Talking Place: Emerging Connections

Monika LUKOWSKA, Annette NYKIEL, Sarah ROBINSON, Jane WHELAN

Gallery25
Building 10, 2 Bradford St, Mount Lawley

Exhibition dates: 11 August to 23 September 2020
Gallery opening hours: Tuesday to Friday 10:00am to 4:00pm and by appointment

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Talking Place: Emerging Connections is the third iteration of a collaborative research project by four artists Monika Lukowska, Annette Nykiel, Sarah Robinson and Jane Whelan exploring the ecology of Perth’s wetlands in the broader realms of place, technology and contemporary art practice. This project began in 2017, within the thresholds of Lake Walyungup, Western Australia, a seemingly empty space amid growing urban communities with a deep history embedded in thrombolites remains and Noongar traditions. Discursive responses articulate the artists’ experiences, conveying the complexities of a place and emerging as a multidisciplinary exhibition involving printmaking, drawing, slow-making, and digital technology. They endeavour to explore, to connect and to extend imaginatively and collaboratively with the materiality of ideas pondering: what new terrain might emerge from asking questions and creating problems while creatively investigating place. During engagement in the field, exchange and conversation, the artists unraveled layers, hidden narratives, and spatial dimensions emphasizing the complex nature of wetlands and their significance in the local and global context. Links emerged connecting the initial site with other local, national and international wetlands through themes that consider what it means to be in this world; including both connection and disruption, and thinking and sensing through the ideas of phenomenologists Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Edward Casey, anthropologist Tim Ingold, and design anthropologist Sarah Pink. They have detected individual, alternative views of the environment and updated their views in this conversation about ways of knowing.
Annette NYKIEL

Emerging from the shadows to meander through the cool, still morning light. A cacophony of frog and shelduck calls rises and falls. I am momentarily captivated by a line of high cirrus cloud—harbinger of fine weather. The trill of scarlet robins snapping midges shifts my focus to a mosaic of moss—russet, ochre, chartreuse in the dappled light edging the lake fringe of sedge, reed and paperbark. Drifting along this threshold, I notice samphire. Brief showers have engorged these succulent plants of green and red-violet. Pollen-laden bees draw my curiosity to tiny yellow flowers borne on only the greenest stems. Later, gleaned windfall from wanderings and stumblings are bundled between re-purposed academic papers steaming in a dyepot—redolent with visceral memories and stories, familiar with complicated longing for much visited places. Uncertainty and trepidation dissolves as I am absorbed in materiality and affected by minor gestures and enactments (in-act-ments).

Annette Nykiel, (2020).

Archived, documentary (detail) digital photograph of bundled stories, Yalgorup National Park 1-6-20. Image courtesy of the artist.

Sarah ROBINSON

Wetland environments act as a catalyst for my transmedial curiosity. This interest drives the alignment of data through touch from the codec of a traditional etching process into the digital space. Abiotic chemical reactions morph with digital technologies in my artwork to regain a tangible reaction from the digital world. Recognising anomalies when a digital or material investigation is interrupted by inherent disturbances, offers a new dynamic to question the effect of digitalisation on knowing. The rapid evolution of technologies’ control over the collection of any data is possibly dangerous. If the term ‘dangerous’ is construed as the chance of a loss, it can also be perceived as an opportunity to reconstruct the diminishing traditional etching aesthetic. This aesthetic calls for a material presence within the digital environment as a remedy for digitalisation. I acknowledge transmuting forms; reminiscent of printmaking’s constant transformation alongside technology and significances of such innovations affecting real-world places, that are vital to progressively question our apparent trust in digital data.

Sarah Robinson, (2020). I am restarting the map. Please do not stand beside me, digital print, Hahnemühle, 50 x 150 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

Jane WHELAN

I have returned to an environment with which I have become deeply familiar; the shoreline of the Harvey inlet. This work is about what I have found; allowing time to observe and absorb; ‘to receive rather than impose’. These drawings reference what I have seen, but as I execute the drawing it becomes a vehicle to express what I have sensed, ‘Much of what we learn about the objects of our attention in the natural world seems to come out from the corner of the eye’ (Winton 2015). I endeavour to share this awareness of the peripheral space; the movement of air and associated sound through the marks that are made, allowing the medium to collaborate with the surface and participate in this conversation. In the past I have let the subject reach from the confines of the paper into the space; in this horizontal installation the subject pushes its frame to reach to the next fragment, in an effort to emerge and connect.
