

_this breath is not mine to keep - Fabrik Arts + Heritage Lobethal - Nov 7 to Dec 6 2020



Globally we are witnessing the extinction of our world, and yet we continue to fuel our demise, so how do we notice our involvement, disrupt the stasis and rewrite the rules? *_this breath is not mine to keep*, curated by Jen Lyons-Reid & Carl Kuddell, interrogates how everyday supremacy thinking manipulates our emotions, conceals systemic injustice and sabotages acts of solidarity.

Date: Nov 7 - Dec 6 2020. Exhibition Launch Sunday November 8th at 2pm

with Welcome to Country ceremony by Kurna artist Jack Buckskin

Hours: 11am-4pm Thu-Sun, Fabrik Arts, Woollen Mill, 1 Lobethal Road Lobethal, SA 5241

Contact: 84080400, fabrik@ahc.sa.gov.au, www.thisbreath.space/

Artists:

Carl Kuddell
Lyn Lovegrove Niemz
Jen Lyons-Reid
Deborah Prior
Clyde Rigney Jnr
Cedric Varcoe
Felix Weber

_this breath is not mine to keep is a provocative multi-arts experiment exploring 10 stages of grief, delusions of supremacy and the existential joy of life.

Ten co-creative installations, including sculptures, bio-art, multimedia, painting and poetry, form an arts trail linking [4 public galleries in South Australia Sep 2020 – Jan 2021](#), with print and online publications.

At Fabrik Arts + Heritage in Lobethal, textiles, concrete, clay, wool, multimedia and barbed wire are used to explore denial, blame, despair and notions of comfort.

This initiative has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body, and by the South Australian Government through Arts SA, with additional support from the Adelaide Hills Council, Alexandrina Council, Nexus Arts and the City of Victor Harbor.



Contested Space

Contested Space is a collaboration between Jen Lyons-Reid, Carl Kuddell, Ngarrindjeri artist Cedric Varcoe and Ngarrindjeri cultural advisor and writer Clyde Rigney Jnr, that focuses on visualizing the attempted erasure of Indigenous Australians.

500 painted concrete shrouds hover in silence, futures erased by colonialization, past relationships etched inside, to instigate a dialogue between the dead and the living. The assembly floats like a fleet of sails, evoking the nightmare of invasion. A heavy presence stranded in time, the concrete death masks demand we bear witness and consider how we will commemorate genocide in Australia.



Contested Space - 500 masks, mixed media, 2020. Photo: Change Media

Walk among the 500 and acknowledge the 438 recorded Aboriginal deaths in custody since 1989. This is a large gathering of people deemed expendable, killed by the ongoing colonial 'duty of care' that created 'The Aboriginal problem'. Engage with each mask and contemplate they also represents the deaths and killings not 'recorded', and imagine the unfathomable grief of genocide.

Cedric Varcoe has painted cultural patterns, designs and prison-wall etchings inside, sharing his personal story of imprisonment, the incarceration and deaths of his brothers, intergenerational absence and belonging. Some masks have strong connections, others have vanished, assimilated, targeted daily, some scream 'I can't breathe', here, now, in this contested space.

The physical absence signifies our collective loss and a hollowness of humanity, as the majority of Australians appear to be comfortable with these ongoing deaths on our watch.

What do we need to do to ensure this systemic violence and societal silence stops now?

Lost Flock (On the Consequences of Comfort), 2020, Deborah Prior

I have spent most of this year wound in a tight ball of despair, hiding under the dampening weight of an old woollen blanket.

I expect I always understood something was amiss because I remember a deep melancholy even from childhood. But it's different now. I don't know how we are expected to keep living when all around is burning, and the air is thick and choking with ash and misery.

This is of course, the type of existential crisis that the very privileged get to have. I can go to the supermarket (masked of course: Fairtrade and organic fabric, purchased online, delivered to my door) to hand-wring over dairy versus almond milk, without being racially profiled by security. The police are uninterested in me. No one screams in my face for 'importing the Virus,' as happened to the pharmacist who dispenses my medication with kind efficiency each time I've lost track the days and am running late for work again.

When we all did our best to bunker down from the Virus in the Autumn it was horizons that I missed the most. Sun and stars, wind, rain, trees above and around me.



Lost Flock (detail), wool, vintage blankets, 2020. Photo courtesy of the artist

Lost Flock is a bunker and prison cell of 6.6 square metres with no horizons. This is the international Committee of the Red Cross' standard for single occupancy cells. The Australian Guidelines are slightly more generous but this means nothing. There are prison cells meeting neither guideline being used here, today. The placards at the rallies protesting the number of deaths in custody since the Royal Commission were out-of-date as they were written.

Lost Flock is constructed with lovely soft bricks fashioned from blankets. Deceptively comforting. Easy enough to smother you, weigh you down. I have invited the audience to loan me a blanket for building. To be a Collaborator. To begin to understand that our safe retreats are so often contingent on the oppressive structures that hurt another.

I am very grateful for my woollen blanket. I am very grateful that the Wool Mill escaped the fire. But there is a trauma and bewilderment in the air: why does this one remain, yet this home burnt to the ground? Lost Flock is all cyclical confusion and consequences. Sheep and wool and mills gave us livelihoods: comfort and protection ... and then too much warmth by far, as our jobs and growth heralded the Age of Anthropocene.

Lost Flock is a monument that remains half-built because it's hard to be productive through a mental health catastrophe. But on better days, I dream that it is a ruin. That the people came and saw this prison for what it was and tore it down. Some bricks remain as a warning for future generations, but for the most part they were shook out in the wind and carried off to be shared amongst friends and strangers. They became protest banners, swaddles for recovering wildlife, and just the occasional comfort...enough so we could keep going.

Settlement



Settlement, barb wire, metal, acrylic, 2019. Photo: Change Media

Settlement is a giant barbed-wire ball of wool, with knitting needles, deified on a white gallery plinth, by Jen Lyons-Reid, Carl Kuddell and Felix Weber. It juxtaposes the comfortable illusion of the 'settler state', conscripting the homely craft of knitwork into the brutal fabrication of nations.

Terracotta Worriers



Terracotta Worriers, unfired clay, 2020. Photo: Change Media

Lyn Lovegrove Niemz collaborated with Jen Lyons-Reid and Carl Kuddell on *Terracotta Worriers*, an army of unfired clay effigies carrying our collective denial against a backdrop of intersecting catastrophes. The full work of 120 sculptures will be revealed at Signal Point Gallery Goolwa Dec 11th. Privileged, challenged, woke or ignorant, we are still in denial wishing for a normality that never was.

Excuse Purifier 3.0



Excuse Purifier 3.0, mixed media, 2020. Photo: Change Media

A multi-modal kinetic sculpture by Jen Lyons-Reid, Carl Kuddell and Felix Weber. Be dazzled by catchy songs of denial and laments of whiteness, as this interactive *Excuse Purifier* sucks in your blame and expunges your responsibility. Voices by Cathy Olsson and Nadia Vernari.

ARTISTS BIOS

Jen Lyons-Reid and Carl Kuddell

<https://www.thisbreath.space/jen-lyonsreid-and-carl-kuddell>

Artistic director Jen Lyons-Reid and creative producer Carl Kuddell are Tallstoreez Productionz / Change Media's co-founders and lead artists. Since 2002 they have explored multi-disciplinary practice in community arts, broadcast media, sculpture and live art, to creatively address social justice, environmental and human rights issues.

Living and working on Ngarrindjeri country, Jen and Carl run Change Media, a multi-award winning community arts and cultural development initiative. Change Media have delivered over 500 workshops with over 10,000 participants across Australia. They have worked with remote, regional and urban communities, including partnerships with Ngarrindjeri, Bell Shakespeare Co, the Australian Festival for Young People, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, Arts Access Victoria and artists living with disability, in youth prisons, and with numerous regional councils, arts, health and social justice organisations across Australia. Their media work includes four factual series for ABC, SBS and NITV and many internationally acclaimed documentaries and short films.

On a national level they interrogate critical literacy and persisting colonising mindsets: In 2013 Change Media partnered in an Australia Research Council Linkage 'Investigation into Harm in CACD' with the University of Melbourne. In 2015 Jen was awarded the prestigious two-year Australia Council for the Arts Fellowship, which led to the development of 'Creating Together - what can possibly go wrong?' in 2017 and 'What Privilege?' in 2018-19, as a playful reflection on power and privilege in cultural work.

Clyde Rigney Jnr

<https://www.thisbreath.space/clyde-rigney-jnr>

Clyde Rigney Jnr, director Ngarrindjeri Namawi Consulting, is a Ngarrindjeri man, writer, cultural awareness educator and former CEO of the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority, the peak representative body of the Ngarrindjeri nation. Clyde was part of the Ngarrindjeri delegation during the recent Treaty negotiations with the South Australian Government. A long-term Change Media collaborator, Clyde co-wrote/ co-produced the Ngarrindjeri Culture Hub project and 8-part award-winning ABC iView series Ngarrindjeri Shorts.

Cedric Varcoe

<https://www.thisbreath.space/cedric-varcoe>

Cedric Varcoe, a Ngarrindjeri and Narangga man, is a contemporary artist, painting the creation stories of his Ngarrindjeri lands and waters. He started painting at the age of eight, watching his sisters and mother, aunts and uncles. Fascinated by paint, he mainly painted lizards and snakes, and developed highly stylized Ngarrindjeri men.

Cedric Varcoe's work is held in private and public collections across Australia and overseas.

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Deborah Prior

<https://www.thisbreath.space/deborah-prior>

Deborah Prior is an early career artist. Her art practice navigates the complexities and pleasures of being and having a body through time-consuming, contemplative craft practices and endurance performance works. Working primarily with salvaged domestic textiles, Deborah crafts objects and actions that consider bodily agency, Feminist modes of production, and the personal and social histories of Domestic work. Most recently she has been investigating the shared visual language of body fragments in medical imaging and religious iconography – creating profane relics that play upon the cultural unease surrounding corporeal bodies. Prior completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) at Adelaide Central School of Art in 2006, and a PhD at the University of South Australia in 2014.

She has exhibited at the Australian Experimental Art Foundation, SASA Gallery, Adelaide City Council Art Pod, FELTspace, CACSA's Project Space, Seedling Art Space, Adelaide Central Gallery, Trocadero Art Space (Melbourne), Rubicon Ari (Melbourne), and Kings Artist Run (Melbourne). She is a past alumni of the Guildhouse Collections Project (SA) and was the 2016 recipient of the Helpmann Academy British School at Rome Residency. In August 2019 she was Artist in Residence at the Australian Tapestry Workshop (Melbourne). Deborah has also lived with chronic illness[es] for over 20 years and has more recently decided she is too tired to pretend otherwise. <https://guildhouse.org.au/deborah-prior/>

Felix Weber

<https://www.thisbreath.space/felix-weber>

Felix Weber, WOMAD 2018-2021 site manager, is a tech, music and installation wizard. A long-term Change Media collaborator, Felix delivered digital media workshops in communities across Australia. His recent work include site-specific installation, sculptural works and mapped video projections for the Adelaide Fringe and several large-scale events. He has access to loads of toys and is not afraid to use them.

I have been described as a jack of all trades, generalist and a polymath. The strength of my work does not come from specialisation, but rather a broad range of skills and eclectic knowledge. Driven by an insatiable desire to learn new skills and to constantly experiment with different mediums, I am most comfortable pushing boundaries and exploring new ideas. I started my creative career in the digital space with 3D modelling, image manipulation and animation. Whilst this space was technically limitless I eventually found myself wanting to create more than just digital images. Creating tangible and tactile work drove me to start building, using carpentry, welding and CNC fabrication. The collaborations on '*_this breath is not mine to keep*' offered me several opportunities to combine multiple skills and mediums across sculpture and installation. Instagram: Polymath.idc

Arts trail locations for *_this breath is not mine to keep*:

[Coral St Artspace](#) Victor Harbor: Oct 9 - Nov 21 2020

[Fabrik Arts](#) Lobethal: Nov 7 - Dec 6 2020

[Nexus Arts Gallery](#) Adelaide CBD Lion Arts District: Nov 12 - Dec 11 2020

[Signal Point Gallery](#) Goolwa: Dec 11 2020 - Jan 26 2021

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