

CATALOGUE

This publication was published on the traditional country of the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land. We acknowledge that they are of continuing importance to the Kurna people living today. We pay respect to Elders past, present and future.

The Margaret Lawrence Gallery is thrilled to present the exhibition *The image is not nothing (Concrete Archives)*.

As Director of the Gallery, I am indebted to the curators Lisa Radford and Yhonnie Scarce who have brought together a number of voices that interrupt standard narratives about history and cultural development. In a process of practice-led curatorship these two (women) artists (who are also academics) have interrogated their own practices (and that of each other) within the context of global concerns around the notion of monuments and monumentality. The Victorian College of the Arts has been the space in which their ideas have been incubated, expanded and refined and I am especially honoured that the Margaret Lawrence Gallery can showcase the depth of their research.

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This exhibition is the result of complex field trips, interviews and web/text-based research. Discussion, including rich conversations with the curators' extensive network of family, friends, artists, writers and academics, has been an important aspect of the trajectory—a suite of observations which have developed into profound concepts and now flourish in this exhibition. It is important to acknowledge that during the curatorial process, both curators continued with their academic roles and their studio practices, affirming the place of teaching and artistic exploration within the curatorial development of the exhibition.

Grounded in ideas around truth and power, memory and memorialisation, personal and shared histories, the reverberations of colonisation, disintegrating and emerging regimes, the impact of dominant narratives, the prized and the discarded—themes that have a critical urgency, *The image is not nothing (Concrete Archives)* is a timely and important exhibition. My deepest thanks and congratulations to the curators and artists.

- 1 British nuclear weapons testing in Australia, <https://www.arpansa.gov.au/understanding-radiation/sources-radiation/more-radiation-sources/british-nuclear-weapons-testing>, accessed January 20 2021.
- 2 Elizabeth Tynan, Sixty years on, the Maralinga bomb tests remind us not to put security over safety, September 26 2016, <https://theconversation.com/sixty-years-on-the-maralinga-bomb-tests-remind-us-not-to-put-security-over-safety-62441>, accessed January 20 2021.
- 3 Elizabeth Tynan, Dig for secrets: the lesson of Maralinga's Vixen B, November 2013, <https://www.foe.org.au/dig-secrets-lesson-maralingas-vixen-b>, accessed January 20 2021.
- 4 Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia, Report (1985), vol 1, <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id:%22publications/tables/papers/HPP032016010928%22;src1=sm1>, accessed January 20 2021.
- 5 Jens Korff, Maralinga: How British nuclear tests changed history forever, <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/history/maralinga-how-british-nuclear-tests-changed-history-forever>, accessed January 20 2021.
- 6 Nick Grimm, Aboriginal Maralinga nuclear test victims healthcare measures 'long overdue and totally inadequate': Frank Walker, May 9 2017, <http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2016/s4665857.htm>, accessed January 20 2021.
- 7 Elizabeth Tynan, Dig for secrets: the lesson of Maralinga's Vixen B, November 2013, <https://www.foe.org.au/dig-secrets-lesson-maralingas-vixen-b>, accessed January 20 2021.

From 1952 to 1963, the British government conducted a series of nuclear weapons development tests across three sites on Indigenous ancestral land in Australia: the Monte Bello Islands off the coast of Western Australia, Emu Field and Maralinga both in the South Australian desert. A total of twelve full-scale atomic bombs were exploded: three at Monte Bello, two at Emu Field and seven at Maralinga. To grasp the magnitude of these explosions, it is worth noting that one of the tests that occurred at Maralinga was twice the size of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan.¹

7 The nuclear tests were agreed to in 1950 by Australia's then prime minister, Robert Menzies, who neither referred the issue to his cabinet or sought permission from geographically-affected Aboriginal groups including the Kokatha, Pitjantjatjara, Maralinga Tjarutja and Yankunytjatjara. Often represented as a fervent Anglophile, Menzies' political agenda emphasised national security and tapped into Cold War fears; he believed working with the UK would provide guarantees of British protection in a post-Hiroshima, nuclear-armed world.² According to science writer and academic Dr Elizabeth Tynan, the Maralinga tests were, at the time, a striking example of extreme governmental secrecy.³ By the late 1970s, however, there was a marked change in how the Australian media covered the British nuclear tests: led by whistle-blowers and emerging media reports over the increasing evidence (and statistical significance) of premature deaths of former staff associated with the atomic tests and subsequent birth defects of their offspring, public outcry resulted in the Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia. The Commission was released in 1985 and found that the tests had been approved without first receiving independent Australian scientific advice on the hazards to humans or the environment. Tellingly, the report also detailed how attempts to ensure the safety of Aboriginal people who lived on the lands were riddled by 'ignorance, incompetence and cynicism', and that significant radiation hazards still existed at many of the Maralinga testing sites.⁴

The damage done to Indigenous people in the vicinity of all three test sites was, and remains, immeasurable, and included forced displacement, injury and death. While there has been no long-term assessment of the health impacts in the region, those who survived the radiation exposure have described health complications as varied as blindness, sores, nausea, cancer,

lung disease and fertility issues. The intergenerational effects of radiation related to the tests also remain under-documented.

Since 1985 there have been concerted efforts by government, community and activists to address the fallout of the nuclear tests conducted in Australia. This includes land clean-ups in 1967, 2000 and 2009; compensation to Aboriginal people for the loss of enjoyment of their lands as well as compensation for some (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who were physically affected by radiation exposure; and the adoption of a United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The fact that Australia is yet to sign the treaty—which provides a framework for the elimination of nuclear weapons and the recognition of the impact they've had on First Nations peoples—goes ways towards demonstrating how our nation is yet to claim full accountability for this environmental and social disaster.

I provide this historical background (which is further expanded upon by others in greater and more sensitive detail across this catalogue) because it is central to why ACE Open has invested in *The image is not nothing* (Concrete Archives): an ongoing motivation in our artistic program is to support artists and curators to tell stories that speak about the complexity and hard truths of Australia as a colonial nation with an Indigenous past, present and future. The absence of timely media coverage and public debate have created a gap in most people's understanding of Maralinga, Emu Field and the Monte Bello Islands. *The image is not nothing* (Concrete Archives) brings this atrocity into the public imagination.

I would like to both thank and congratulate the exhibition's curators, Lisa Radford and Yhonnie Scarce, for bringing together research and artworks that collectively (and powerfully) deal with nuclear colonisation, Indigenous genocide and cultural erasure as a way to provide a global framework to a local history and trauma that by no means has been healed.



Hayley Millar-Baker, *Untitled (The best means, of caring for, and dealing with them in the future)* (2018), inkjet on cotton, 120 x 150cm.
Courtesy the artist and Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne.

Malatja tjutaku Ara Irati Pulkatjara (Generational story of Nuclear Colonisation)

Early Memories

10

- 1 AB 11 (Yami Lester), Testimonial from the McClellan Royal Commission into the British Nuclear Tests in Australia found in British Nuclear Tests in Australia—Royal Commission (President: Mr Justice J.R. McClelland), Volume 1, 20 November 1985, pp. 6-8, <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id:%22publications/tailedpapers/HPP032016010928%22;src1=sm1>, accessed January 2021.
- 2 Shortened version of Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta which is a mixture of Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, Antikirinya and Kokatha languages with an English 's' on the end.
- 3 Muckaty Station is made of the seven clans Milwayi, Ngapa, Ngarrka, Wirntiku, Kurrakurraja, Walanypirri and Yapayapa.
- 4 Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission report urges SA to pursue waste dump, 9 May 2016, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-09/sa-nuclear-fuel-cycle-royal-commission-findings-waste-dump/7395632>, accessed January 2021.
- 5 Civil society is the 'third sector' of society along with government and business. It comprises of civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations. The UN recognises the importance of partnering with civil society because it advances the Organisation's ideals, and helps support its work. Here are some useful websites for members of civil society and also for those interested in the work of the UN., from <https://www.un.org/en/sections/resources-different-audiences/civil-society/index.html>, accessed 4 February 2020.
- 6 Indigenous Statement to the U.N. Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty Negotiations, 19 June 2017, <https://swuraniumimpacts.org/indigenous-statement-u-n-nuclear-weapons-ban-treaty-negotiations/>, accessed January 2021.

“... things suddenly changed for me, for all of us at Walatina. We heard a loud bang, the ground started shaking, then the black smoke rolled over. It was black and shiny.”

Yami, the autobiography of Yami Lester (1993).

These are the memories of my late father Yami Lester. They are also the memories of many who survived the British nuclear tests in Australia in the 1950s–1960s. Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people of the Western Desert region moved freely through their traditional lands, living, hunting, gathering and practising their culture for thousands of years. This land was our Ngura—home, this land was our ‘safe place’. That was to change.

On the morning of the 15 October 1953 ngayuku walytja tjuta (my family) woke to the ground shaking and a black mist rolling over their camp at Walyatjata, Walatina South Australia. As my late grandmother Pingkai Upitja recalls, the black mist came with a very strong potent smell and stench, an oily like substance that fell over the camp. Many in the camp were filled with fear and panic, they started to dig into the sand dunes to bury and save their children. Anangu had great knowledge about the dust storms which came with strong winds, dust and flying vegetation. They came with sound, but this black mist rolled silently, silently through the trees and over the sand dunes creeping in over the camp.

On that day many lives changed forever.

Ngayuku Walytja Tjuta (my family) suffered from the catastrophic nuclear weapons tests that happened across our country, our ngura. Many died, others had skin rashes, sore eyes, vomiting and diarrhoea, while many more fell ill soon after. Families had to bury their elderly family members who died in the days that followed. Dad had suffered from very infected eyes and had to be led around by a stick.

“When people first got sick my eyes got sore. I couldn’t open my eyes. I got tjuri (diarrhoea) and a rash on my skin. I remember when this happened my mother asked me to stay in the shade.

Because I couldn’t see I was led around with a stick. You hold it one end and the person ahead of you holding the other end and you follow along. I didn’t have the stick for long, I don’t reckon it was even a week. My left eye came good again so I threw away the stick, but my right eye was permanently blinded after that. But I could see with my left eye, but it gave me a lot of trouble. I could not see 100% with my left eye.”¹

Yami Lester

These are the stories I grew up with, the stories of suffering and pain. These are stories that took something so precious and irreplaceable away from my father—his ability to see and remember the world, his world that he loved and cherished. Their actions took away his freedom and ability to be the man he loved to be—a stockman, a great horseman. But instead, he came to be a man who was to be a great leader to his people; a man with great vision, patients, drive, compassion and humanity. He was to be the voice for his people and would achieve great things.

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Living with these stories, this pain of not fully understanding why or how my father was blinded and why he wasn’t like other fathers was hurtful and distressing but I was very much aware of why he played such a crucial role in many of his great achievements for his people and this nation.

In the early 1980s Dad was heavily involved in initiating the Royal Commission into the British nuclear tests that took place during the 1950s and 1960s on the traditional lands of the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people. Dad’s drive and passion came about after hearing an interview on ABC Radio with Sir Ernest Titterton who was being interviewed about the nuclear tests at Emu Fields and Maralinga. He recalls Titterton saying that they had taken good care of the blacks—Dad said “that’s bullshit”. They never spoke to Anangu to tell them about what they were planning on doing, they never asked for consent, they couldn’t even speak Yankunytjatjara. There was only one patrol officer to cover thousands of square kilometres informing the community of the British and Australian Government’s plans for nuclear testing in the outback of South Australia. With this interview in the back of Dad’s mind he was determined to set the record straight and remind Australia of what they did to Aboriginal people of the western desert region.

In the Royal Commission it was recognised that the lands

that Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara occupied and were used for, as the 1983–85 Royal Commission reported, “hunting and gathering, for temporary settlements, for caretakership and spiritual renewal.”

It was later found that the radioactive cloud from the first detonation at Emu Field, Totem 1 (9.1 kilotons), did not disperse as expected and traveled north-east over the Australian continent. As a result, Emu Field was considered too remote for future use. The search for a more convenient location led to the survey of Maralinga where a further series of atomic tests were conducted. The effects on the southern Pitjantjatjara, Kokatha, Mirning, Wirangu traditional owners were to be profound as a result of atomic testing.

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Talking Strong: Anti-Nuclear Campaigning

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In 1998, the John Howard Government were looking for a location to dispose of Australia’s nuclear waste. Billa Kalina, Arcoona Station in the far north of South Australia was identified as a potential location. This was to be the fight of the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta, (the women of Coober Pedy) and was the birth of the Irati Wanti, the “Poison, Leave it” campaign led by the Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, Antikirinya and Kokatha Women who lived in Coober Pedy and were united against the proposed waste dump by the Howard Government. Their fight and activism were to protect country, people and all Australians—a fight for the protection of Wapar, the ancestral stories and knowledge held by traditional Anangu women and their associated cultural responsibilities. This fight was for the protection of important stories that traverse through country and will hold value for future generations.

Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta was formed by a council of women elders with first-hand experience of the horrific nuclear tests and spoke strongly against the Australian Government’s proposal to store nuclear waste in their country, their ngura. They travelled thousands of kilometres, telling their stories and talking up strong, attending many rallies, events, protests and forums to have their stories and concerns heard and for the whole of Australia to know.

I came onboard as an Anangu interpreter and as Mrs Eileen Kampakuta Brown’s granddaughter to help get these stories out, keep the fight going and to be the voice for the next generation—

talking straight about their first-hand experience and taking their words across the oceans. Their stories were full of compassion, kindness, understanding and sympathy but most of all their fight was for all Australians, both black and white. My Kami, the late Kampakuta Brown, and the late Eileen Wani Wingfield were both recognised for their activism and recipients of the Goldman Environmental Award for their leadership for the protection of country—ngura. I took away many lessons from my elders but the one I remember most clearly is that they were concerned for all Australians. This is not a black issue only, but an issue for all Australians—black and white, young and old. I still hold this dearly in my work—talking straight out and to never stop talking.

The Kungkas² spoke out and did not stop telling their stories. They said:

We take our responsibilities very seriously toward: the land, the Country, some of the special places, we know them as Tjukur—the important stories of the land the songs that prove how the land is the Inma-song and dance of the culture; all part of the land as well the bush tucker that we know and do our best to teach the grandchildren, and even tourists when we have the chance preserving the traditional crafts; the wira-wooden bowl, wana-digging stick, punu-music sticks, and even kali-boomerang, that our grandmothers have passed down to us through generations—the language, the family, members have respect for one another. ‘All this is law’

(Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuṛa Editorial Committee et al. 2005, p. 6)

The success of the Irati Wanti campaign led to major changes in state legislation as the sections from the South Australian Nuclear Waste Storage Facility (Prohibition) Act 2000; Acts 8, 9 and 13 of the legislation below show:

- 8 Prohibition against construction or operation of nuclear waste storage facility;
- 9 Prohibition against importation or transportation of nuclear waste for delivery to nuclear waste storage facility;
- 13 No public money to be used to encourage or finance construction or operation of nuclear waste storage facility (Government of South Australia 2000, p. 3).

The Australian Government abandoned their plans for a radioactive waste dump in South Australia on 14 July 2004. But, at the same

time, the Howard Government stated they would start a new search outside of South Australia to dump nuclear waste.

Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta were winners after more than six years of their brave, stoic and kind activism for their country to be free of nuclear waste. Three years later in 2007, the fight went over the border to Muckaty Station, Northern Territory. Again, the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta offered their support to the Traditional Owners of Muckaty Station, standing in solidarity.³ That fight—involving court hearings and stress to another Aboriginal community—lasted another seven years (until 2014).

15 The fight to protect country and people continued and within ten years the national radioactive waste dump issue was back on South Australia's agenda. On 13 November 2015 the Federal Government released its shortlist of six sites across the nation for nuclear waste storage, three of which were in South Australia—Wallerberdina, near Hawker in the Flinders Ranges, Lyndhurst and Napandee both near Kimba, Eyre Peninsula. With this announcement, the South Australian community had to fight this issue for a second time. Again, we began strategising how we were going to fight this one and examined how the process was being run by the Australian Government which was flawed and their tactics were shameful. They opened up the process to almost like a tender: landowners would nominate their properties to the government who was dangling a cash-carrot. Accepting nominations, the government made a short list eliminating sites for being too remote, or too close to a region or population. The process divided families and split communities, with the Federal Government trying to override what was previously won by the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta with the South Australian Nuclear Waste Storage Facility (Prohibition) Act 2000.

The Adnyamathanha and Barngarla people, the traditional owners of the three locations nominated, were anxious and concerned what this would mean for country, culture and people. Support and solidarity were needed again so we could stand strong together as South Australian Aboriginal people and send a strong message to the Australian Government. I recall many feelings and being overwhelmed and worried with fear of the unknown and if their country was going to be the dumping ground for the nation.

Within a year we were all completely blindsided by the announcement of a Royal Commission into the nuclear fuel cycle.

I clearly remember my older sister say “I don’t think I have the energy to fight this one” and I replied, “We are going to have to tag team, sis.” This was to be the biggest and hardest fight for me and the Aboriginal community of South Australia.

On 10 May 2016, the South Australian Premier Jay Weatherill announced that he planned to consult the South Australian community for their opinion and deliberation on ‘the opportunity to establish used nuclear fuel and intermediate-level waste storage and disposal facilities in South Australia’ which would be undertaken through the formation of a citizens’ jury. This was in response to a report led by Honourable Rear Admiral Scarce who recommended a used-nuclear fuel and intermediate-level waste storage facility should be built in South Australia.⁴

The community consultation was framed by the question ‘Under what circumstances if any, should South Australia propose to store or dispose of nuclear waste from other countries?’ and included consideration of the following areas:

- A Community consent—and the importance of an informed opinion
- B Economics—including the benefits and risks to the state
- C Safety—including key issues around storage, health and transport
- D Trust—noting that accountability and transparency must be built into any regulatory systems

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(Government of South Australia, 2016)

We were all thrown back into the fight but this time we were up against our own state and a political party that had backed the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta some ten years ago which was always in the back of my mind trying to make sense of it all. What? How? Why? How could they? But I was determined to talk up strong and remind everyone that Aboriginal people of South Australia have always said “NO” to nuclear.

I held with me the stories of my people, the suffering they had endured from the British nuclear tests, the fight they took up through the Irati Wanti campaign. It was inevitable that I needed to fight this. What was so important was that we were there at the table from the very beginning and that we were not going away—that we would be involved in this Royal Commission from

the beginning, and we were. Our Aboriginal voice was being pushed through the process as I sat at roundtables and committees arguing for a fair and just process and the need for the citizens' jury to hear the voices of the Aboriginal people of South Australia. It was crucial we engaged with the jurors and we did so through what we called the 'speed dating' experience and Aboriginal panel. It was daunting and intimidating to justify to strangers the lived Anangu experience and suffering felt by Anangu, but I was not alone. With the support of my older sister and cousin sister we confronted one hundred jurors and each outlined why we were saying "NO".

17 During the entire process we worked hard to build strong working relationships with organisations such as the Conservation Council SA, Maritime Union of Australia, Mothers for a Sustainable South Australia (MOSSA), faith groups and medical professionals and, from it all, came the 'NO DUMP ALLIANCE' (NDA). With NDA Ambassador, my late father Yami Lester, we rallied so tight and strong that we put an end to this State Royal Commission's findings once and for all. The community support we received was overwhelming: we all stood in solidarity to send a strong message to the South Australian Government that we were not interested in being the nuclear radioactive waste dump of the world.

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My Journey

While one campaign came to a close, another one was opening ... I was embarking on my own personal journey with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) to free the world of these catastrophic weapons. I travelled to Japan and took our Anangu story of struggle and suffering to talk up strong on why Anangu are standing firmly in solidarity for a world free of nuclear weapons. This campaign saw a shift in my focus to an international scene, a global network of survivors. All the while, I kept my feet firmly grounded in our Ananguku story.

In June 2017 I was fortunate to travel to the United Nations Headquarters in New York and be part of the negotiations on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). I spoke as a civil society representative and delivered a statement on behalf of the Pacific Region.⁵

Many suffered from nuclear testing in the Pacific region and the world needed to know.

“For more than seven decades, nuclear weapons have posed an intolerable, ever-present danger to all peoples and the planet as a whole. Because we abhor these instruments of terror and mass destruction, we warmly welcome the United Nations negotiations for a treaty to ban them. Indigenous communities have borne the brunt of these deadly experiments. Our land, our sea, our communities, and our physical bodies carry this legacy with us now, and for unknown generations to come.”

(Statement from Indigenous Communities in support of a Treaty to Ban Nuclear Weapons, 2017)

Within a month of my return back to Australia after presenting to the world, our Anangu story, my generous father, Yami Lester passed away. His story had reached the world and, like many others’ who suffered from nuclear testing and nuclear bombs, was powerful, profound and crucial to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It is a journey that I was, and am, so proud to be part of—to be that messenger and keep our Anangu story alive for future generations.

22 January 2021 was not only a very emotional and historical day for many across the world when we celebrated the end of nuclear weapons through the enforcement of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (which made nuclear weapons illegal under international law). Speaking up strong against these horrid weapons has been a generational journey for my family. My late father spoke strong against Australia’s dark secret in order to let everyone know what had occurred on his country and what impact it had on his people in the western desert region. Our land has been seen by outsiders as nothing but a wasteland, but to Anangu it was and is our home, our safe place, rich in culture that is so important to us. Anangu suffered from those British nuclear tests in the 1950s–1960s and many are still suffering from the impact today. We remember those who are not with us but are the reasons why we continue to fight and stand up against these catastrophic weapons—for a safer and peaceful world free of nuclear weapons.

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- + Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta (ed. Nina Brown), Talking straight out: stories from the Irati Wanti Campaign / Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta, Coober Pedy, South Australia, Alapatja Press, 2005.
- + Nuclear Fuel Cycle, Royal Commission SA, <http://nuclearrc.sa.gov.au/>
- + No Dump Alliance, <https://www.nodumpalliance.org.au/>
- + Yami Lester, Yami: the autobiography of Yami Lester, Alice Springs, N.T.: Institute for Aboriginal Development, c1993.
- + The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), <https://www.icanw.org/>



Members of Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta

Standing Emily Munyungka Austin and Ivy Makinti Stewart

Seated Left to right: Eileen Unkari Crombie; Eileen Kampakuta Brown; Angelina Wongka; Tjunmatja Myra Watson

Introductions and invitations

- 1 Diana B. Sayed, Australian crimes in Afghanistan weren't just a 'few bad apples', we're rotten at our core, 3 December 2020, <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2020/12/3/australias-afghanistan-crimes-werent-just-a-few-bad-apples>, accessed 12 November 2020
- 2 Julie Gough, *Forgotten Lives – The first photographs of Tasmanian Aboriginal People* in Jane Lydon (Ed), *Calling the Shots: Aboriginal Photographies*, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014, p. 21.
- 3 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, The University of Chicago Press, United States of America, 2003, p. 151.
- 4 Elizabeth Tynan, *Atomic Thunder: The Maralinga Story*, Newsouth, 2017, p. 93.
- 5 Karina Lester, 16 June 2017, <https://vimeo.com/221944177>, accessed 12 November 2020.
- 6 Elizabeth Tynan, *Atomic Thunder: The Maralinga Story*, Newsouth, 2017, p.3.
- 7 Jeffrey K. Olick, *Memory and the Nation: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations*, *Social Science History*, Winter, 1998, Vol. 22, No. 4, Special Issue: *Memory and the Nation* (Winter, 1998), pp. 377–387.

The letter reproduced below was originally reproduced in Art + Australia's 2019 issue five (55.2) titled Brutalism edited by Edward Colless. The project it introduces, has come to be known as The image is not nothing (Concrete Archives). It began as fieldwork in 2018 with the proposition to travel together to sites of memorialisation, nuclear colonisation and genocide. Since this time the project has evolved online and in print supported by Art + Australia and now finds form in the travelling exhibition for which this catalogue accompanies.

This first letter is bookended with a post-script that appears at the end of the catalogue. This form is used, because rather than recount history we are interested in what can be shared between people through the experience of place. Between these two pieces of writing we present an array of witness accounts in both written and visual form as a way for traversing a selection of documented histories and the space they occupy; between testimony and image, in physical form. Like you, we are the audience, looking to that which sits between them in a space we can share.

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The image is not nothing (Concrete Archives) is an ongoing and open archive that explores the ways in which differing kinds of memorials make present overlooked acts of genocide and nuclear trauma. It examines the relationship between the Nation State and the physicality of loss as it appears in the work of artists and writers from Australia, the Pacific region, South America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Between the letter and the post-script, anti-nuclear activist, Anangu interpreter and translator for the Western Desert Language, Karina Lester writes the experience of Country with her father, family and the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people, as a witness account of the memories of many who survived the British nuclear tests in Australia in the 1950s–1960s. Artist and writer Azza Zein parallels this with what she calls the polarised image, a reflection on the role of the Nation State via her experience working with the online archive published by Art + Australia. In her essay, Zein, originally from Lebanon, writes through the experience of the 2020 Beirut explosion drawing on the research of Ghassan Hage, Forensic Architecture, Aileen Moreton Robinson and the filmic works of artists Rania Stephan, Joanne Choueiri, Larissa Sansour, and Shirin Abu Shaqra.

In 2019, Natalie Harkin published Archival Poetics, an arrangement of poetry images, words and documents that draw

on the classifying, dismissive methods and ‘office’ of the coloniser alongside memories and accounts found in letters from family and friends. Spacious and intimate in form, the work is simultaneously an act of negation, resistance and renewal. It is the result of a methodology that we share; more montage than collage, we look to the space between images and words as one we can inhabit and share discourse in.

The end of this introduction opens, via Natalie Harkin, as an invitation. It is an invitation to you to share with us, in time, the relationship between different forms memorialisation may take in (and between) the works by the artists in this exhibition from across the world, the words and images in our catalogue and archive: to look and listen without already knowing.

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Memory Lesson 6 A Way Of Knowing

this is not a way of knowing the supernatural/paranormal/impossible
 this is not superstition this is not a way of knowing the ghostly-orb
 reflected in the photo this is not a way of knowing urban myths that
 go bump in the night this is not an exploration of Aboriginal spirit-
 worlds of mamu or grubba stories retold by grandmothers around
 fires and kitchen tables this is not about figuring Indigenous bodies/
 voices/histories in dark wilderness landscapes in ghostly terms this
 is not evoking history as linear/passed/past

this is a search for missing narratives finding traces in places of those
 whose eyes we have not yet met or will never meet again there is they will
 no destination only a perpetual motion of search their colour
 find us catch us by surprise through their shape
 their gaze displaced through their passing to present recognition
 fading eyes looking back interrogate what is remembered
 recover the forgotten reveal the act of forgetting through a
 faded troubled-trembling this the motion/emotion
 of the search

Dear Yhonnie,

We're in the middle of something—history shared and speculative—a Kokatha and Nukunu woman mentions her home to a whitey. We find ourselves trying to speak with some of the 5000 images taken over six weeks, from late December 2018 to February 2019. These images are an index of an experience we shared. There are repetitions in this short loop: warning in a salt lake, two abandoned cities, bus stops. The Andamooka cemetery sign beckons that of Birkenau. I like thinking I knew what I was being asked to do when you invited me to walk with you. You don't want to visit sites of genocide and nuclear destruction alone this time.

New York, you said. We feed on Orion Diner burgers, souvlaki and pancakes for 10 days while Trump decides on how to fund his wall. The 9/11 Memorial, as a structure, attempts to hold a scale that is in proportion to an act. Beneath it we consider a museum turning grief into propaganda. Twin Towers built on Little Syria, Mohammad tells us over a beer. Towards a Concrete Utopia. Tito's post-Nation-State proposition united ethnic diversities, proposing hybrid social monuments. Can a memorial of shared histories fail? As we walk through this relatively small exhibition, in the seemingly immense Museum of Modern Art, we ask: is the representation of large-scale and unacknowledged violence too large to depict or so large that any depiction renders the act void? Drive through Bad Lands to Wounded Knee in South Dakota; remember John Fusco, Val Kilmer, Thunderheart. A frontier sci-fi genre mess. The Sioux Pine Ridge Reservation and ghosts of history. A bombing range also, just like Woomera, where we visited an officially ex but definitely present military base.

In 'Manhatta' where 'one gathers bows' we are taught a dance, set to beating drums in a room with 100 First Nations people from around the world. Lakota elder Kelly Looking Horse walks us through the calculated ambush and massacre of his people in December 1890. It is zero degrees.

Accidentally, we land in Krakow because Russia started a stand-off with Ukraine in the Black Sea. Unavoidably, we find ourselves deep in complex politics; humbling and terrifying. Nation States and monuments appear from beneath the earth. But we are speaking to people, not power. Travel to Kiev to find a nondenominational crematorium called Two Halls of Parting. Hire a guide and drive two hours to Chernobyl. In Pripyat, inside the 30-kilometre Chernobyl exclusion zone, we find hot spots in snow. Evacuated in three hours. 30,000 people bussed out from a purpose-built city. A privileged city, more services than others in the Greater USSR. Workers valued by the state for the power they are servicing. More theatres per capita, hotels, mosaics of power, a bronze Prometheus moved from a city square to a sarcophagus housing nuclear history. An accidental monument—un-photographable, a terror target 30 years on.

A sarcophagus built over a sarcophagus. Russian doll. Obyekt Ukrytiye. Shelter object. This accident precipitated the fall of an empire. Chernobyl 2: a second city named to offset US intelligence. Classified and unmapped. Duga the town, Duga the radar receiver. Over the horizon a structure never used, but memorialised in the computer game S.T.A.L.K.E.R. as a 'brain-burner'. The trolley bus is a shelter. The 3D rendering on your screen can be climbed IRL. An open-air museum or a memorial; a film set or film history. Back at the hotel, the Turkish men are dancing in the foyer bar and our hostess tells us in English that she only speaks in Russian. Stalin is popular again. He was Georgian. We head there.

Silk routes and buildings called caravans. Emptied utopic buildings, a brutalist university for a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics now housing refugees from an annexed Crimea. We find one generation trying to save a history the previous generation can't speak of. What to do with a Nation State emptied of another Nation State? Reclaimed identities, reaffirmed but never lost, yet-to-be renewed economies. Demonumentalising Lenin, in Ukraine it is Leninopad. Lenin once sat in Freedom Square, now, St George is slaying a dragon. When we were in Tbilisi looking at the history of weapons, we asked: where is there representation of conflict and history of weapons in our museums? Something is missing. Wars that happened without shared representation, othering history. Partitioning it off to something owned; another war, he said.

In Japan, the Great Tōhoku Earthquake or Great Sendai Earthquake of 2011, causes a tsunami and a nuclear accident. Sixty years prior it was a nuclear weapon at Hiroshima—now a peace park and the memorial or atomic dome. In Fukushima, as men in white suits bag the first five centimetres of topsoil, our prefecture official running an unofficial tour wonders how can we get people to live here again. Lands deemed unusable; science making fiction. In Armenia, the Genocide Memorial rises from the ground like a monumental threshold into a future form of transport: 12 slabs in a circle, 12 lost provinces. An alley of Atlas trees commemorates victims, alongside plaques denoting those that recognise what others do not. Merkel and Trudeau are the most recent additions.

In Australia, genocide sits as an unpassed political bill of recognition.

In all honesty, I don't know what I am being asked to do. But I am doing this with you.

Lisa

In the polarised
enchantment of
borders and images

An image can scar. It can numb, paralyse, and stab. One can speak of the deterring power of images as they migrate and change in meaning. Images can evaporate as they multiply or sink deeply into your body. Some bodies carry pictures of distant pleasures, while others bare the images of the plumes of demolition, protests, and tear gas.

This essay asks how polarised images relate to the way Nation States construct worlds.

I use my Ventolin spacer while writing this essay.

In 2020, I had the opportunity to work with the evolving archive *The image is not nothing* (Concrete Archives) for Art+Australia. Here, I found myself engaged, not from a sense of duty but, rather with an existential need as a migrant wanting to understand the composition of this Nation State 'Australia'. How do I, as an artist, relate to this place with its dual narratives of coloniser and colonised? What parallels can be drawn from my understanding of the systemic brutality of divided borders in the Middle East? This essay is borne from a reflection on these experiences and observations of works by Arab artists: Shirin Abu Shaqra, Joanne Choueiri, Larissa Sansour and Rania Stephan.

27

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Polaroid Images

A polaroid image becomes instantaneously visible through the process of the material polarisation of light. In her two films, *Train-Trains 1: where is the track?* (1999) and *Train-Trains 2: A bypass* (1999–2017), the artist Rania Stephan exchanges polaroid images with people she interviews while travelling along an old train track in Lebanon which connected Palestine to Baghdad and Cairo. By montaging historical images of these tracks found in famous Arabic films with similar scenes from Western movies, Stephan's film unites together two separate worlds: the romantic cinema of trains, fleeting love stories and crimes, with the dysfunctional reality of the Arabic train system.

We witness disadvantaged groups speaking proudly of their past employment at the train station or their experiences of watching trains. These people occupy the abandoned stations and tracks in visually similar ways to the greenery climbing over the

railroad. In the folds of their memories, we find a forgone Middle East—borderless and economically flourishing, as experienced before the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90). After each encounter, Stephan takes a polaroid picture documenting the exchange and leaves it as a gift, revaluing their roles in the reconstruction of memory. The juxtaposition of cinematic images with this lived reality of the disused tracks draws our attention to the dual imagination of mobility and borders. While some dwell on the mobility of the train, others focus on the viability of the track. This polarised image of the railroad delineates divergent experiences of Nation State borders. By overlapping the image types on the screen, the artist draws our attention to the structural relation shared by both.

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Defining Polarisation

In the book *Is Racism an Environmental Threat?*, the anthropologist Ghassan Hage develops the relational concept of general domestication to explain the intertwined correspondence between governability and ungovernability; spaces of war vs. spaces ‘regulated with policing logic’, with parallels to our domestication of nature. For Hage, the process of general domestication has an ‘Apartheid-like tendency’ taking form through three elements: ‘the process of occupation, the process of polarisation between domesticator and the domesticated, and the practices of spatialised extraction’. Here, polarisation becomes ‘the process of turning difference into polarity ... driven by the domesticator that has an interest in this polarity.’

28

In this essay I am applying Hage’s notion of polarisation to images. Through the polarisation of the meaning of images, democratic states are able to distance themselves from other Nation States and explain their catastrophic policies as exceptions. The many contributors to the archive of *The Image* is not nothing show us, in different ways, that the horrific occupation of Country is structural to the current form of Australian democracy and is not a past exception.

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Polarised Images Of Plumes

The non-nuclear explosion in Beirut's port on 4th August 2020 created an image similar to the well-known nuclear mushroom cloud. Both plumes depict the horrific occupation and brutal domestication of nature. While images of nuclear plumes are associated with foreign invasion and colonisation, the Beirut plumes have come to signal the Lebanese ruling class as illegitimate, corrupt occupiers. Both events speak of the moral vacuity perpetrated on human and non-human bodies. The photos, however, have polarised signs and meanings. In one, the image can be read as an exceptional event of successful democracies and the other as expected result of a failed state.

29 Images of the Beirut non-nuclear plumes seem distant in time, space and materiality to the nuclear plumes of Maralinga, but both are the result of arms-races and deterrence strategies. Forensic Architecture, a human rights research agency at Goldsmiths, University of London, analysed the smokes' origins, colours and shapes of the Beirut explosion using 3D modelling based on found images and videos: they highlighted how the storage of ammonium nitrate stacked haphazardly, was in violation of safety regulations existing in other countries such as the UK and Australia. The incompetency of the Lebanese State in what is primarily a local disaster, has a direct relationship to the international order where the fight between an Iran-supported militia and Western-supported factions have paralysed the country's institutions.

The image is not nothing sought permissions for some of the archives related to the British atomic bomb tests. The British authoritative voices narrating over archival videos of atomic bomb tests, reveal how integral these military footages of nuclear power were as a deterrence strategy. Deterrence is understood as an act that forces rivals to avoid confrontations and wars by credibly creating the belief that war is very costly. The footages are copyrighted. Some institutions insisted on fee-for-use making permission and copyright become weapons for the rewriting of history.

Beirut's plumes and the nuclear plume are shadows of each other. The Lebanese plumes are also the shadows of unfound weapons of mass destruction; they are the shadows of wars at arms length from the soils of successful democracies.

The Shadow Lines Of The Nuclear

Last year after granting permission to publish an image, the copyright holder asked us to kindly clarify what was meant by the term ‘nuclear’. I replied: nuclear colonisation and nuclear tests. The holder clarified that their confusion arose because of the phrase ‘nuclear family’ revealing to me an unintended relation between the image of the Nation State and the nuclear family. The modern Nation State is often seen as a summation of households; nuclear families maintained by borders of privacy. Mainstream economists model an economy in this way. The atomic family—a capitalist entity that can be cosmopolitan, migrate and thrive in consumption, protect its privacy by disconnecting from extended families, thrive by owning a home, spend its lifetime paying a mortgage, and be grateful for living peacefully. This atomic family, it seems, forms an essential element of good citizenship for the modern Nation State.

At the end of the second lockdown in November 2020, the Victorian government drew circles in parks to delineate safe areas for families to gather in. The circle’s perimeter became a border against the contagion of the virus—a circle with a 1.5-meter radius for the distance between bodies, and then a circle for the 5 km radius delineating restricted mobility during the lockdown. At the peak of the restrictions and spread of the virus in Australia, the news repeatedly attributed the outbreak to large family gatherings. News coverage inadvertently blamed large families for not being small and atomic revealing layers of divide between race and economic class. Australia’s strategy of detention centres and offshore processing was introduced to the mainland in order to deal with the virus spread—hotels and public housing towers become new sites for border control.

The Shadow Lines (1988) by Amitav Ghosh is a novel about a Bengali family split between Calcutta and Dhaka after the partition of India and Bangladesh, the narrator uses a rusty compass to draw a circle on a map between two equidistant cities on the border between Bangladesh and India. The resulting distance (1200 miles) becomes the radius of a circle he repeats and transfers to other parts of the map. In making sense of distance and navigation and the construction of borders and Nation States, Ghosh writes:

‘It seemed to me, then, that within this circle there were only states and citizens; there were no people at all.

When I turned back to my first circle, I was struck with wonder that there had really been a time, not so long ago, when people, sensible people, of good intention, had thought that all maps were the same, that there was a special enchantment in lines; I had to remind myself that they were not to be blamed for believing that there was something admirable in moving violence to the borders and dealing with it through science and factories.'

The image is not nothing does not emphasise the aftermath of nuclearisation, but instead the interrelationships between the social and institutional conditions that link nuclear tests with the larger project of colonisation: the violent domestication of nature and erasure of Indigenous history. The nuclear becomes something beyond nuclear science—a nexus of the relationship between the institutions that enabled scientific exploration such as the university or the fields of ethnography, and the building of an urbanised Nation State.

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Unreal Events And Real Estate

There is a visceral relation between policing human beings and nature, controlling borders and plant growth, managing land ownership and real estate development. The highway project that led, in December 2020, to the destruction of one of the Djab Wurrung sacred birthing trees in Victoria exposed the settler colony's greed. The Victorian and Australian government—in prioritising the construction of highways—revealed its narrow valuation system of land as thoroughfare and real estate.

Capitalist growth relies on constant cycles of urban destruction and reconstruction based on extractive notions of land through the hegemonic valuation of real estate. The Lebanese post-war reconstruction project was led by a company called Solidere, initiated in the 1990s by the late Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Solidere's reconstruction plan—opposed by grass-roots activists, writers, artists and architects—forced owners of the destroyed buildings in downtown Beirut to exchange land ownership into stocks. At the time, Solidere acquired the rights to make seemingly

random decisions about which buildings to keep or demolish in service to their plan.

In *Conversations on Memory—Rivoli* (2020), Brisbane-based Lebanese artist and architect, Joanne Choueiri follows the memory of a Beirut cinema called Rivoli that was demolished by Solidere while executing their real estate redevelopment of the city centre. One interviewee remarks: ‘During the war very few buildings disappeared, most of the demolitions happened after the war... to go back to the Rivoli, I do remember very well, this Rivoli cinema resisting the demolition.’ Another refers to the demolition as an ‘unreal event’. The work comments on the gentrification of Beirut after the war. The reconstructed downtown of Beirut, having some of its previous old façades renovated, became more like an international airport housing expensive shops inaccessible to the majority of the population. This same space was transformed dramatically in October 2019 when protestors occupied the streets with their songs, grass-roots waste management initiatives, debating and cooking tents, and the slogans and graffiti protesting against the corrupt ruling class.

In the Middle East, Israel has made the lives of the Palestinian people impossible with illegal settlements that erase and demolish Palestinians’ homes. The short sci-fi film by Larissa Sansour, *Nation Estate* (2013), imagines the future Palestinian State as a skyscraper. We move with the protagonist from an Amman Express underground tube into an elevator that takes us across different Palestinian cities and sites. Blending 3D modelling, sci-fi-costumes and futuristic real-estate videos, the images are glossy, ruins domesticated rendered with contemporary white walls and neon-lit ceilings. The film’s character, a pregnant woman and future citizen, deprived of any sociality except while occupying the elevator, heads to her home in Bethlehem, watering an interior tree and eating packaged Palestinian food. The video disturbs the settler-colonial present by simply imagining a future for Palestinians, and by disrupting the usual modes of political discussions around the Palestinian State which often centre on the Palestinian-Israeli peace process and the distribution of land and territories ignoring both the ecosystem and the social aspects of inhabiting land. The film ironically comments on the peace process by referring to the Palestinian territories as a managed property—the nation-estate. Sansour’s film imagines a land that cannot be occupied horizontally, rather, the nation grows vertically like a skyscraper an image in itself embodying the process of polarisation and spatial dissociation from nature.

The Island, The Beach And The Sinking Image

Swimming at the beach was my only relationship with nature growing up in Beirut. Post-lockdown in Victoria, I found myself rushing on a daily basis to swim, seeking liberty in the waves. En route, my daughter—comfortable in the backseat—would remind me that Australia’s borders are the sea.

In *Bodies that Matter on the Beach*, the writer Aileen Moreton-Robinson examines how Australian-white hypermasculinity developed in relation to the coast. Australian surf lifesavers were essential in developing an image of the colonisers command of the beach which was then challenged by the emergence of the recreational surfer. Moreton-Robinson adds: ‘Surf lifesavers responded to surfers by calling them “seaweed” because of their long, bleached, matted hair and their supposed inability to master the waves.’

33 This hypermasculinity Moreton-Robinson explores contrasts within the images of powerless sinking bodies floating in the Mediterranean during the refugee crisis. The UNHCR estimates the sinking bodies of the Mediterranean to be in the thousands. Australia’s inhumane offshore detention policies reflect a capacity to insulate Australia creating hierarchies in the images of bodies at sea: those who arrive via cruise-ship against those who arrive by boat, bodies that sail for sport versus the bodies that barely survive the sea in their escape from misery.

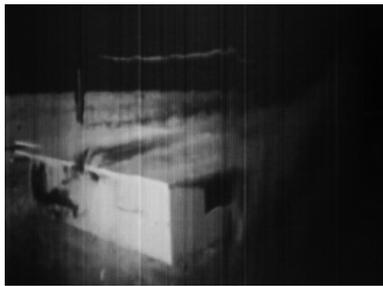
Shirin Abu Shaqra’s work *What Happens to a Displaced Ant* (2017) follows a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) boat near Italy and Greece where Abu Shaqra spent five months as part of a rescue team during 2015. Her film creates parallels between the sinking bodies and the sinking city of Venice. Mixing reality and fiction via letter correspondence between an MSF character and her lover in Venice, we experience shifts between images depicting waves, boats arriving with asylum seekers, still images of Venice, and collages of heroic shipwreck paintings by Gustave Courbet and others: one remarkable scene in the film constructed through moving survival foil blankets suggests the danger of the sea. A voice from onboard reads her diary recounting a failed rescue of 400 people: ‘...the sea turns out into a mass grave’. Images of flooding museum spaces in Venice interrupt scenes of the sea: museum walls and ornate floors shadowing exclusionist borders. The film

creates visible parallels between racist nationalist practices of the European Union sea borders, and the environmental crisis manifest in Venice as a sinking city finding resonance in Hage's concept of general domestication and governability.

The works discussed so far, relate to the anxious construction of borders in relation to nature and bodies, and shadow some of the concerns found in *The image is not nothing*. Could the missing bodies and posters on the trees of Julie Gough's series *MISSING* or *DEAD* (2019) correspond conceptually with the sinking bodies in the Mediterranean Sea of Abu Shaqra's work? With very different artistic strategies both artists highlight the haunting traces of domesticated bodies in nature. Does the performativity of light in Steven Rhall's work at the Queen Victoria Market parallel the role of the polaroid image in Rania Stephan's work as gestures to create an alternate history of a site? Can the poetry of Sarah Walker's *Dead Air* audio tour relate to Joanne Choueiri's oral record of the demolition of Beirut's iconic Rivoli cinema? Is the image of a future Nation State as a skyscraper in Larissa Sansour's work as daunting as the image of an Atomic Picnic by Daniela Edburg?

Lisa Radford and Yhonnie Scarce have developed a critique of the contemporary 'Apartheid-like' system in our seemingly peaceful society alongside a curatorial methodology documenting an alternative history. The locality and context of images may differ but the artistic approaches—here in Australia and in Lebanon—shadow each other by refusing narrow notions of governability, domestication, and racism. For me, the tracking of these shadows, is the beginning of something new.

- 1 I am indebted to Lisa Radford and Yhonnie Scarce for commissioning me to write this essay and for their inspiring conversations.
- 2 A polaroid image is defined as follows: 'a type of plastic sheet that can polarise a transmitted beam of normal light because it is composed of long parallel molecules. It only transmits plane-polarised light if these molecules are parallel to the plane of polarisation and, since reflected light is partly polarised ...' <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/English/polaroid>
See details on the scientific polarising process in this link 'Polaroid: the Invention of the Polarizer', Harvard Business School website, n.d., accessed February 3, 2021, <https://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/polaroid/emergence-of-a-new-technology/invention-of-the-polarizer/>.
- 3 Rania Stephan, Train-Trains 1: Where Is the Track? (Trailer), Vimeo, distributed through Marfa' Projects 2020 Online Film series, 1999, <https://marfaprojects.com/train-trains-1-by-rania-stephan/>.
- 4 Hage discusses the 'Apartheid-like tendency' after introducing Giorgio Agamben's notion of 'state of exception' in relation to exploitative capitalism. (p.60) Ghassan Hage, *Is Racism an Environmental Threat?*, Polity Press, 2017, p.60, p.94.
- 5 *Ibid*, p.98
- 6 See responses of Australian-Lebanese artists and writers to the horrific explosion in Beirut on 4th August 2020, at Live Updates from Lock Down: Dispatch For Beirut facilitated by myself with contributions from Joanne Choueiri, Lina Koleilat, Lara Chamas, Sherine Al Shallah and Lujayn Hourani. <http://www.kingsartistrun.org.au/live-from-the-field-part-2/>, the series curated by Katie Ryan and Jeremy Eaton.
- 7 Forensic Architecture, 'The Beirut Port Explosion,' <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/beirut-port-explosion>, accessed 28th January 2021.
- 8 See details on how the shipment of ammonium nitrate arrived and was stored in Beirut in this link from Der Spiegel. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/the-perfect-bomb-anatomy-of-the-explosion-that-rocked-beirut-a-54f89d71-2caa-4592-94c4-25b54109e69c>, accessed 28th January 2021.
- 9 See as an example Movietone Moments, Maralinga Nuclear Test, 1957, Youtube, 2018 <https://youtu.be/R0MgVjCEwd0>, accessed 9 February 2021, and discussed in the October editorial, The image is not nothing, (Concrete Archives), <https://www.artandaustralia.com/online/image-not-nothing-concrete-archives/october-editorial>, accessed 9 February 2021.
- 10 Refer to the Nobel Laureate Thomas C. Schelling's Prize lecture for a summary of deterrence as a military strategy. Thomas C. Schelling, *An Astonishing Sixty Years, The Legacy of Hiroshima*, Nobel Prize Lecture, 8 December 2005. <https://www.nobelprize.org/uploads/2018/06/schelling-lecture.pdf>, accessed 9 February 2021.



Trent Crawford, Newclear (Single story reinforced masonry block house)
(2017), silver gelatin print, 60 x 47.5cm. Courtesy the artist.

- 11 See this article's title as an example: Liz Main, 'Family Gatherings Blamed for 19 New Virus Cases in Vic', *Financial Review*, 21 June 2020, <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/new-victoria-covid-cases-delay-easing-20200620-p554k0>, accessed 3 February 2021.
- 12 See in this article the handling of the outbreak in the public housing in Victoria as a case of human right breach. 'Lockdown of Victoria's Public Housing Towers during COVID Crisis Breached Human Rights, Ombudsman Finds - ABC News.' <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-17/lockdown-public-housing-towers-breached-human-rights-ombudsman/12991162>, accessed February 3, 2021.
- 13 Amitav Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, John Murray Press, Kindle Edition, 1988, p. 227.
- 14 See details in this link <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/sacred-350-year-old-indigenous-tree-cut-down-for-victorian-highway-upgrade-activists-report>
- 15 Joanne Choueiri, *Conversations on Memory _ Rivoli Cinema*, Vimeo, 2020, <https://vimeo.com/386890582>
- 16 Larissa Sansour, *Nation Estate*, Vimeo, 2013, <https://vimeo.com/47817604>
- 17 Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'Bodies That Matter on the Beach', *e-flux-Journal*, April 2018, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/90/190252/bodies-that-matter-on-the-beach/>, accessed 28th January 2021.
- 18 See monthly updates of missing and dead bodies in the Mediterranean in this link, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean?ID=100>
- 19 See for example the enchantment in the winners of the VendeeGlobe competition, <https://www.vendeeglobe.org/en>
- 20 'Yannick Bestaven Wins Vendée Globe as Dramatic Sea Rescue Proves Crucial', *The Guardian*, 28th January, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jan/28/yannick-bestaven-wins-vendee-globe-as-dramatic-rescue-proves-crucial-sailing>, last accessed 28th January 2021.
- 21 Shirin Abu Shaqra, *What Happens to a Displaced Ant*, Vimeo (a trailer), 2017. <https://vimeo.com/217477846>.
- 22 Julie Gough, *MISSING or DEAD*, 2019, <https://www.artandaustralia.com/online/image-not-nothing-concrete-archives/missing-or-dead>, accessed 9th February 2021.
- 23 Steven Rhall, *Gesture (70 degrees East)*, *New Day Rising*, 2016 <https://www.artandaustralia.com/online/image-not-nothing-concrete-archives/gesture-70-degrees-east-new-day-rising>, last accessed 9th February 2021.
- 24 Sarah Walker, *Dead Air*, 2019. <https://www.artandaustralia.com/online/image-not-nothing-concrete-archives/dead-air>, accessed 9th February 2021.
- 25 Daniela Edburg, *Atomic Picnic*, 2008, <https://www.artandaustralia.com/online/image-not-nothing-concrete-archives/releasing-power-atoms-and-art>, accessed 9th February 2021.
- 26 Ghassan Hage, *Is Racism an Environmental Threat?*, Polity Press, 2017, p.60

Artist

Biographies

Judy Watson (Waanyi) was born in Mundubbera, Queensland, in 1959. Watson's Aboriginal matrilineal family are from Waanyi country in north-west Queensland. Her process lies in revealing hidden stories within Country, working from site and memory, revealing Indigenous histories, following lines of emotional and physical topography that centre on particular places and moments in time. Watson co-represented Australia in the 1997 Venice Biennale and a major solo exhibition of her work was held at Art Gallery of New South Wales (2015). In 2020 a significant solo exhibition of her work was presented at Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, and *Looking Glass: Judy Watson and Yhonnie Scarce* was presented at Tarrawarra Museum of Art. In 2021, she exhibited at Artspace in djilong dumularra alongside Carol McGregor. Watson's work is held in major Australian and international collections including: National Gallery of Australia; all Australian State Art Galleries; MCA/TATE Modern, London; Taipei Fine Arts Museum; The British Museum, London; Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge, UK; Library of Congress, Washington, USA; and Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, University of Virginia, USA.

Phil Collins (DE) is a visual artist and filmmaker based in Berlin and Wuppertal, Germany. He is Professor of Video and Performance at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne. Over the last twenty years Collins has gained recognition for ambitious projects which are rooted in a close relationship with place, people and communities. Manifesting as films, installations, performative situations or live events, his work foregrounds the aspects of lived experience, the radical potential of empathy and connection, and voices that have often been disregarded or suppressed. Across different geographies, ethnicities, class, and language – from Europe and the Middle East to South East Asia to North and South Americas – Collins' approach is guided by an ethos of exchange, exemplified by a commitment to long-term process and engagement with the local context. Over the years his collaborators have included, amongst others, the youth of Baghdad, Kosovan-Albanian refugees, Palestinian disco dancers, friends and lovers in Belgrade, protagonists of Turkish and British reality TV, the stars of Mexican telenovelas, anti-fascist skinheads in Malaysia, teachers of Marxism-Leninism from the former German Democratic Republic, the homeless population of Cologne, and men incarcerated in one of the United States' largest maximum security prisons. Reflecting disarming immediacy, while remaining critical of uneven power dynamics and the political economy of culture, Collins' diverse practice underlines everyday hardships, a

shared sense of solidarity, and what it means to relate to one another.

Nina Sanadze (AU) was born in Georgia (former USSR) in 1976 and immigrated to Australia in 1996. She lives and works in Melbourne, Australia. Nina is driven by an urgency to respond to socio-political and personal material. Presenting appropriated original artefacts, blunt replicas or documentary films as witnesses and evidence, Nina seeks to re-examine our grand political narratives from a diametric personal position. Nina has exhibited widely including *100 years After, 30 Years On, 3rd Tbilisi Triennial, Georgia* (2018); *Blockage, Series of Public Art Installations at City of Port Phillip, Melbourne* (2019); *Living Room, short film series on Bus TV, Bus Projects* (2020). Group exhibitions include *Silences Between Ticks of a Clock: Absence and Erasure in an Age of Cultural Palimpsest, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne* (2020); *Majlis Travelling Scholarship, Margaret Lawrence Gallery* (2019); *Bollard Up the Tree, Yering Station Sculpture Exhibition & Awards* (2018). Nina has been a finalist and winner of many illustrious awards including: *Incinerator Art for Social Change Award* (2020), *Wyndham Art Prize* (2020) and the *2018 Incinerator Art Award: Art for Social Change* of which she was winner.

Rosemary Laing (AU) is a photo-based artist based in Sydney, New South Wales. Laing originally trained as a painter before moving to the medium of photography in the late 1980's. Her project-based photographic work is often cinematic in vision and generally created with real-time performance and physical installation. Laing's work is concept-driven, her projects forming an ongoing narrative that tracks periods of time and events that have had an impact on cultural consciousness. With interventions undertaken in situ or through the use of choreographed performance work, her practice engages with the politics of place and contemporary culture. Laing has exhibited extensively in Australia, Asia, Europe and the USA. She has participated in Biennales (Adelaide, Busan, Istanbul, Sydney, Venice) and presented several solo museum exhibitions (Australia, Denmark, Japan, Spain, USA). A monograph, written by Abigail Solomon-Godeau was published by Prestel New York in 2012.

Niki Hastings-McFall (Aotearoa/W. Samoa) was born and raised in Titirangi, West Auckland, she was educated at Auckland Girl's Grammar, Auckland University and Manukau School of Visual Arts and has a Bachelor of Visual arts and a tertiary teaching diploma. Her art practice, which developed from the early 1990s, addressed and continues to explore a

number of key issues relevant to the discourse of a then emerging contemporary Pacific art practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Time has seen a steady shift from an early Polynesian referential aesthetic to one that's more elusively eclectic. However the methodology and conceptual foundation are still firmly rooted in the principals of her earliest core practise. She has exhibited extensively in the USA, UK, France, Germany, Australia, the Pacific and throughout New Zealand and her work is held in public and private collections nationally and internationally, including the British Museum, UK; Queensland Art Gallery|Gallery of Modern Art, Australia; the Museum of Volkekund, Germany; the Tjibaou Centre, Noumea; Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa; University of Auckland, New Zealand; Victoria University, Australia; Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand.

Megan Cope (Quandamooka) is a Quandamooka woman (North Stradbroke Island) in South East Queensland. Her site-specific sculptural installations, video work, paintings and public art investigate issues relating to identity, the environment and mapping practices. Cope's work has featured in the NGV Triennial 2020, UNSW Galleries presentation for Sydney Festival, Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art (2020), The National (2017), and Defying Empire: 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial (2017) and many more. In 2017–19 Cope was the Official Australian War Artist. Her works are held in the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, National Gallery Australia, Musées de la Civilisation: Canada, and more. Her public art commissions include Weelam Ngulut at Monash University, The Koorie Art Commission, Melbourne Museum and You Are, Here Now at the Australian Catholic University. Megan Cope is a member of Aboriginal art collective proppaNOW. She is represented by Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

The Unbound Collective (Kaurua Yarta, AU) is Ali Gumillya Baker (Mirning), Faye Rosas Blanch (Yidinji/Mbarbram), Natalie Harkin (Narungga) and Simone Ulalka Tur (Yankunytjatjara), also with violinist/composer Katie Inawantji Morrison (Yankunytjatjara). They address notions of ethical practice, cultural responsibility, and repatriation of story through enacting memory and storytelling, and offer poetic interrogations of state colonial institutions, practices and archives through performance and mixed-media projection and sovereign (re)representation.

Pam Diment (Ceduna, AU) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Ceduna, South Australia. She has worked as a creative producer, project manager and

community leader working with national centres and galleries for over decade and is an independent artist whose practice encompasses pottery, illustration and silk screen printing. She has mentored and taught numerous emerging artists including several Indigenous communities at the Ceduna Arts Centre. She was 1st prize winner for WestArts Eyrescapes Art Prize (2015) and has participated in numerous exhibitions including NO BLACK SEAS, ACE Open, Adelaide (2019); Tarnanthi Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, South Australia (2015); Our Mob 2006–2015, ArtSpace, Festival Centre, Adelaide (2015); Red Poles Gallery, McLaren Vale (2011); NewLand Gallery, Port Adelaide (1996); Lismore Regional Gallery, NSW (1989). In 2019–2020 Pam worked closely with artists at Yalata Womens and Young Womens camp running painting workshops.

Warren (Ebay) Paul (Yalata, AU) is an artist from Yalata in the far west of South Australia. He produces intricate ink drawings and multimedia works, depicting local scenes, the landscape of Yalata viewed from the air, animals and vegetation, dreams and political viewpoints. In 2014 he turned his hand to pottery, working with Pam Diment, potter and then Director of Tjutjuna, the Ceduna Aboriginal Arts and Culture Centre, in an exploration of the images and impacts of the atomic bomb. The sculpture mentorship was undertaken as a community arts residency, facilitated by the Nuclear Futures program, where Warren initially focused on making A-bomb-like objects as intermediate art works to inspire his line drawings. The sculpture series emerged as artworks in their own right, and in 2016 were exhibited at Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute as part of the Nuclear showcase produced by Alphaville in 2016.

Sanja Pahoki (Woiwurrung, AU) is a multimedia artist in Melbourne, Australia. Sanja uses photography, video, neon and text to explore observations from everyday life. Existential issues such as the nature of self, identity and the role of anxiety are recurring themes in her work. As the autobiographical is the initial inspiration for much of Sanja's work, humour is often employed as a strategy to direct attention away from the personal to shared universal concerns. In 2018, Sanja was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy from Monash University, Melbourne. Sanja's artwork has been exhibited both nationally: ACCA @ Mirka at Tolarno Hotel, Melbourne; Heidi Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne; Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne; Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne; Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney. Sanja has also exhibited in international exhibitions

including shows in Brussels, Japan, Shanghai, Vienna, Berlin, Paris and Rotterdam. Sanja is currently the Head of Photography at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. She is represented by Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne.

Jelena Telecki (AU) was born in Yugoslavia and currently lives and works in Sydney, Australia. Telecki is interested in representation in painting and sculpture and how it can articulate her sense of personal and shared narrative, internal and the external. She has exhibited extensively in Australia, UK and Japan since 2008, and was awarded several residencies, scholarships and grants including the one-year studio residency at the Artspace, Sydney (2019), University of Sydney Postgraduate Award (2008-2009), and a Australia Council for the Arts grant for the development of new work (2010). She was awarded Masters of Visual Arts in 2010 from the Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney.

Ashley Perry (Quandamooka) is an interdisciplinary Goenpul artist from Quandamooka country. His recent works come from research into Quandamooka cultural practices, focusing on material culture held in museum, university, and private collections. He completed a Bachelor of Fine Art in Sculpture and Spatial Practice with honours at the Victorian College of the Arts. Perry has exhibited across Melbourne in galleries including Margaret Lawrence Gallery, West Space, Incinerator Gallery and the McClelland Gallery & Sculpture Park. He was the recipient of the Incinerator Art Award: Art for Social Change (2019). He recently presented work in Florence, Italy for the First Commissions Project, the University of Melbourne. He was the recipient of the Mary and Lou Senini Prize in sculpture (2017) and the Fiona Myer Award (2017). In 2017 Ashley was awarded an exchange to the Indonesian Institute of the Arts, Yogyakarta as a part of the New Colombo Plan scholarship.

Mareike Bernien (DE) and Kerstin Schroedinger (DE) have been collaborating since 2006 in joint film, exhibition and text projects. They critically interrogate image production and seek to produce as well as reproduce images as material for thought. Their historiographic approach to film, radio play, music and text questions the means of production, historical continuities and ideological certainties of representation. Their cinematographic works include *Rainbow's Gravity* (2014), *Red She Said* (2011), *Translating the Other* (2010) and *As*

Found (2009).

Andree Korpys (DE) lives and works in Berlin, Germany and Markus Löffler (DE) lives and works in Bremen (DE). Since the beginning of the 1990s, Andree Korpys and Markus Löffler have been addressing the question of how reality is constructed and staged in media images. A key motivation in their work is to question the postulated and widely accepted truth content of this *mise-en-scène*. Their artistic-investigative works focus in particular on locations and structures of power, as well as on the representation of that power in the form of architecture, hierarchies, control mechanisms, or the use of force. Korpys / Löffler combine fictional, biographical, and documentary material in videos, drawings, photographs, and complex installations to devise a succession of narrative threads and visual references as an alternative to those dictated by mass media and official image campaigns. Solo exhibitions include *The Vault*, West Museumkwartier, The Hague (2020); *Pool*, Meyer Riegger, Karlsruhe (2016); *Villa Feltrinelli*, Galerie Otto Schweins, Cologne (2008); *Gallery Q*, Tokyo (2005). Group exhibitions include *Berlin Video Art Festival*, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (2020); *Disruptions, Interruptions, Misruptions*, Goethe in the Skyways, Goethe Pop Up, Minneapels (2018); *Real(ity) cuts*, Museu d'art contemporani de Barcelona (2009); *The Soul*, Manifesta 7, Trient, (2008); *History Will Repeat Itself*, Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw (2008).

Trent Crawford (Naarm, AU) is an artist working with photography, video, and installation who lives and works in Melbourne, Australia. His work considers the effects images and image-based technology have on human perception and agency. In recent years Crawford has exhibited artworks at *Hobiennale*, Hobart (2019); *Myojuji Sarue*, Tokyo (2019); *Kuiper Projects*, Brisbane (2019). Crawford has held solo exhibitions at *c3*, Melbourne (2019); *ARTnSHELTER*, Tokyo (2018) and *Auto Studio*, Beijing (2018). He completed a BFA (Honours) at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2017, where he currently teaches the course *Contemporary Art and Biomedicine*.

Hayley Millar-Baker (Gunditjmara, AU) is a research-driven, contemporary artist based in Melbourne, Australia. Utilising her mediums of photography and multimedia, Hayley examines human experiences of time and memory, resulting in monochromatic photographic works—often in series that divulge her storytelling methodology. Here, she negates experiences of remembering/ misremembering memory, while reflecting on how often

personal recollections and historical accounts are improvised and embellished. Her work has been exhibited nationally including the University of Technology, Sydney (2021); TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art (2019, 2017), Yirramboi Festival (2019, 2017); Sydney Festival (2018). Millar-Baker's work is held in significant collections across Australia: Australian War Memorial, Canberra; Melbourne Museum; Bundoora Homestead Art Centre, Melbourne; Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne; Murray Art Museum, Albury; State Library of Victoria; Shepparton Art Museum; Deakin University Art Gallery, Melbourne; Horsham Regional Art Gallery. She recently won the John and Margaret Baker Fellowship for the National Photography Prize in 2020. Hayley Millar-Baker is represented by Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne.

Matthew Davis is a Melbourne based artist who works with sound. Since 2016, Matthew has been a member of the Management Committee of Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, and along with others has contributed to the digitisation of the Museum's oral history collections and developed programs and exhibitions that document and interpret aspects of the natural, lived and built histories of Melbourne's inner west.

fine print is an independent magazine cultivating critical and experimental discussion around contemporary art. *fine print* commission and publish diverse written, performative and moving image works both online and in real time. Each issue is centered around a thematic concept key to the contemporary art world. From our base on Kaurna Yerta, *fine print* has an eye for the concerns of local, national and international communities and believe in the importance of a conversation that recognises the contribution of each to our understanding of current art practice. *fine print* is a space for a broad cohort of voices. We are excited about fresh perspectives in the practice of writing about visual art; new forms of reporting, reviewing, debating and reciprocating contemporary art that make an effort to actively record art as it happens.

PS and post

- 1 Diana B. Sayed, Australian crimes in Afghanistan weren't just a 'few bad apples', we're rotten at our core, 3 December 2020, <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2020/12/3/australias-afghanistan-crimes-werent-just-a-few-bad-apples>, accessed 12 November 2020
- 2 Julie Gough, *Forgotten Lives – The first photographs of Tasmanian Aboriginal People* in Jane Lydon (Ed), *Calling the Shots: Aboriginal Photographies*, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014, p. 21.
- 3 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, The University of Chicago Press, United States of America, 2003, p. 151.
- 4 Elizabeth Tynan, *Atomic Thunder: The Maralinga Story*, Newsouth, 2017, p. 93.
- 5 Karina Lester, 16 June 2017, <https://vimeo.com/221944177>, accessed 1 November 2020.
- 6 Elizabeth Tynan, *Atomic Thunder: The Maralinga Story*, Newsouth, 2017, p.3.
- 7 Jeffrey K. Olick, *Memory and the Nation: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations*, *Social Science History*, Winter, 1998, Vol. 22, No. 4, Special Issue: *Memory and the Nation* (Winter, 1998), pp. 377–387.

This postscript draws from the editorial that concludes our online archive begun in February 2020, with a last 'post' in December of that same year.

Yhonnie, you often refer to the feelers of our project.

Feelers are the animal organs such as an antenna or palp that are used for testing things by touch and in the search for food. As humans we often refer to having a feeling, a sense which is often denied for the preference of reason. Rather than setting them against each other, we have come to understand that we are working with our senses. The faculty for which our bodies perceive external stimuli, sense also assist in our ability to follow lines of logic and the tangents of our connections as they are made visible and emerge in the conversation and encounters with artworks and artists, writing and writers.

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We have since travelled further, there are thousands more images.

Three weeks. Berlin to Venice via former Yugoslavia. Buzludzha—the spaceship constructed in the 1970s as a set for the Bulagarian Communist Party. The largest Red Star. Lying dormant since the 90s. A relic, a failure, a future, a past. Driving through the Shipka Pass in our VW Golf from Split. A Croatian plated car in Serbia, Bosnia, Albania, Montenegro.

Memorial after monument, monument after memorial. I make you listen to a podcast history of the Balkans, we break with radio intermissions. A traffic jam in Tirana. Will we ever get to Kosovo?

These feelers you speak of are the emergent and previously unseen lines of connections between the people and places we have encountered, the contacts made, fostered, stirred and supported.

For Foucault the archive consists of 'the law of what can be said'. For Derrida the archive is not just a material place where knowledge is stored, but it is also a general feature of our mental lives. Ernst von Alphen in *Staging the Archive* (2014) re-iterates him in suggesting 'all human beings suffer from mal d'archive, from archive fever or an archive sickness.' This compulsion to archive is one of excavating memories. Between Foucault's discursive site of law and Derrida's psychoanalytic base, we find both a 'system

of statements' of what can and cannot be said—distinctions and exclusions, as well as the practice of archiving memory and archeologically excavating that which is repressed.

Truth-telling isn't a part of our history. What is a deep-seated part of our history is massacres, denial and erasure of violence committed at the hands of the state. The very same state that commits alleged war crimes in our name overseas.

One of our students rhetorically muses, do we use archives to compensate for our bad memory?

Our bad memories forever being re-written and re-coded, by both will and force, deliberation and accident. The practice of archiving and excavating is the means by which we practice memory—it is neither delineated nor defined. It functions both personally and socially and is a cultural activity affected by surplus and deficits. The materiality of memory, always-already affected and influenced by loss and gain of its technics of collection, storage, dissemination and distribution, as well as by its capital and categories, assets and acquisitions. Collections age, storage reaches capacity, distribution methods become obsolete, categories of distinction are disputed, and the appearance of miscellany muddles a social contract.

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The state of most of the Old People, our Tasmanian Aboriginal forebears is relentless, accusatory and unwavering. Captured in nineteenth century lenses of at least eight colonial photographers, permanently present, their gaze is more than only fixed forever at a time, amidst events they should not have experienced. It is something uncanny and comfortable, downright painful to be subjected to. While not direct ancestors, these people are kin, and compatriots. When I look at their faces I see family and feel a lot more than I want to.

We are attempting to approach history, not through hierarchies of information, but through the experiences and relationships of those who encounter the archive and create, unearth, re-frame and re-form the knowledges of exchange found in them, that which we share, or should share, both public and private. Riddled with conflict and contradictions, archives need to be re-examined, rearranged and rethought in order to

discover what is missing: artworks that source archives and the archives themselves. To draw on one of Ernst von Alphen's opening statements in *Staging the Archive*, '... 'archival artworks' probe the possibilities of what art is and can do.' The archive is a site for productive contradictions; mal d'archive is both sickness and affirmation just as pharmakon denotes remedy, poison, and scapegoat, sickness implies a host has been dominated and also affirmed.

45 Concrete has an interesting etymological journey moving from the past participle of *concrescere* 'to grow together' to a logicians' term in opposition to abstract and meaning 'expand'. Our experiences travelling—through place and through research—parallel these definitions. Perhaps we realise now, that the socialist modernist *spomeniks* of former Yugoslavia and the articles and artworks we have collected, both form a mass of concretion, one via sediment the other through language (be it image or written in form): projects of and for memory be they commissioned by the state or revived by the people. Our Concrete Archive is part of a network that image science operates in. Images and information in relation to each other.

To remember:

The image is neither nothing, nor all, nor is it one—it is not even two. It is deployed according to the minimum complexity supposed by two points of view that confront each other under the gaze of a third.

We speak to this relationship between image and data, information and experience in a project traversing relationships between science and the Nation State, military capitalism and memorialisation, the conflict in systems of management and the ignorance and arrogance of destroying cultural information.

The site was within the Great Victorian Desert to the North of the Nullarbor Plain. The Len Beadell (sic) exhibition also found remarkable evidence of Aboriginal civilisation—what Chief Scientist Alan Butement, with Beadell at the time, described as the "Aboriginal Stone Henge". This arrangement of numerous piles of large and smaller stones and slivers of shale seemed to form an enormous arrowhead on a vast claypan between Emu and Maralinga. But, noted Butement "there was no time to make a

detailed study of the area”, and that was that.

Karina Lester’s speech to the UN to negotiate a treaty banning nuclear weapons in 2017 cites her family’s direct experience of the tests at Emu Field and the disproportionate impact of nuclear testing on Indigenous peoples throughout the world. She states, ‘Indigenous communities have borne the brunt of these deadly experiments. Our land our sea our communities and our physical bodies carry this legacy with us now and for unknown generations to come.’

The term ‘Nuclear Colonisation’ was coined in 1992 by US anti-nuclear weapons testing activist Jennifer Vierreck, who described it as ‘the taking or destruction of other people’s natural resources, lands and well-being for ones own in the furtherance of nuclear development’.

A democratically elected prime minister of Australia decided to lend Australia (comprising of stolen and unceded land) to the United Kingdom, without consent of its people: the genocidal legacy of Terra Nullius deployed to full effect.

When we travelled to Maralinga in April of 2019, Uncle Robin, caretaker and tour guide points to a map of the area and recounts the source of water and experience of the area known to Maralinga Tjarutja people and their relation to governance and the state:

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His name was Walter MacDougall, he was the native patroller. There was no other good people anywhere on the land here. 2500 kilometres of dirt roads and he could ride 2500 kilometres of dirt roads in 10 days easy. But how would you go, getting in through the scrub and everything. You're driving on dirt road. And drive fast, and then walk down and a family under the bush. He didn't see them. And all of a sudden then, just poke your head up, wonder what that vehicle is there going down the road. It's physically impossible to get everybody off the land in 10 days.

Uncle Robin continues:

So yeah, that was 117 documented cases that he recorded of people being turned around that never went anywhere. They never came back or... Just disappeared. That's the people he found. What about the people he didn't find?

What about the people he didn't find?

There is a fundamental link between memory and the nation. This link is made visible in the decisions the state makes with regards to who and what are remembered, how and to what scale. Jeffery Olick observes that, national memory and historiographical nationalism can be challenged by recognising that the nation is an identarian as well as political form. Pierre Nora in 1989 writes 'We speak so much of memory, because there is so little of it left.' Thirty-one years later, this memory is recorded, built, revived and transmitted in ways that can more easily challenge the dominant historical narratives of the nation and the purposes that these narratives and illusions to descent might serve. But, at the same time, the accelerated and individuated technological forms that transmit and transfer these memories, run the risk of alienating negotiated and shared collective forms. Memory and history need not be conflicting forms, memory and history are responsibilities shared by communities demonstrating that what was thought to be violently erased, has not been.

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This is not a reconciliatory project; it is a social one that attempts to keep in play that which legacies of colonisation and settler mentalities have attempted to nullify. The people Walter McDougall didn't find, we hope, can be felt in the action of this exhibition and archive, ongoing and incomplete.

Colophon

The image is not nothing (Concrete Archives) began as fieldwork upon invitation from Yhonnie Scarce to Lisa Radford in 2018 to travel together to sites of memorialisation, nuclear colonisation and genocide. Since then the project has evolved online and in print with Art + Australia and now finds form in this exhibition that explores the ways in which differing kinds of memorials make present overlooked acts of genocide and nuclear trauma, and examines the relationship between the Nation State and the physicality of loss.

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