

TETHERED

**COLLABORATING ARTISTS ANNELIES JAHN & JANE BURTON TAYLOR
INCINERATOR ARTSPACE, WILLOUGHBY**

6 APRIL -1 MAY, 2022

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY

We wish to acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional custodians of these lands on which we gather and to those too of the Wodi Wodi, Gundungarra, Wangal and Gadigal lands on which we have worked for this exhibition. Most likely we stand on traditional Gammeraygal lands, but this is unclear because the lives of the original custodians of this place, were devastated by being so close to the ground zero of colonisation. We pay our sincere respect to these elders, past, present and future, and acknowledge our deep gratitude for their care of country.

We would also like to pay our respect to all Aboriginal people here today. Specifically we would like to thank David Watts of the Aboriginal Heritage Office, and Deborah Lennis, of the Cultural Officer Inner West Council, for their generous assistance and guidance in the making of work on their country.

TETHERED TO THE TROUBLE



There is a place, not far from here, where a ruined chair sits on a shore. As a still image within this exhibition (*Marked*, video projection) there is a striking poignancy and portent to the found scene in which all things seem to be subject to the same processes of weathering, decay and destruction. Half-buried within the scene though is a story. That wrecked post-colonial seat occupies another much older, secret human site; a midden, cradled by coastal caves and now part of a suburban harbour-side park. Culturally emblematic and historically layered, the portrayal of this landscape is a troubled amalgamation. Tethered together by place, time and events, the disparate elements – like characters in the story – rub against each other uncomfortably but within a visual image that is undeniably beautiful in its starkness. This image, part of the *Marked* series reveals a contemporary fracture between the overlay of Indigenous and colonial markings still visible on the land.

The *Tethered* exhibition is the outcome of a years-long collaboration between artists Annelies Jahn and Jane Burton Taylor and they locate it within a broad framework of land or ecological art. They began working with what they call *benign interventions* across three specific natural sites, all familiar to them and which are referenced in this exhibition. The gallery holds evocations of their engagements as they travelled and returned to those places. In talking with the artists, they are conscious of the responsibilities that come with working on and from land. Where possible they have talked with Indigenous custodians of the sites, in order to acknowledge the depth and breadth of cultural and spiritual custodianship, practised for millennia. The artists are fully aware that they grapple with the heavy shadows of colonialism that lie across this country. And while such histories are fraught and complex, Jahn and Burton-Taylor also admit that awkwardness, on many levels, is a constant in the tangle by which our species is tethered to the natural world. Through their work, they are committed to exploring and engaging, not only with a problematic and unresolved colonial legacy but also an ongoing alienation from nature.

The artworks they have made and installed aim to realise the collaboration's goal

of increasing a *sensitisation* to plants, wildlife and the natural environment. They do this gently, with a lightness of touch, to the sound of soft footfalls and distant birdcalls, in traces of things not present and through the silent arrangements of ghostly artefacts and simulacra of nature. It is a sensitivity that reflects an impulse to kinship with other species and a negation of a human centred hierarchy. Their approach is influenced by the philosophy and writings of Donna Haraway, and an aching awareness of the anthropocene as an era of extinction. In a way, Jahn and Burton Taylor seek to tell the stories with visual artefacts, and as Haraway says of the place of stories,

I am not interested in reconciliation or restoration but I am deeply committed to the more modest possibilities of partial recuperation and getting on together. Call that staying with the trouble. And so I look for real stories that are also speculative fabulations and speculative realisms. These are stories in which multispecies players, who are enmeshed in partial and flawed translations across difference, redo ways of living and dying attuned to still possible finite flourishing, still possible recuperation.¹

Aspects of the works in *Tethered* play with conventional Eurocentric presentations and in this, they work to re-present that Haraway idea of partial and flawed translations. The work *Herbarium (for a Refuge)* adopts the herbarium, a systematically arranged collection of dried plants as specimens often used by European explorers to document voyages. Here though, the plants are not dried specimens but vibrant and colourful digital scans, made directly from Indigenous plants and displayed on a black background, without apparent classification or nomenclature. Nearby, the soft fabric suspensions of *Refuge* mimic the proportionate columns of Greek temple architecture, a reference to democracy. These columns are made from muslin cloths dyed with the same plants of the *Herbarium* (even retaining scent) within a form that conveys the democratising concept of interconnectedness. The use of these subtle inversions

work to question accepted cultural norm of classification, a system that privileges one species over another.

Other works fittingly enact stories as forms that can be interpreted as *speculative fabulations and speculative realisms*. The baked clay of colourless porcelain is manipulated to emulate and imprint other natural plant forms located at bush sites. Rolled paper thin to resemble the bark shed by eucalypts, the circular work *Missing* is laid on the ground of the gallery. Alluding to an earlier site work created by the artists, out of context of site it has the air of a memorial wreath. Another ceramic suite, *Seven Trees* is a collection of impressions taken from trees, placed at eye level. The elevation of these marks of nature to this position in a gallery recalls the linear placement of portraits, each one unique.

Immersion and sensorial engagement continues in the work *Bathing*, described as a sound drawing. Played softly, the intention is to draw visitors in close, almost to the point of having to strain to hear the recordings. The sounds traverse the sites visited and known by the artists; of particular significance to them are the recurring calls of vulnerable bird species – the Gang Gang and the glossy black cockatoo. Also recorded are the wave wash sounds of Middle Harbour, tensioned with the knowledge that the waves bring damage to the middens, alongside the uplifting whisper of wind through high gum trees.

Ultimately, being tethered to the natural world delivers many joys but also an awareness of our human impact and our accountability.²

Filling a wall, the video projection *Marked* displays a series of images, large and silent, that convey the incongruous siting of viewing points, signs, public benches and plaques - often and insensitively fixed over the top of Indigenous places and rock carvings, contributing to a marking and layering the land over time.



Finally, included within the exhibition is a wall drawing; a personal mapping of the collaborative process, the means by which the artists were themselves tethered together to realise this project. They explain that while they knew at the start that each artist would bring her own practice and concerns to the collaboration, there was a third thing that happened. That third thing was a spontaneous, unpredictable, ego-less and faster way of working, fuelled by a constant interplay of approaches. It seems appropriate for their stated intention, of addressing *trouble*; those vexed issues and intersections between species and place. In *Tethered*, Jahn and Burton Taylor's work as land / eco artists closely explores disconnection between ourselves, species and the land, particularly in the troubled wake of colonialism;

*We believe we are a part of, and in a sense tethered to the natural world, as it is to us.*²

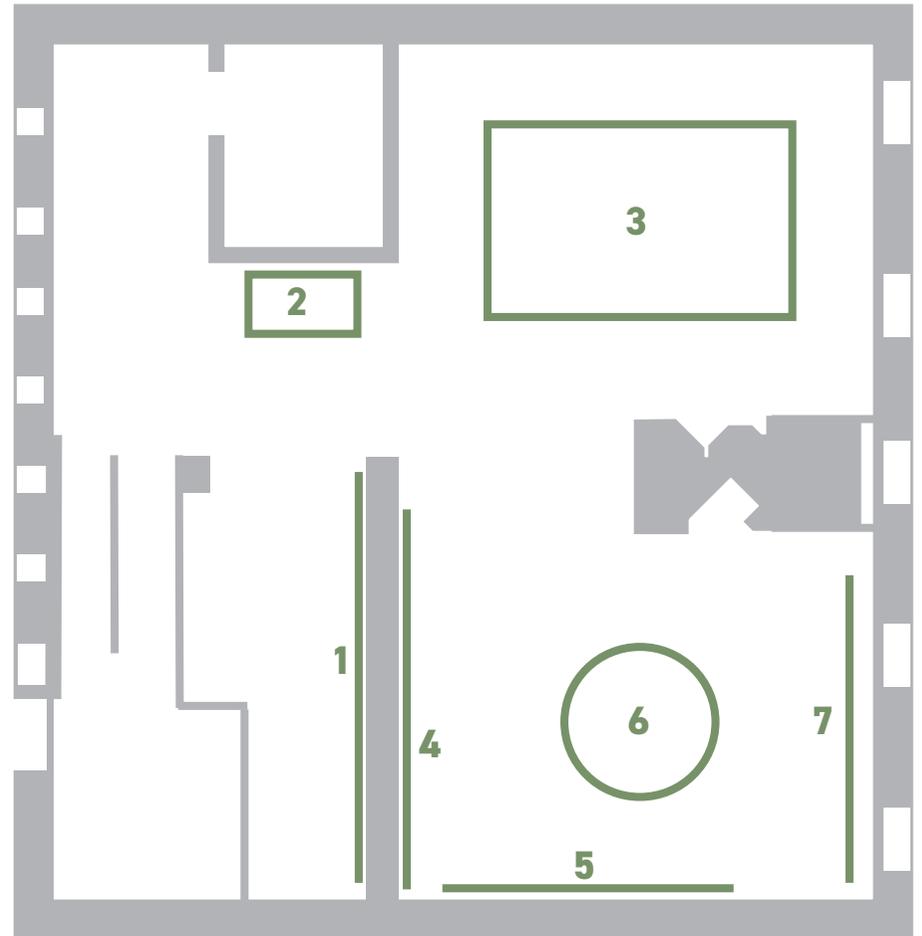
Lisa Pang
July 2021

1. Haraway, Donna, "Playing String Figures With Companion Species" in *Staying With The Trouble: Making Kin In The Chthulucene*, 2016: Duke University Press
2. Annelies Jahn and Jane Burton Taylor

TETHERED

COLLABORATING ARTISTS ANNELIES JAHN & JANE BURTON TAYLOR
INCINERATOR ARTSPACE, WILLOUGHBY

- EXHIBITION PLAN
- 1. *Herbarium for a Refuge*
 - 2. *Tethered- 3 sites*
 - 3. *Refuge*
 - 4. *Marked*
 - 5. *Seven Trees*
 - 6. *Missing*
 - 7. *Bathing*



TETHERED_3 SITES

“When you work on a specific site you inevitably learn about the layers of its history and meaning for its different inhabitants. Here is a little of what we gleaned of the three sites on which we worked for this body of work.”

TETHERED_3 SITES

WODI WODI AND GUNDUNGARA LANDS_ RURAL SITE IN WINGECARRIBEE SHIRE

The road to our rural site in Meryla runs along a ridge and is still predominantly dirt. It was once part of a network of Aboriginal trails. This land, west of Moss Vale, described in the 1800s by one settler as 'wild romantic country', is at the traditional boundary of three indigenous peoples: the Wodi Wodi, the Dharawal and the Gundungarra.

Records suggest these three peoples traded and moved across this country. The coastal Dharawal peoples reputedly traded fish, shellfish and waterfowl with the Gundungarra people, to their west, for much-valued possum skins. The Wodi Wodi are thought to have been the most likely people actually living on and caring for the lands on which we worked. Evidence of their presence has been found along waterways.

In 1818 Colonial explorer Charles Throsby came in search of a route from Moss Vale down off the escarpment to Kangaroo Valley. Two Aborigines he met near Bundanoon Creek helped him. The indigenous men were from Lake Illawarra, one was known as Timelong (a property in Meryla still bears his name). The men showed Throsby a trail that was a long-standing Aboriginal trading route.

By 1831 the road to Meryla had become established as a stock route for white settlers. By the 1860s the ridge and valley were settled with about 30 farms. Documents record that when 'the blackberries and rabbits took over' the place started to deteriorate; these introduced species plus a devastating bushfire at the turn of the century. The area has been logged since the 1870s with patches of near pristine bush, such as the land we worked on, which is now bounded by Meryla State Forest. The land is primarily scribbly gum forest, with fresh water creeks running through it, and supports many vulnerable species such as the Gang Gang.

EXPERIENCES:

Gratitude to the owners of this private land for their generosity and hospitality in letting us to work there.

Near pristine bushland that does seem still wild and romantic country.

Mist on the water early morning, dissipating with the warming of the sun.

Bundanoon Creek, the transformations of it through the day to evening, the visitations of birds and animals to this water source.

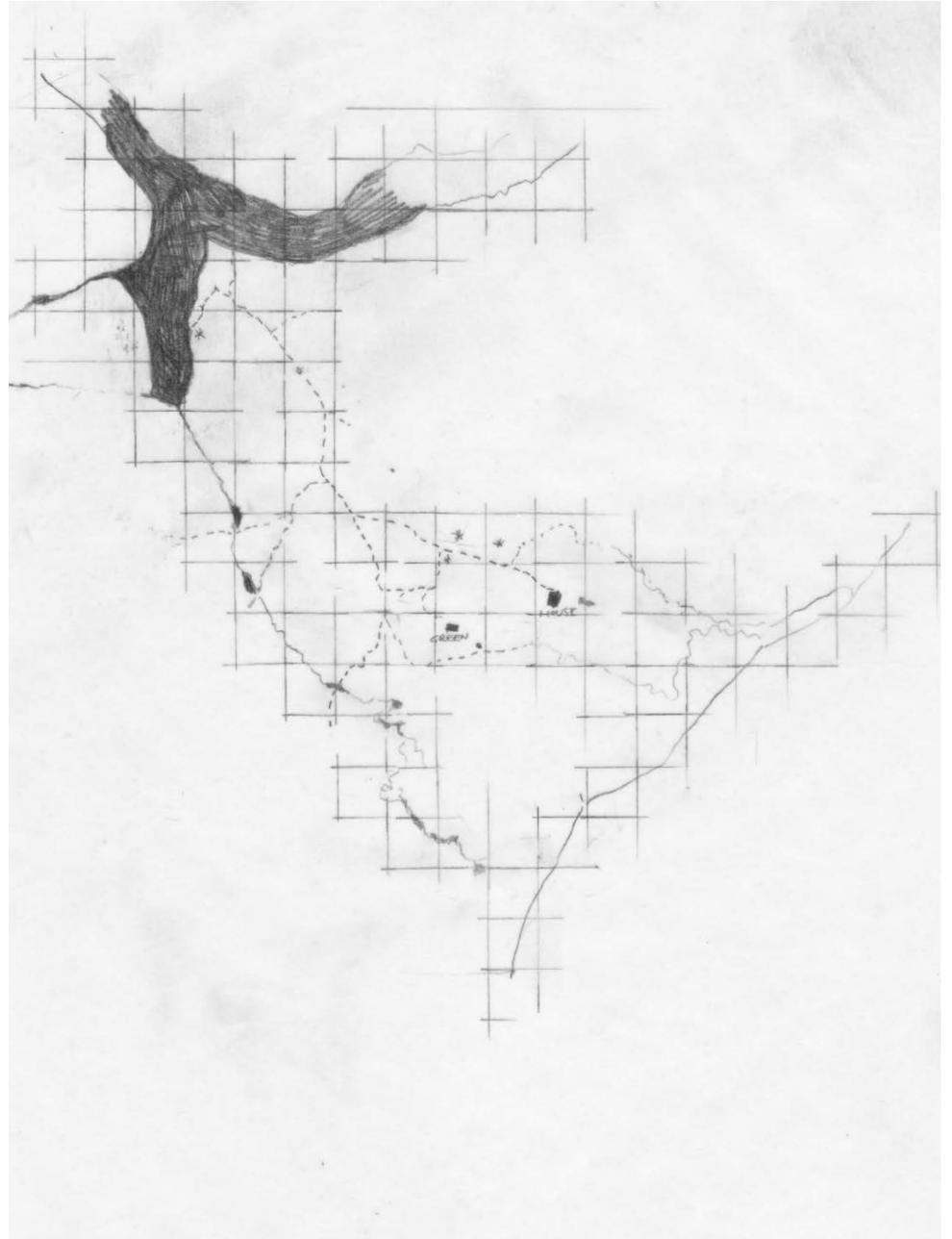
Gang gangs, glossy black cockatoos and other native wildlife are very present, including wallabies and wombats .

The way the trees tell the story of their lives in the scribbly gum forest.

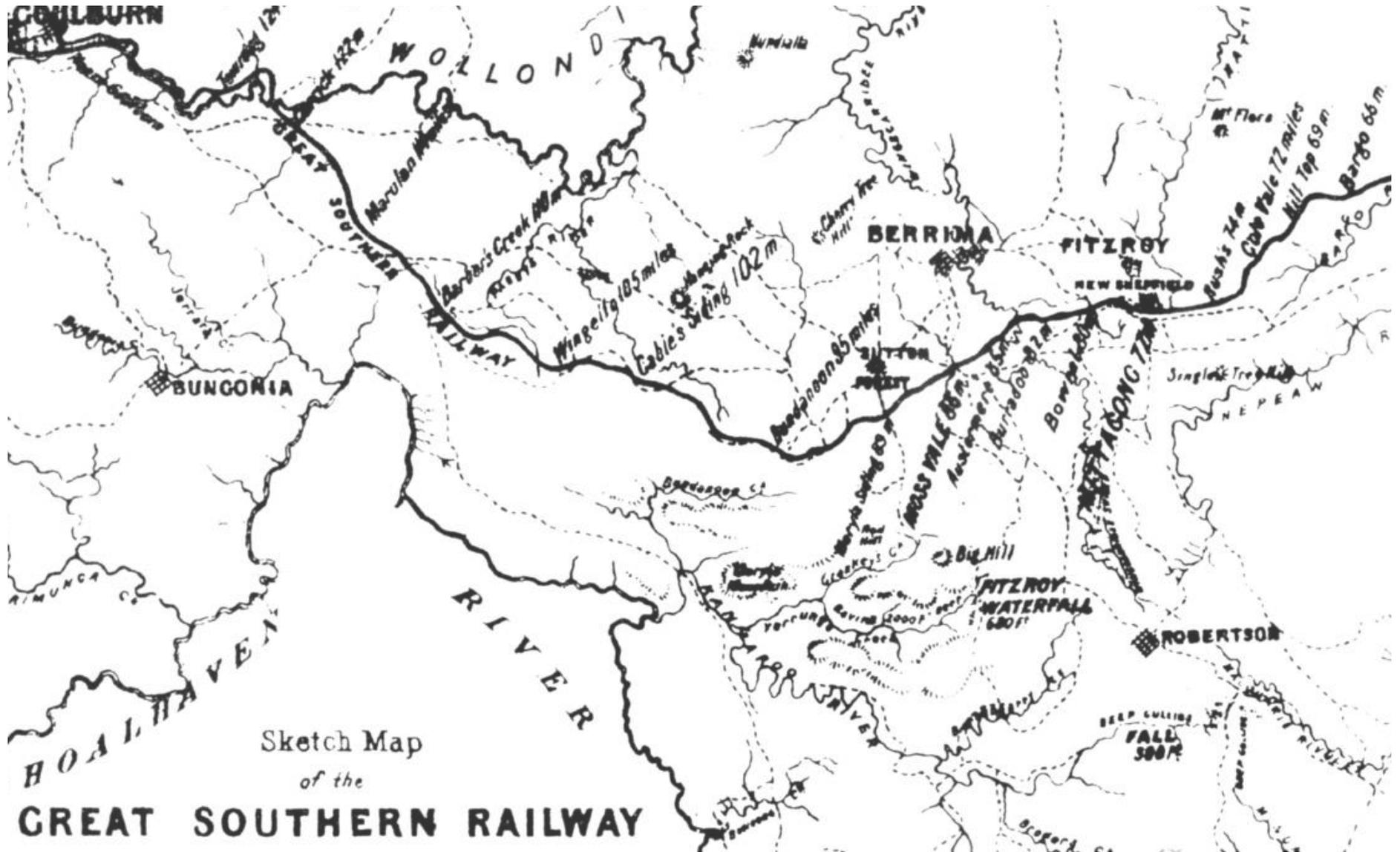
The possibility to play here uninterrupted.

TETHERED_3 SITES
WODI WODI AND GUNDUNGARA LANDS _RURAL SITE IN
WINGECARRIBEE SHIRE

pencil on drafting film, 84.1 x 59.4 cm



TETHERED_3 SITES
WODI WODI AND GUNDUNGARA LANDS_RURAL SITE
IN WINGECARRIBEE SHIRE



TETHERED_3 SITES

WANGAL AND GADIGAL LAND_RAINFOREST GULLY AND CALLAN POINT IN CALLAN PARK

This gully runs through and forms the boundary between the traditional lands of the Gadigal and Wangal peoples. Deborah Lennis, Indigenous Cultural Advisor to the Mayor, Inner West Council, tells how the local indigenous people used the spring at the top of the gully as a fresh water source. She recounts many stories about existing indigenous trees and plants in the area including the She Oak forest on nearby Callan Point. She tells how if children were lost, they would go to the She Oak Forest, as snakes and spiders don't like the casuarinas' needles. The tiny cones of the tree were also threaded as a bracelet, children would wear them if they had bad dreams; when ready, they would bury the bracelets and their bad dreams into the earth. The whole of Callan Point is a midden, says Lennis, and although she notes that there have been many insensitive post-colonial incursions like graffiti and boat storage on these indigenous sites.

Two native trees still growing in and near the gully, likely dating from pre-colonial times, are the Sandpaper Fig and the Black Bean Tree. The former, Lennis says, was used to polish wooden tools, also by women to 'shave their legs'. The Black Bean Tree, endemic to northern NSW, was either planted or carried here as seeds by indigenous people. Traditionally, it was used to make damper: seeds were first washed thoroughly in flowing water then pounded into flour.

The earliest colonial records in the area dates from May 1788 when there was a conflict between two convicts and indigenous men. The site of the confrontation was called Bloody Point, now Dobroyd Point.

Land subdivision in Callan Park was undertaken by colonial peoples in the early 1800s. In 1841 Broughton House was built, to the east of the gully; the spring providing a water source for livestock. From 1842 to 1912 Broughton House and its land was owned by John and Elizabeth Keep. In 1863 neighboring Kalouan was purchased by David and Kate Ramsay. It was during their ownership that a collection of native and non-native trees were established in and around the

gully. These included now massive Bunya and Hoop pines. Many species were seeded from expeditions into Northern Queensland. In 1912, the Keeps sold to the Langdon Brothers and it was during this era that the gully was landscaped with a brick path and seating, under Dr Sydney Evan Jones. The gardens were transformed from a symbol of a prosperous colonial family demonstrating their position into a therapeutic garden, a tradition in essence that continues today

EXPERIENCES:

Joy from the people who walk through the gully.

The richness of the indigenous history of the gully and nearby Callan Point.

The gentle custodianship of the gully by WHO, We Help Ourselves.

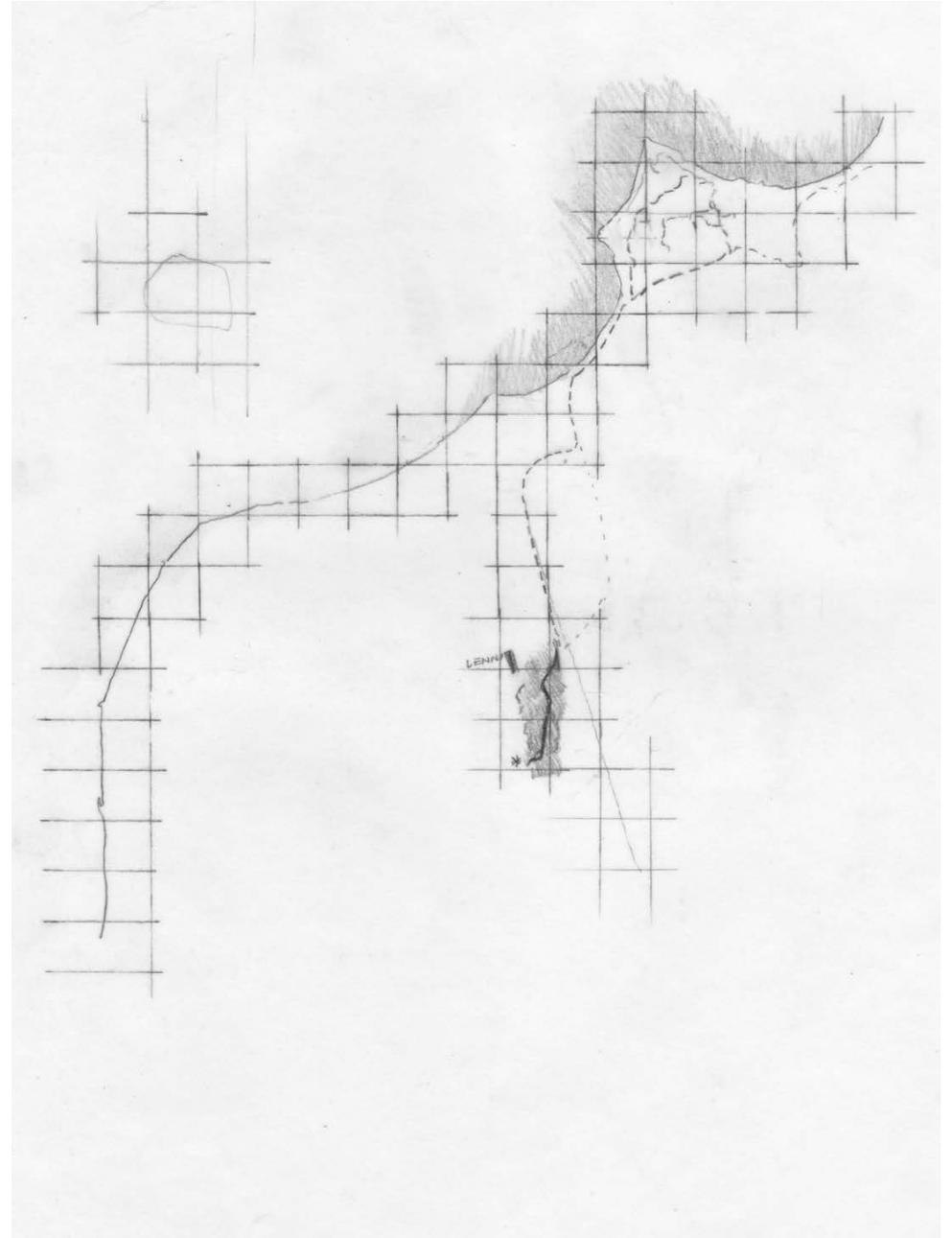
The possibility to play and generosity of Leonard Ramsay, the current gardener overseeing the gully and surrounding gardens.

Working with the still running water and transforming it into a mist installation for visitors.

The honour of walking over this area and hearing about its history with Deborah Lennis.

Doing a species list of the gully plants and learning more about indigenous plant history.

TETHERED_3 SITES
WANGAL AND GADIGAL LAND_RAINFOREST GULLY AND
CALLAN POINT IN CALLAN PARK
pencil on drafting film, 84 .1 x 59.4 cm



TETHERED_3 SITES

WANGAL AND GADIGAL LAND_CALLAN PARK



At the S. End of LEICHHARDT and S.W. of

TETHERED_3 SITES

GAMMERAYGAL LANDS_CLIVE PARK, WILLOUGHBY COUNCIL

Clive Park is a waterfront reserve sitting in traditional Gammeraygal lands, though this is disputed. The traditional owners and custodians of the land on which the park sits were severely impacted by their close proximity to the early colony. Due to disease, killings and colonial land grants - which directly dispossessed them of their lands - they were not seen living traditional life in the area after the mid 1800s. It was also around this time that the Clive Park site was proposed as a residential subdivision. The park occupies part of the first Crown grant in Northbridge dating from 1837 and three years later was proposed for Albert Town Estate (we presume after Prince Albert Queen Victoria's husband). Thankfully the residential estate did not happen and it was gazetted as a park 1933.

There are 26 registered Aboriginal sites within Clive Park including several middens, some coming under significant erosion pressure from wash from passing boats on the harbour. The park also has picnic tables and children's swings, that mostly appear to date from the fifties, and on the waterfront, the remains of a sea pool constructed in 1945.

The park is under encroaching urban pressure, including careless leaving of rubbish, graffiti into rocks where there are indigenous carvings, council signage adjacent to a cave with indigenous hand prints, plus the earlier mentioned boat wash. Most recently, the Western Harbour Beaches Link has been slated and will run directly under Clive Park and reputedly will impact and potentially destroy a rock shelter.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-17/beaches-link-tollway-threatens-to-destroy-ancient-aboriginal-art/10624752>

In the words of Phil Hunt, senior archaeologist at the Aboriginal Heritage Office,

"[There are] lots of issues there. And the latest (other than eroding foreshores from sea level rise and boating traffic) is the proposed tunnel from the Northern Beaches that will go under the water there between Seaforth and Northbridge. Clive Park is like a small oasis being battered by the urban desert at every angle!"

EXPERIENCES:

Incredibly beautiful location on the harbour foreshore.

Several middens, rock carvings and caves with remnant paintings so indigenous presence palpable.

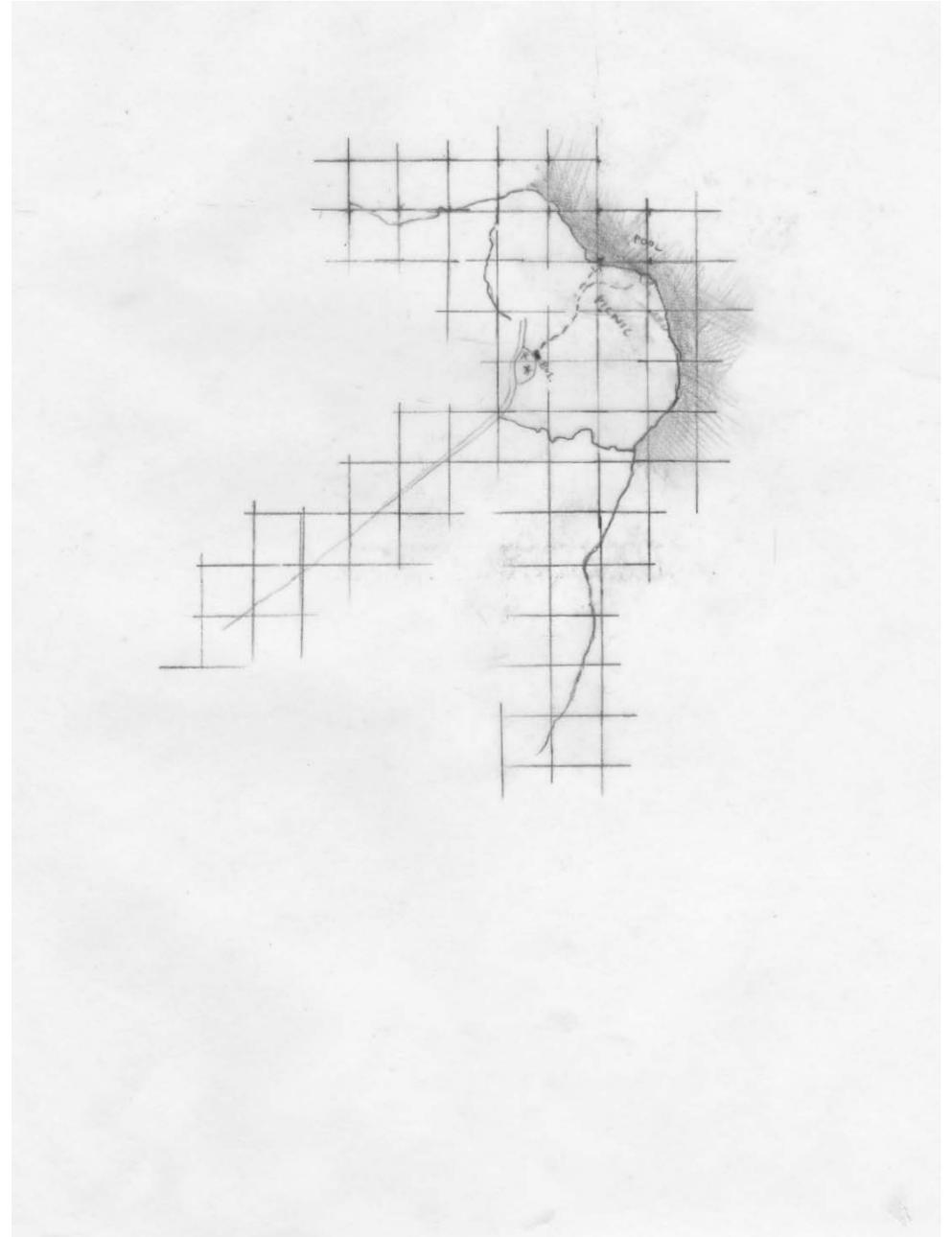
Graffiti and rubbish like dirty nappies left on the beach and names and noughts and crosses graffitied into the trees at the top of the park.

Amazing bird life, (the kookaburras in Bathing).

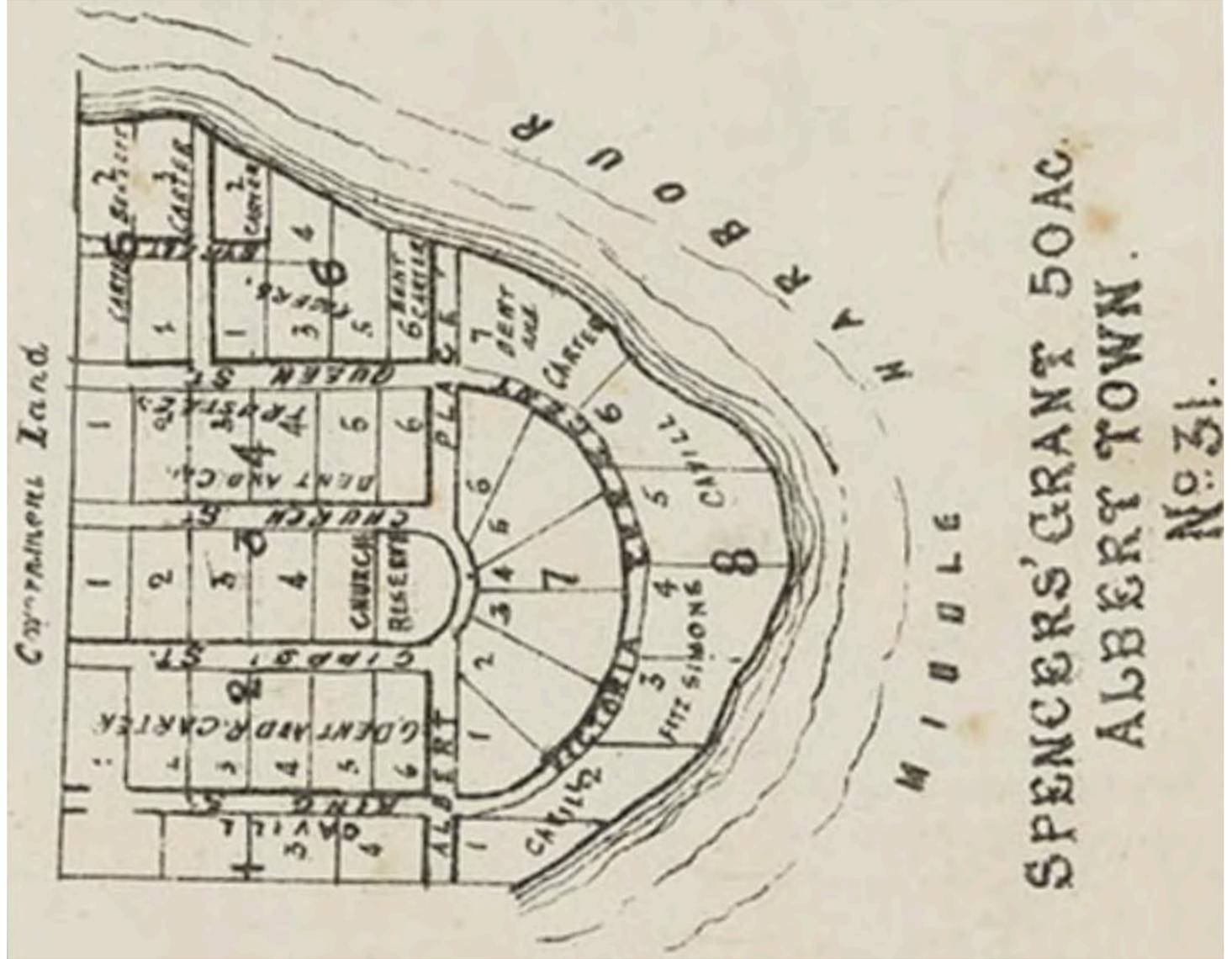
TETHERED_3 SITES

GAMMERAYGAL LANDS_CLIVE PARK, WILLOUGHBY COUNCIL

pencil on drafting film, 84.1 x 59.4 cm



TETHERED_3 SITES
GAMMERAYGAL LANDS_CLIVE PARK, WILLOUGHBY COUNCIL



TETHERED_3 SITES
GAMMERAYGAL LANDS_CLIVE PARK, WILLOUGHBY COUNCIL



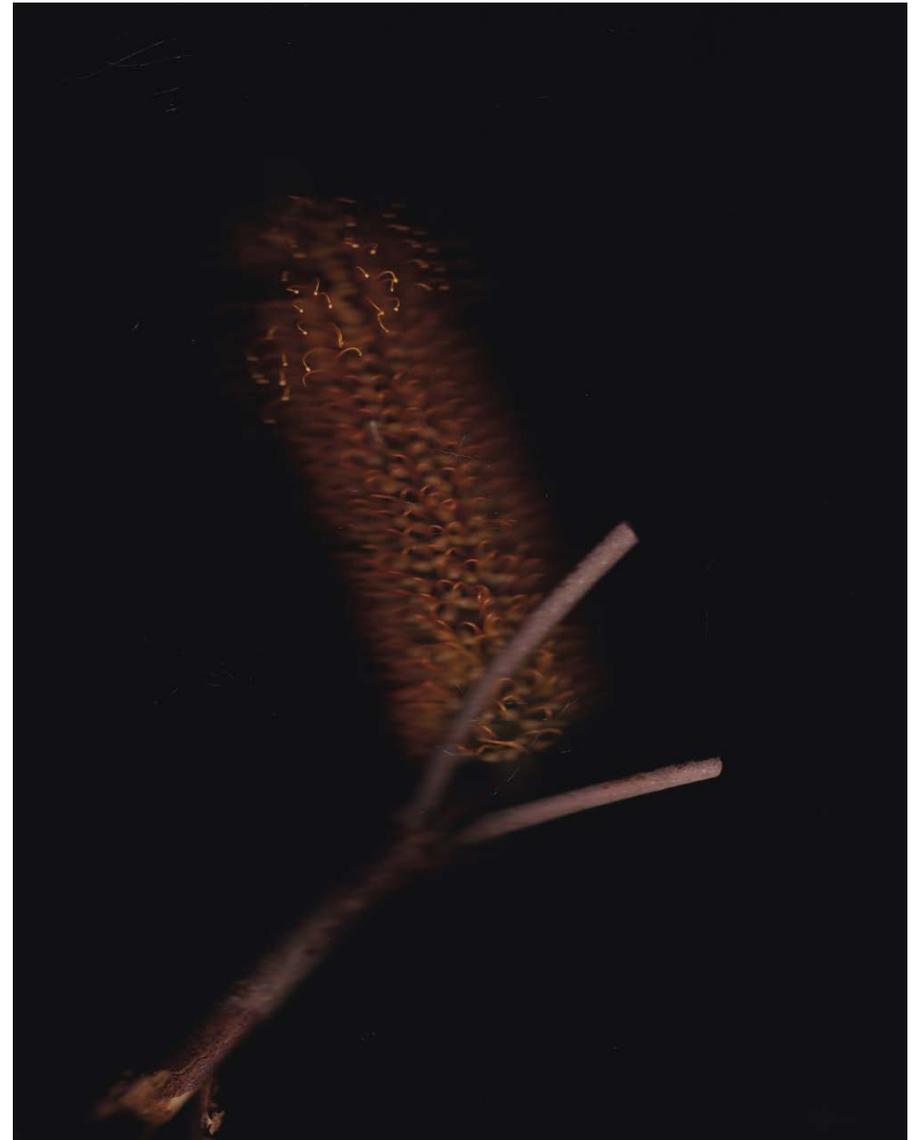
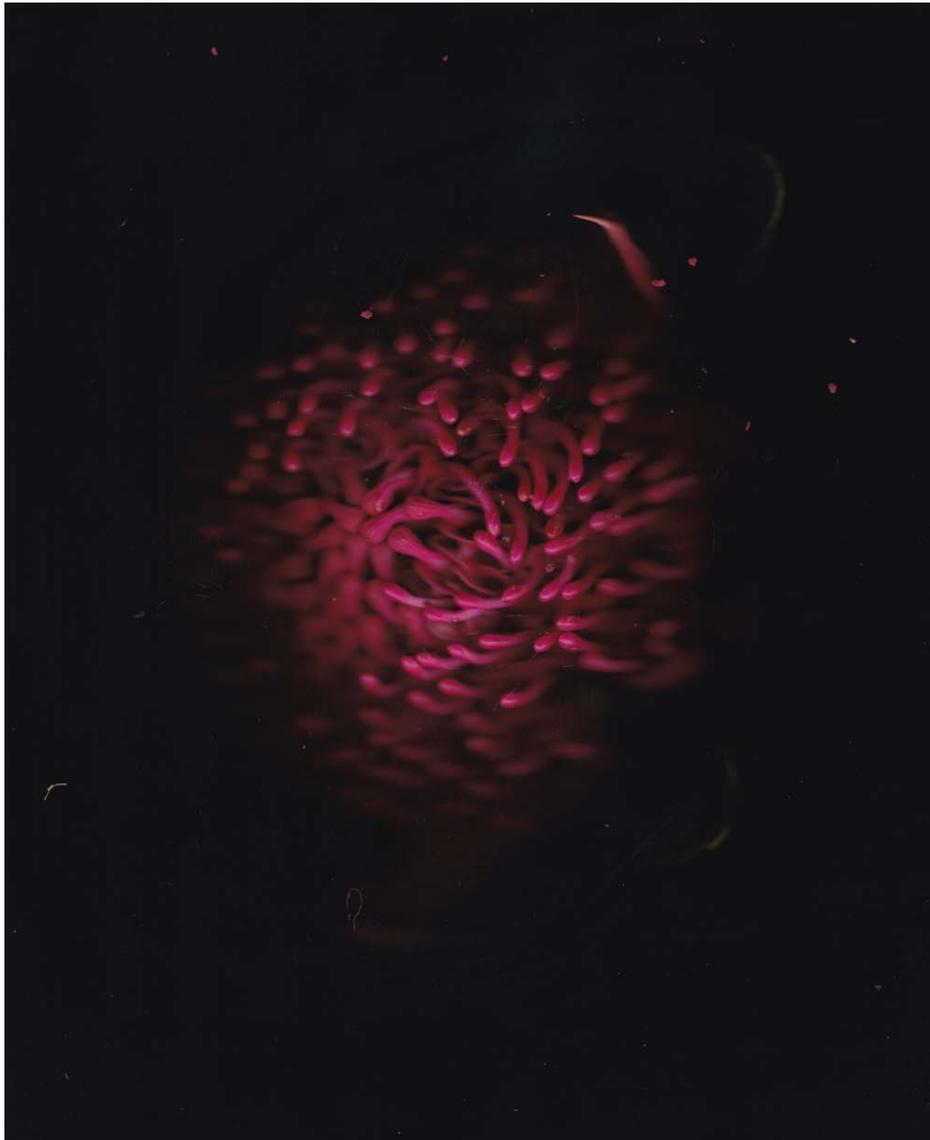
HERBARIUM FOR A REFUGE

Digital prints of direct digital scans of native flora used to create dyes for REFUGE, on archival cotton rag. Collective print 126 x 89.1 cm



HERBARIUM FOR A REFUGE (details of waratah and fallen banksia)

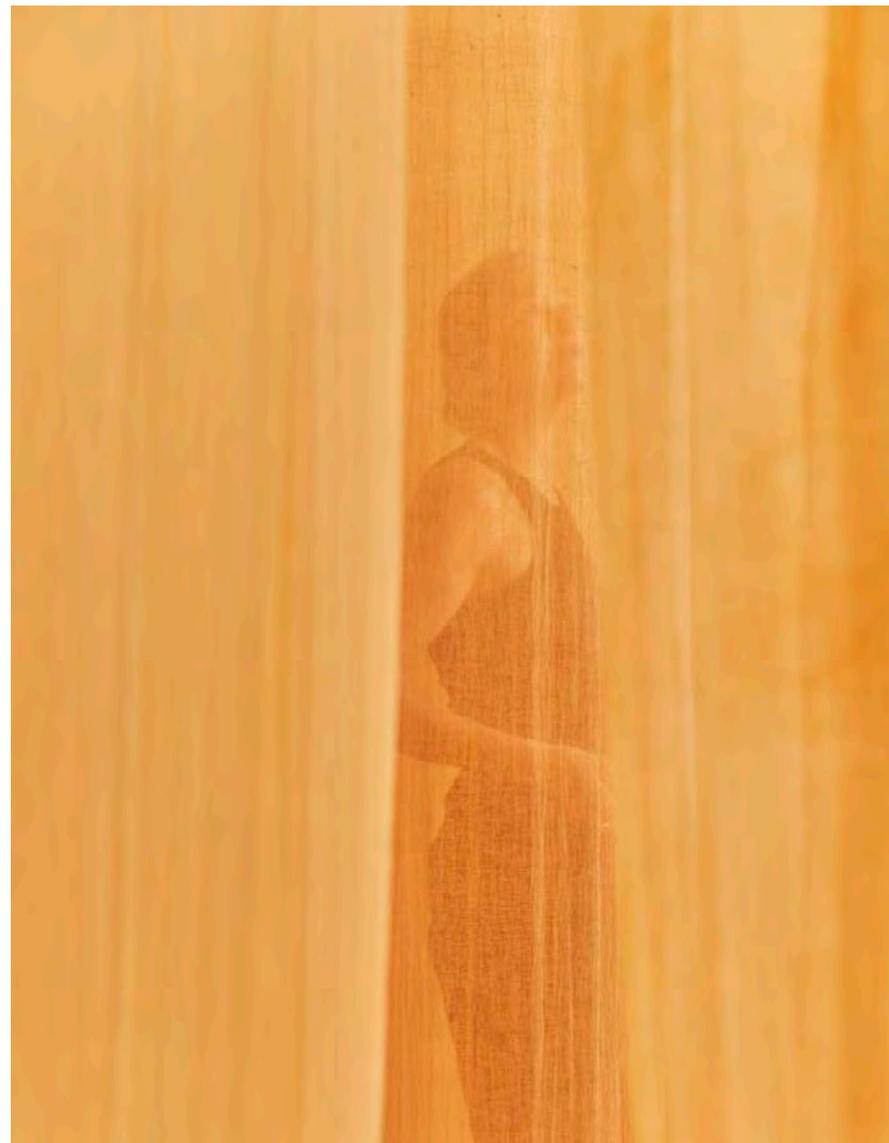
Digital prints of direct digital scans of native flora used to create dyes for REFUGE, on archival cotton rag. Individual images 21 x 29.7 cm



REFUGE (details)

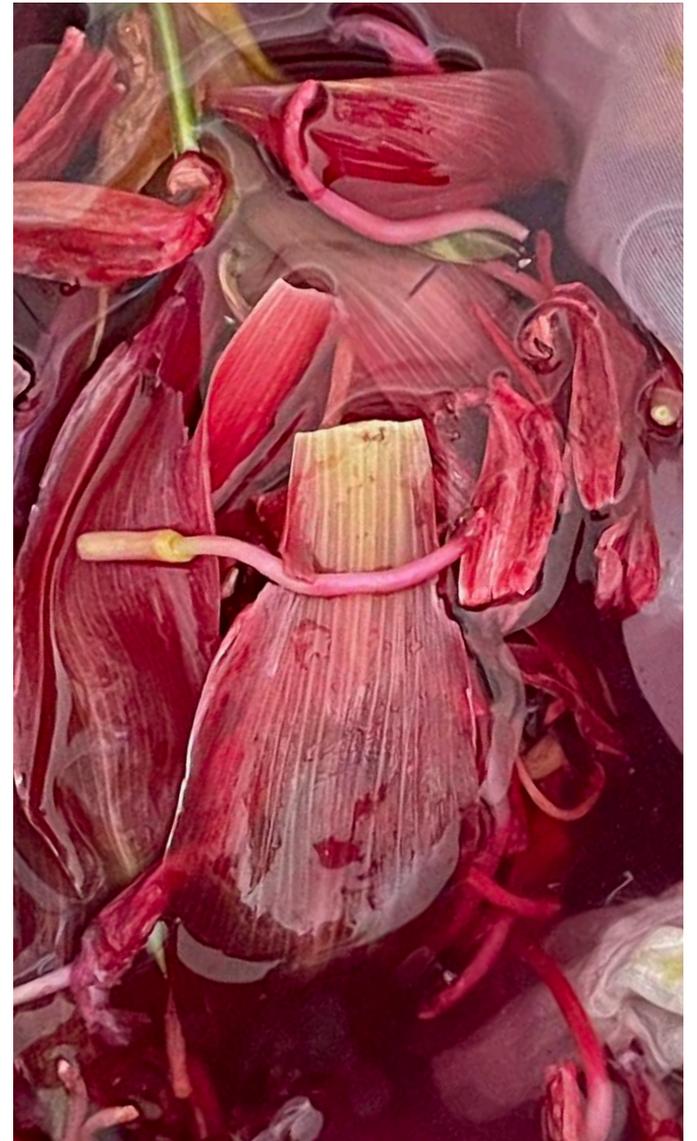
Installation of muslin hand-dyed with indigenous flora from Gadigal lands, scent, embroidery hoops and linen thread. Installation 225 x 420 x 275 cm

Photography by Robin Hearfield



REFUGE (detail)

Installation of muslin hand-dyed with indigenous flora from Gadigal lands, scent, embroidery hoops and linen thread. 225 x 420 x 275 cm installation and image of making waratah dye.



MISSING

Handmade porcelain replicas of bark shed by scribbly gums on rural site. Approximately 110 x 110 cm. Photography of ceramics by Robin Hearfield.



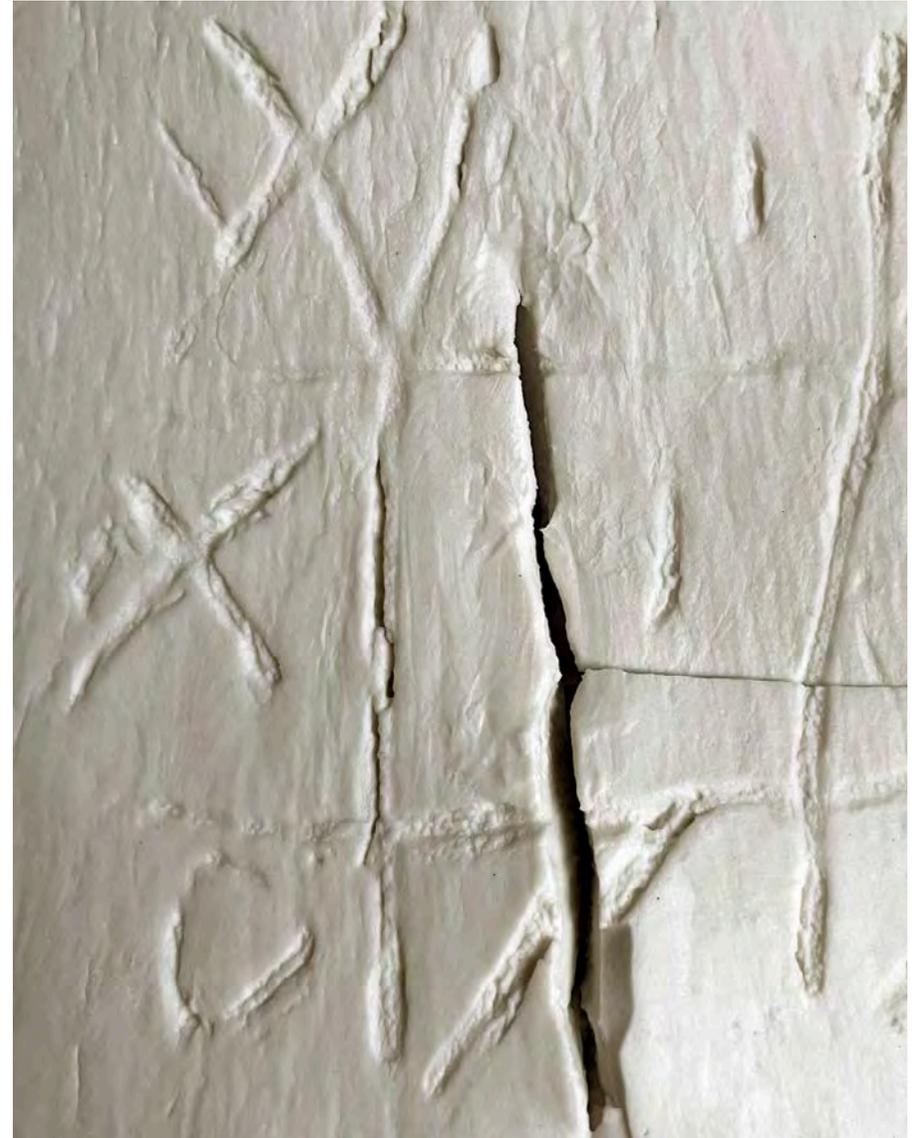
MISSING (ONSITE)

Bark shed by scribbly gums on rural site. Approximately 110 x 110 cm and on right collected shed bark and handmade porcelain replicas



SEVEN TREES (details)

Ceramic impressions taken from the branches of scribbly gum trees taken from two sites urban and rural, porcelain. 21 ceramic pieces on 3 custom made steel tables, installation dimensions 140 (approx.) x 360 x 25 cm



SEVEN TREES

Ceramic impressions of branches of scribbly gum trees taken from two sites urban and rural, porcelain, and on left collecting porcelain impression of scribbly gum



SEVEN TREES

Image of scribbly gum line drawn by the moth grub (Ogmograptis) and residue of porcelain from collecting an impression.



MARKED (detail midden)

Documentation from two urban sites bearing witness to indigenous lands overlaid with markings/incursions made by colonial, post-colonial and contemporary peoples; indigenous sites include middens active until the late 18th century. Projection duration 9:42 looped



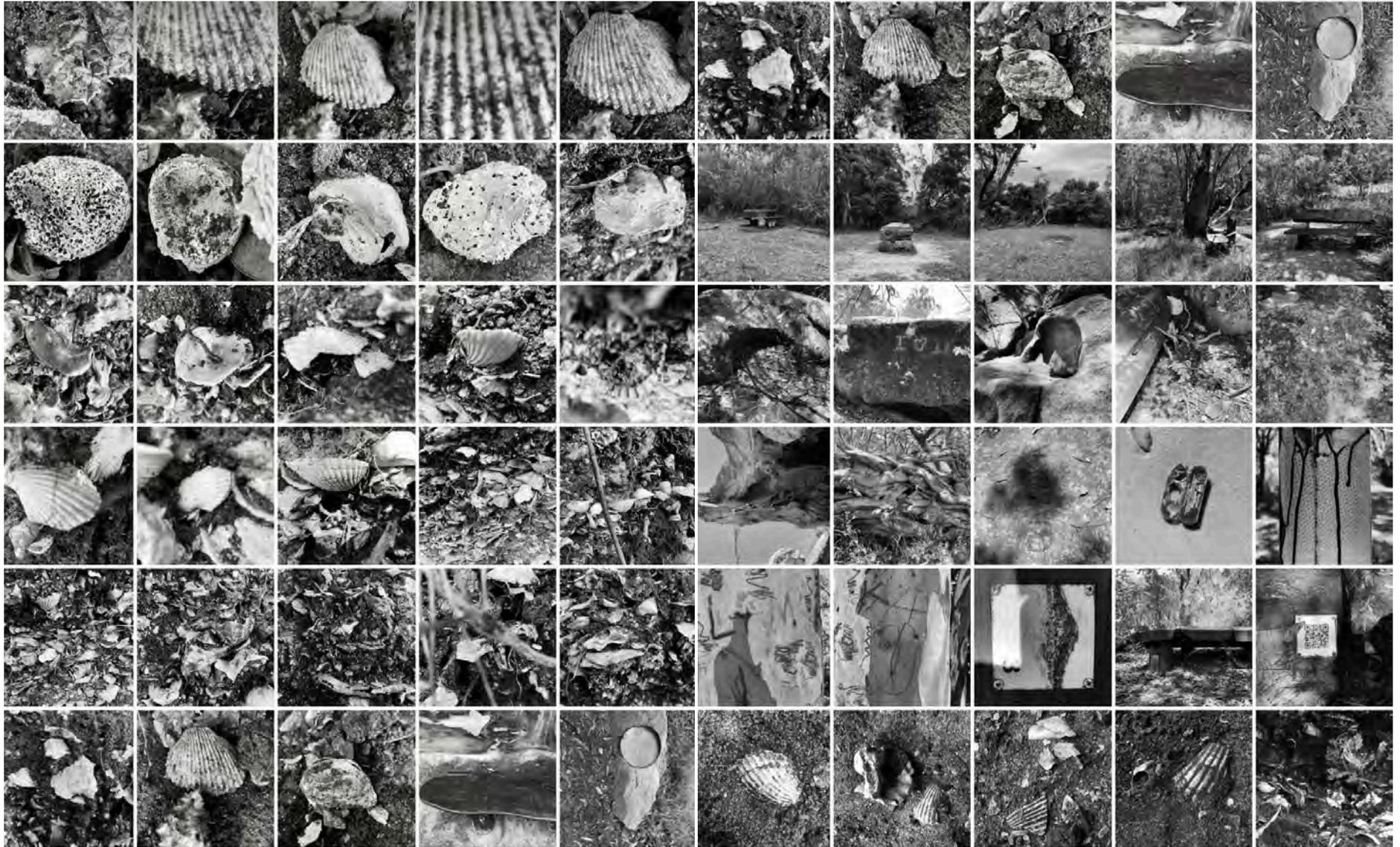
MARKED (stills – painted rock face and detail of midden)

Documentation from two urban sites bearing witness to indigenous lands overlaid with markings/incursions made by colonial, post-colonial and contemporary peoples; indigenous sites include middens active until the late 18th century. Projection duration 9:42 looped



MARKED (stills for projection)

Documentation from two urban sites bearing witness to indigenous lands overlaid with markings/incursions made by colonial, post-colonial and contemporary peoples; indigenous sites include middens active until the late 18th century. Projection duration 9:42 looped.



BATHING

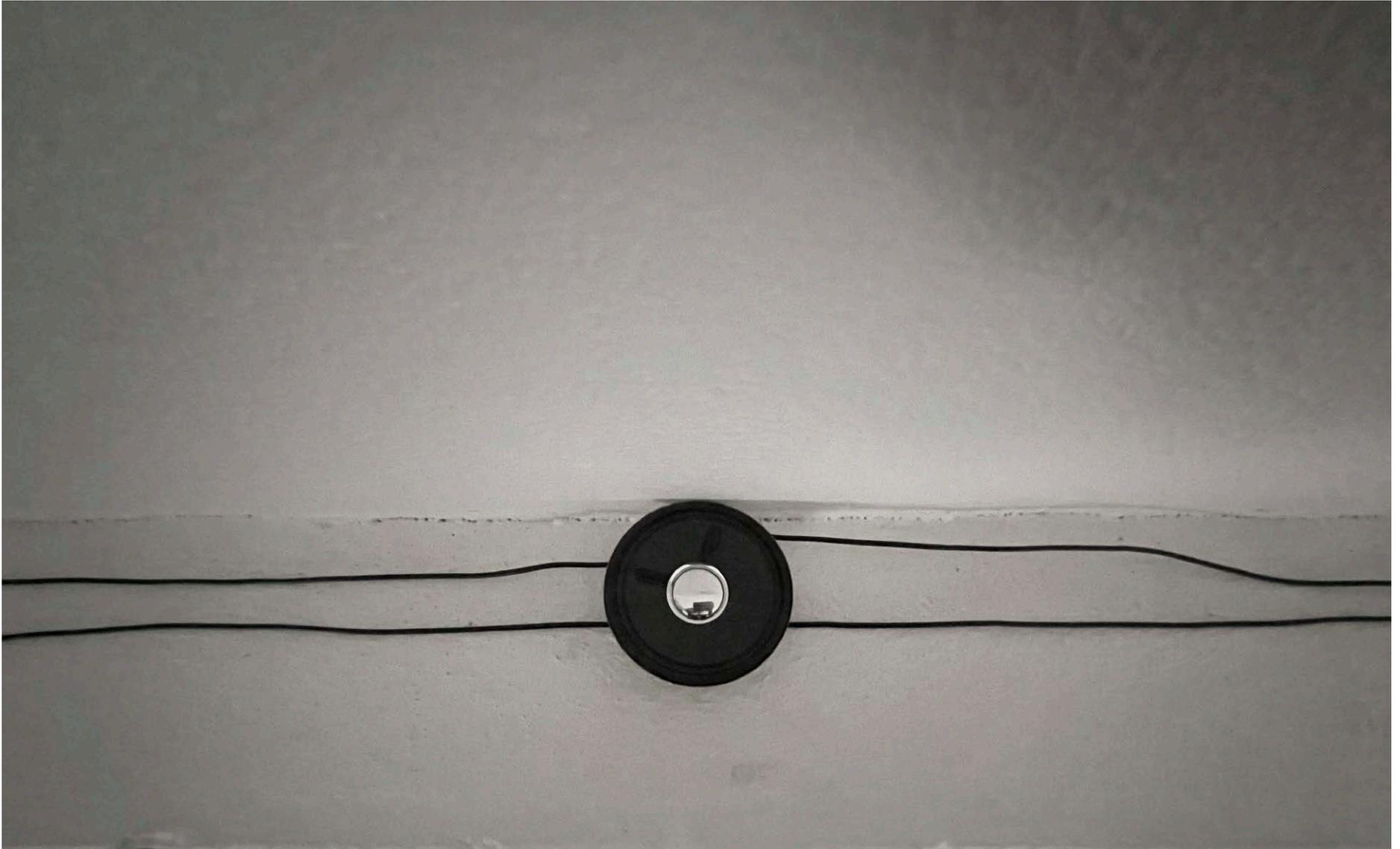
Bathing is an artwork that gives gallery visitors an immersive sound experience of the three sites researched in the making of *Tethered*.

By creating a work that encourages viewers to walk up to a speaker to hear a sound, we hope to isolate and emphasise this sound and its significance in the gallery visitor's experience. Of particular importance to us are the calls of two vulnerable species: the Gang Gang and the glossy black cockatoo.

Other recordings include waves crashing against rocks in Clive Park, one of our three sites. This recording is specifically significant to us as these waves, heightened by wash from boats in Middle Harbour, are damaging the middens on the harbor foreshore in the park. Other sounds, such as wind in gums, are benign and in a sense reassuring. Ultimately, being *tethered* to the natural world delivers many joys but also an awareness of our human impact and our accountability.

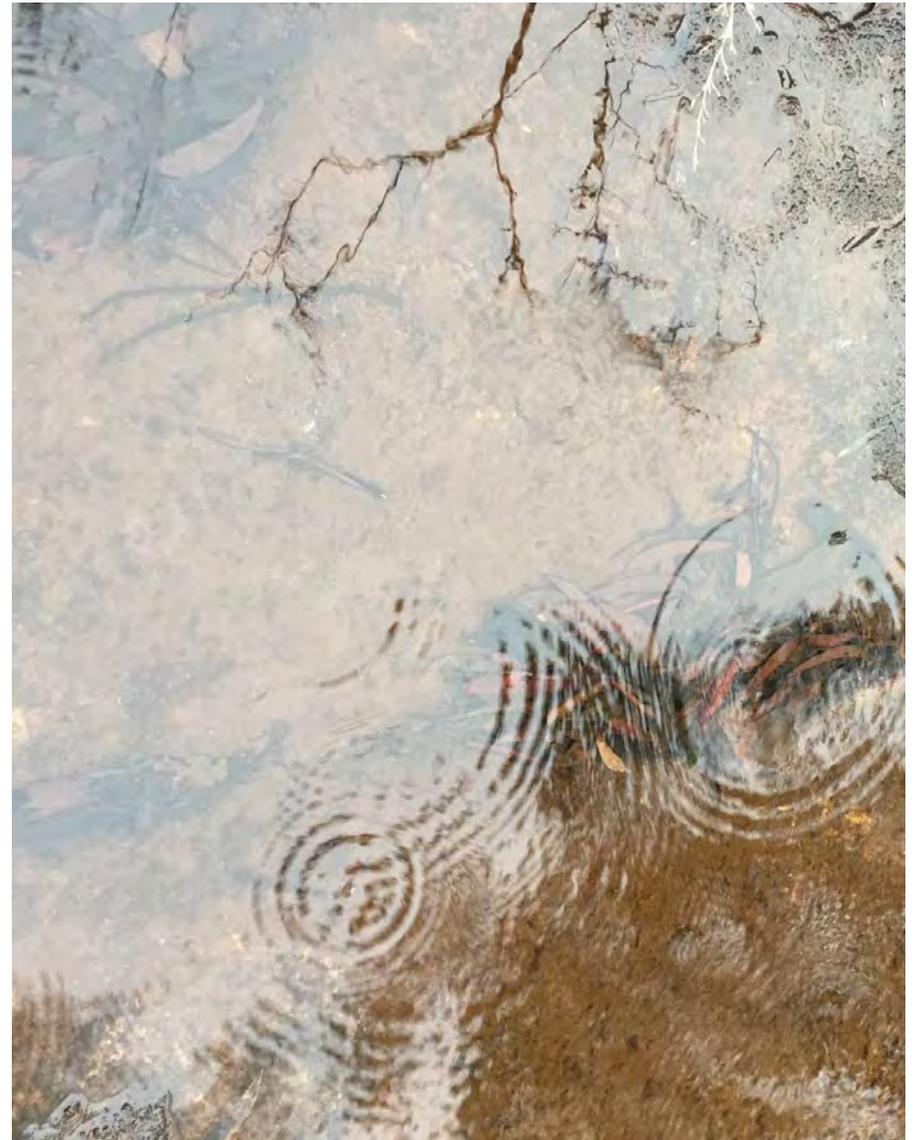
BATHING

Sound drawing with recordings of bird calls and ambient sounds including wind and water from 3 sites, I-pod, speakers, wiring and amplifier. Duration 13:05 looped



BATHING

Bush site used for collecting recordings for sound drawing with recordings of bird calls and ambient sounds including wind and water from 3 sites. I-pod, speakers, wiring and amplifier. Sound duration 13:05 looped



BATHING

Bush site used for collecting recordings for sound drawing with recordings of bird calls and ambient sounds including wind and water from 3 sites.



RE-WILDING_SEEDLING GIFTING

The work created for *Tethered* was predominantly undertaken within the Endangered Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub plant community, the natural habitat that dominated the Sydney Basin before colonialism. Only pockets of this plant community survive now in Sydney, and do so in near-pristine stretches of bush in parks on the harbour and coastal foreshore and in the Malabar Headland and North Head National Parks.

For this reason, the artists are presenting visitors to the gallery opening event, with seedlings from this plant community sourced from IndigiGrow an indigenous run nursery in La Perouse. Since so many Sydney gardens are still dominated by European plants, the artists are making the seedling-gifting as a gesture towards collective care of country. It is a way of re-wilding native flora, which in turn supports indigenous fauna. It is a social artwork, engaging visitors in actually taking home and nurturing indigenous flora via the simple act of planting a seedling in their garden.

The plants given away will include lomandra, native violet, banksia, rare black wattle, prickly acacia and waratah tube-stock from IndigiGrow (www.indigigrow.com.au).

SEEDLING GIFTING

A selection of the plants given away , all tube-stock from IndigiGrow (www.indigigrow.com.au).



WITH THANKS

The artists extend their thanks to the following people who through their generosity, skill and time, made this exhibition possible.

Renata Atkin and Ross Ramsay

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Claire Brown

Lisa Sharkey

Lisa Stack

Jennifer Brady

Pamela Leung

