks, at conferences including 2014 Affective Habitat ANU Canberra; 2015 AESS at UCSD CA, Arts in Society at UCLA CA and Paris 2016: ISEAHK2016: ISACS17 Germany; SEI Sydney Uni 2017. With open lectures at Spektrum (in association with Art Laboratory) Berlin, Edith Cowan University WA and QCA Griffith University Brisbane. Exhibiting my work internationally and locally in group and solo shows.





CURRICULUM VITÆ

CV of Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger Born Sydney Australia 1964

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS – INTERNATIONAL

2017 Venice Summer Academy – Palazzo Zenobio Venice

Impressions Print Exhibition – Galway International Art Fest – Galway Mayo Inst of Tech, Centre for Creative Arts & Media – Ireland

ASCI Biodiversity/Extinctions – The Silva Gallery of Art Pennington School

2016 Stunning Edge Contemporary Ceramics
 Exhibition – Taiwan
 10th Arte Laguna Prize – Shortlisted –
 Sculpture and Video

2015 ASCI Biodiversity/Extinctions – New York Hall of Science

2014 Where's the Art in Bio-Art? – School of Visual Arts (SVA) Flatiron Gallery Manhattan NYABF – MoMA PS1 Long Island – SVA New York

Living Things are NOT Cooperating – Bio-Art Residency Exhibition SVA New York

2013 Semi Living – Bio-Art Residency Exhibition SVA New York

MGC – Manhattan Graphics Juried Print Exhibition – New York

Portrait in Print – Centre for Contemporary Printmaking – Norwalk Connecticut USA

2012 Exploration of a Medium: Printmaking – Centre for the Arts Evergreen – Colorado USA
 The Irish Connection: Lorg and Warringah Printmakers Exhibition Ballybane – Ireland

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS - AUSTRALIA

2017 Harbour Sculpture – Woolwich, Sydney NSW 2016 Inkmasters Print Exhibition – Cairns Qld

Waterhouse Natural Science Art Prize S.A.
North Queensland Ceramics Award (biennial)
Elemental – M Contemporary Projects – NSW
2088 Mosman Regional Art Gallery NSW
Fresh Paint – Grilled Chicken Articulate
Project Space NSW

2015 SCA Post-Graduate Show – NSWCNWAP – Chippendale New World Art Prize – NSW 2088 Mosman Regional Art Gallery NSW

2014 Inkmasters Print Exhibition - Cairns Qld

Art Concerning the Environment – Scope Gallery Vic

Print and Works on Paper Awards – Swan Hill Regional Gallery – Vic

Swan Hill Print & Drawing Prize – Swan Hill Regional Gallery – Vic

Under Pressure Printmedia Exhibition – Red Gallery Glebe NSW

2088 Mosman Open Exhibition – Mosman Regional Art Gallery NSW

2013 Fisher's Ghost Open Art Prize – NSW Verge Art Awards finalist in 2D and 3D – Sydney University Postgraduate Exhibition SCAP – Sunshine Coast Art Prize – QLD

RESIDENCIES, RESEARCH AND COLLABORATIONS

2017 Culture at Work Ultimo – Residency working with research from Antarctica, Mar 6 to present Deception Island (Antarctica) – Research 19 days The Ninth Wave project 'Floating Lab' on board the Guluk of the Netherlands, Jan 7 to 26

2016 Faroe Island Residency – Research 4 weeks The Clipperton Project 'Floating Lab' on board the Johanna of Vagur, June 3 to 28

2015 Lord Howe Island – Water sampling, sound recording, filming and research, April 25 to May 9 The Clipperton Project – Inaugural floating lab Western Australia, March 2015

2014 Galapagos Islands Researching – filming, sound recording and research, Oct 1 to 15 Bio-Art Summer Residency – SVA New York, May 19 to June 20 Lord Howe Island – Water sampling, filming and research, Jan 12 to 26

 2013 Bio-Art Summer Residency – SVA New York, May 21 to June 21
 OMG – Octopus Mandala Glow – Collaborative Performance work with Prof Victoria Vesna chair UCL Art/Sci, Aug

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019 Project Gallery QCA, Qld - Feb 7 to Mar 2

2018 Spectrum Project Space, ECU, WA, May 17 to June 2

2017 Gagged in Dystopia – Interlude Gallery Glebe Point Rd Glebe NSW, Jan 27 to Feb 4

2015 Colliding Worlds – Hazelhurst Community Gallery – NSW, Mar 6 to 17 2013 Coding the Future – GAFFA Gallery Clarence Street, Sydney, Feb 21 to Mar 4

AWARDS AND GRANTS

2014 PRSS Sydney University Research Grant – for travel to research in the Galapagos Islands

2012 Phyllis Arnot Print Prize - Hornsby College NSW

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

2014 – Mar 2016 Master of Fine Art – SCA Sydney College of the Arts (Sydney University) including Auditing 2nd Year Botany, 3rd year and Marine Biology at University of Sydney and, 2nd year the Art of Sound and Noise and 2nd year Art and Nature at SCA

2013 Master of Studio Art – SCA Sydney College of the Arts (Sydney University)

PUBLICATIONS CONFERENCE PAPERS AND LECTURES

2018 Propelling the Dystopian: the bucket list desire for the authentic. AAANZ Conference RMIT Vic There be Dragons: exploring contemporary consumerism on the utopian ideal. Public Lecture – Queensland College of Arts June 28

2017 Beyond the Verbiage: Consumerism through Tourism and its manifestations in small islands and remote places. Sustaining the Seas Conference SEI (Sydney Environment Institute) University of Sydney, Dec 12 Deception – Convergence of spaces brings

context to time. ISACS17 Symposium ZKM Karlsruhe Germany, Sept 30 Beyond the Idealised Mosaic: Stepping

outside the comfort zone. MAANZ Symposium Hobart, Aug 18 On a Knife's Edge: exploring the tourism

On a Knife's Edge: exploring the tourism industry and consumerisms environmental effects through art. Joint paper presentation with Lina Espinosa (Columbia) 12th Annual Arts in Society Conference, June 14 to 16

2016 Gagged in Dystopia: the use of plastic and non-politically correct materials in the creation of art. 11th Annual Arts in Society Conference UCLA (University of California Los Angeles), Aug 12 There Be Dragons: human impact on the unique environments of the Galapagos and Lord Howe Island. Lecture about my research at Spektrum, (Art Laboratory Berlin), May 22 Gagged in Dystopia, ISEA (International Symposium of Electronic Art) Hong Kong May 19

Gagged, Presented at the Opening Keynote speech by Monica Gagliano PhD Jane Goodall Institute; Symposium Interconnectedness Brussels, May 14

There Be Dragons: human impact on the unique environments of the Galapagos and Lord Howe Island – Lord Howe Island Museum, April 13

2015 Exploring the Microscopic World of Plant Communication – NMiCA (New Materialism in Contemporary Art) at SCA (Sydney College of the Arts), Aug 31

There be Dragons: human impact on the unique environments of the Galapagos and Lord Howe Island – AESS (Association of Environmental Sciences and Studies) at UCSD (University of California San Diego), June 23 to 29

Distinction with a Difference: exploring the ecospheres of the Galapagos and Lord Howe Islands with controlled tourism – AMOS (Australian Metrological and Oceanographic Association) Conference Brisbane, July 15 to 18

2014 Metaphor for Evolution: From Weed to Tree and exploration of the Dandelion – Affective Habitat – Humanities Conference – ANU Canberra, June 19 to 21

PUBLICATIONS GENERAL

2018 Beyond the Verbiage: Consumerism through Tourism and its Manifestations in Small Islands and Remote Places. Environment and Ecology Research Vol. 6(5), pp. 471-478 http://www.hrpub.org/journals/article_info.php?aid=7424 DOI: 10.13189/eer.2018.060507 SciArt Center COLLOQUIUM by Kate Schwarting, Programs Manager https://www.sciartcenter.org/lea-kannar.html

2017 Exploring Tourism and Contemporary
Societies' Effect on Three Utopian Ideals –
Artist and Climate Change June 12, https://
artistsandclimatechange.com/2017/06/12/
exploring-tourism-and-contemporary-societieseffect-on-three-utopian-ideals/
Interview: Gagging in Dystopia at Interlude
Gallery. https://vimeo.com/210705521

2016 Art the Science Blog – http://artthescience. com/blog/2016/03/11/creators-lea-kannarlichtenberger/

SOLO EXHIBITION This Ain't No Mirage – LEA KANNAR-LICHTENBERGER PROJECT GALLERY OCA

Exhibition List of Works

Isolation, 2019, 5 Slab constructed and 20 wheel formed high fired ceramics with text. Individual size up to 75D \times 65W \times 45H cm installation size $300 \times 400 \times 70$ cm

Gagged, 2015, 3 channel video and sound installation 14:00 looped, performed by Molly Morphew, choreography and directing by Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger with written text by Carl Safina (silk screen on clear plastic) 2015, size varies

Corpses of the Everyday, 2015, Measured, colour coded and catalogued plastic debris from Lord Howe Island, hand stencilled in acrylic on clear builders plastic, size 500 x 360 cm

Apparitions of the Everyday, 2019, hand stencilled text from Corpses of the Everyday in acrylic on walls, size varies

Distorted Truths, 2018, (Ephemeral work) Perspex Petri Dish 120 cm diameter x H12 cm, block of ice H100 x 50 x 40 cm, plastics collected from Deception Island, with projection video Distorted Truths, 2017, size 120 x 120 cm Unhappy Feet I, 2018, Pigment print on archival photo paper 200 x 110 cm

Unhappy Feet II, 2018, Pigment print on archival photo paper 200 x 110 cm

Deception I Berlin, 2017, Runtime Video 01:00 sec looped, runtime Sound 03:00 sec, sound by Maria Alfonsine and Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger; Projection of Berlin street scene onto melting glacier Deception Island, South Shetlands Islands, Antarctica, size varies

Peregrinate, 2019, Runtime 00:01:15 sec looped, time-lapse of journey from Hvalba to Vagur Faroe Islands

From the Bow, 2018, 12 drawings Galapagos Islands 12 salt works, graphite and salt (Sydney beach and lava salt) on drawing papers 30 x 10 cm

Livingston I Presume I, 2017, Pigment print on archival photo paper 200 x 110 cm

Front and back interior of cover – details of Distorted Truths, 2018, ECU, WA

Cover - detail of Isolation, 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the late Jens Lichtenberger for his unwavering support of my artistic journey. Jan Guy for her curation of the exhibition and emotional support. The people of Lord Howe Island, Professor Emeritus Helen Tiffin and Sydney University (PRSS Grant) for support with the Galapagos Island Expedition, the Clippertom Project for the Faroe Island Expedition, The Ninth Wave for the Antarctica Expedition and the Queensland College of Art for their support in staging this exhibition.

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