



VIA?

PERDITA PHILLIPS

In the years prior to 1968, wheatbelt locals recounted 'persistent subterranean booms', more sound than shake'. Meckering inhabitants spoke of the noise that accompanied the October 14th earthquake, as a roaring that moved over the ground, or like an explosion as the earth lifted, shifted and came to rest. Whilst comparatively small on a global scale, and with no deaths to account for, houses and structures were destroyed by the Meckering earthquake, roads and rail were buckled and blocked, and fences displaced. A subsequent geological map of the fault rendered the earth as a neat stitching of the earth where it was tugged and folded over, east to west. Fifty-five years later, much of the fault line through wheat and canola fields is hardly noticeable', apart from where it has been preserved on the Quellington Road.

The 1968 Meckering earthquake was a temporal marker that shocked settler West Australians into recognition of the inconsistency of our local place. A number of the creators in this exhibition were, like me, babies or young children at the time of 1968 (although not all were living in WA). It prompted me to consider how the artists featured travelled to this point in their careers, and what had shaped how they responded to the veers, direction changes or transitional points in their lives. What was the nature of their fortitude? Our lives have many detours and circumstances—choices not pursued—or dramatic deviations—that can sweep us off course. Sometimes these are major—death, mortality, estrangement (stuff rolls right over us)—but sometimes it is about shrugging off great loads or weaving things back again, in the wake of upheaval. The artists described to me how periods of creativity followed on from the dry years, where other responsibilities of family or paid work needed to come first. What united their histories was the ways that creativity swelled and dwindled and pulsed again, like an untamed but fickle, fluctuating stream.

Life is never as clean and as optimistic as our Instagram feeds would suggest. In slow-making, messiness is the natural condition and acceptance of impurity led to less stress for some of the responders—some noting the aporisms—this too, shall pass. There is a fine balance between accepting and addressing disorder. Deidre Robb recounted her re-conception of time and movement in the textile work, *Time Well Spent*, following a period of stressful post-pandemic transition.

Reassessment of life, led to re-evaluation of where she spent her time, moment by moment, inch by inch. In Kerrie Argent's *Words woven*, a knot of tangled letters on brightly coloured reused strapping reselves itself into sentences from a cherished friend. The viewer needs to spend time making sense of the complexity.

A shared strategy for people caught up in fragmented time, is focussing on small things and small moments. Small pieces of stitching or rolling and hand felting could be done in scattered moments. Anette Nykiel's plant pigmented felt cords in *What are we wearing?* resolved themselves into meandering creek lines or rootlets. Materials were re-purposed, re-figged and used up. Lea Taylor wove accumulated craft materials to produce basketry softly-lined with wetly (emu) feathers, recalling her totem and ancestors. For some, multi-tasking and too many projects on-the-go were increasingly replaced with considered focus and intense investigation, wisdom manifesting as being **more on course**. After upheaval, making for Tineke Van der Eecken, is now about connecting generations: grandmothers, mothers, daughters and granddaughters. Here she exhibits the results of the technical process of vascular corrosion on the material flesh of life.

We have seen how some of the artworks highlight careful use and reuse of materials. Such gestures of care in making occur within greater social scales of sustainability, resource use, habitat loss, climate change and beyond. In slow-making, 'the push to slow down is paradoxically urgent'—the contradiction of Western Culture's hubris of interfering with global geo-bio-chemical processes occurring within the framework of deeper First Nations cultural histories, and vast geological timescales. It is pertinent that these practitioners share their talents in a supportive network. Nien Schwarz notes, 'friends "make the Anthropocene bearable". In her work "(t)he slow act of painstakingly stitching [...] as a means to respect imperceptible geological transitions"'. The sometimes circuitous paths of these artists and makers extends into the future. There are muted rumblings under our feet: the Australian tectonic plate has moved 7 cm a year, northeast towards Asia, since 1968'.

This essay was written on unceded Whadjuk Nyoongar boodja.

¹ Newman, R., *Slow Making in Five Short Blasts*. Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts, 2019, 24(8) p. 121-124.
² Schwarz, N., Personal communication, 2023.
³ Inter-governmental Committee on Surveying and Mapping. Australian Terrestrial Reference Frame, no date. <https://www.icsm.gov.au/australian-terrestrial-reference-frame>.

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was WA regional correspondent for *Art Monthly Australia* 2012-2014.

archive for Lee Harrop. She has written for *Garland, The Architectural Review, CSPA Quarterly, Artsource Magazine and Swamphen: a Journal of Cultural Ecology and encounters and liquid connections* (Manchester University Press) and *A Hole in the*

Dr Perdita Phillips writes about art encounters and more-than-human worlds.



CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Slow-making is taking time to notice and to care for people, place and the materials of making. To cultivate is care for, nurture and encourage the complex relationships between people, plants, animals and the soils that sustain all of us on Earth. Hence, cultivating slow-making is a process of creating new works through the exchange of ideas and knowledge, materials, technical skills, and scientific inquiry while nurturing long term relationships. An ongoing engagement with people, materials and skills grounded in connection, care, and sharing.

Many slow-makers ground their practice in field-based walking, taking time to notice and to care for their local environment and bring attention to the wider ecology. Much of the work of cultivation is done in learning about the local environment, the soil, the seeds and their needs and preparing for the best possible conditions for thriving. In this sense, cultivation is process-based and relies on the skills and knowledge of the cultivators to communicate and bring about the changes that germinate healthy individuals.

Slow-making artists are cultivators and are often called upon to become mentors for new and emerging artists and to facilitate and teach programs and skills to the wider public while embracing social change. The artists in this exhibition have a long history of cultivating art as teachers, artistsworkers, mentors and workshop facilitators. These selected artists consider the ways they cultivate their practice within the current environment to produce intimate new works that respond to the theme of Cultivating slow-making.

Annette Nykiel 28th September 2023.



Front Cover: Nien Schwarz, *Motherlode* (detail), 2023, high vis work shirt, metallic threads, dimensions variable. Photo: Michael Wingate.

Back Cover: Tania Spencer, *The End of my Cultivating Days*, 2023, felted human hair and copper wire.

The exhibition was kindly opened by Lee Kinsella, curator of the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art at The University of Western Australia.



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Mundaring Arts Centre respectfully acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we operate, the Whadjuk people, as well as other First Australians connected with this land. We pay our respects to Elders both past and present.

CULTIVATING SLOW-MAKING

Curated by Annette Nykiel

7 OCT - 26 NOV 2023

IMAGES

1. Deidre Robb, *Time well spent* (detail), 2023, textiles, cotton thread, metallic thread. Dimensions variable.
2. Tineke Van der Eecken, *Matrescence | Umbilical*, 2023, vascular corrosion cast human umbilical cord, methylmethacrylate, displayed in lab bottle, 14 x 7cm.
3. Martien van Zuien, *Mapping a Saltlands Gaze*, Merino wool and other natural fibres (silk, cotton, nettle, wool nepps), mulberry bark, cotton muslin, silk gauze, wire. Wet-felting. Dimensions variable. Photo: Bewley Shaylor.
4. Tineke Van der Eecken, *Lace Safari*, 2023, recycled copper wire, wooden bobbins and pins mounted on paper board, 59 x 42 x 1cm.
5. Caitlin Stewart, *Flourish*, 2023, paper, foam, found objects and material, thread, machine and hand stitched, 12 x 13 x 4cm each. Photo: Bewley Shaylor.

1. Lea Taylor, *Waste Not Want Not (2) Vandi* (detail), 2023, natural raffia, hand dyed raffia, acrylic yarn, emu feathers, 8 x 68 x 25cm.
2. Martien van Zuien, *What are we wearing?* (detail), botanically dyed fine merino wool fibres and silk fabrics, various threads, embroidery hoops, paper raffia, wet-felting and hand-stitch. Dimensions variable. Photo: Bewley Shaylor.
3. Dierne Strahan, *Satanly More!*, 2023, *Eucalyptus longicoma*s bark and dyes, wool. Dimensions variable.
4. Tineke Van der Eecken, *Matrescence | Placenta*, 2023, vascular corrosion cast human placenta, methylmethacrylate, 18 x 18 x 5cm.
5. Dierne Strahan, *Edge of the Creek*, 2023, *Eucalyptus rudis* bark and dyes, wool. Dimensions variable.
6. Anette Nykiel, *What are we wearing?*, 2023, gifted hemp dress, bush wool wood coat hanger, plant pigmented felt cords, 135 x 50cm. Photo: Bewley Shaylor.
7. Kerrie Argent, *Words Woven - Part 1* (detail), 2023, yellow recycled plastic strapping, paint pen (text by Debbie Cooper). Dimensions variable.



ANNETTE NYKIEL

CURATOR AND ARTIST

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How do we put things back together too? - a reconstructed shirt dyed in the same dye pot with different mordants, suggesting that things are not always the same when they are reassembled. How we cultivate is important. A small addition to the cloth changes the colour as does adding or taking away minerals from the soil.

What are we wearing? - bodies are multispecies organisms entangled in the surrounding ecosystem. Relationships need time and are nurtured by caring and sharing. The pre-loved hemp dress, a gift from a friend, the rhizomes felted from leftover wool and pigmented with plant dyes in shared dye pots begin to materialise how slow-making may be cultivated.

How do we put things back together? too? 2023, plant dyed reconstructed cotton shirt. Various mordants, brushwood and fencing wire hanger. Dimensions variable.



CAITLIN STEWART

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Flourish - exploring Western Australia's distinctive ecosystem reveals a rich tapestry of plants shaped by isolation, varied climates, and ancient landscapes. In what might be described as poor soils and harsh weather, our flora has adapted and thrived. I have observed the flora and landscape, as they change through the seasons in the regional towns I have lived in. The colours, shapes, forms, and textures captivate me. Watching and noticing, I feel grounded in the country around me. I put down my own roots and hope to flourish.

Flourish, 2023, paper, foam, found objects and material, thread, machine and hand stitched, 12cm x 13cm x 4cm each. Photo: Bewley Shaylor.



DEIDRE ROBB

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Time well spent - mounting evidence proves that sitting for long periods of time is terrible for our physical health. Recent research recommended a pattern of five minutes walking after every 30 minutes of sitting. I have never been an employee where this pattern would be acceptable. Much of our modern work world is incompatible with our bodies' requirements. In my creative practice I have control over how I structure my time. These works are my record of cultivating a healthier working routine of sitting vs exercise. These tape measures record patterns in time and are reminders to care for ourselves as we work.

Time well spent, 2023, textiles, cotton thread, metallic thread. Dimensions variable.



DIANNE STRAHAN

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Leaves and bark, along with items of discarded rusty metal found while walking add to Dianne's treasure trove of possibilities. Fabric or wool dyed or printed from these finds are used in her textile pieces. Every leaf, stem or bark is unique and needs to be acknowledged. Off-loom weaving allows time to get to know each found object, combining the weft and warp in harmony with the lines, curves and shapes of each individual piece. Collection of the plant materials, preparation of fabric and paper to be dyed, and the actual dyeing process takes time and is all part of cultivating slow-making. You are invited to slow down and take the time to immerse yourself in the subtle variations of colour obtained from Australian merino wool in response to each individual eucalypt dye.

Sheoak Whispers, 2023, Allocasuarina spp. branch and dyes, wool, cotton. Dimensions variable.



KERRIE ARGENT AND DEBBIE COOPER

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Words woven - stories are woven, they don't just happen. They become an idea in the writers' mind, mulled over, considered, developed until they become a single thread. Words are then written on paper, read and re-read and rewritten. How many times in the days, weeks or months before the writer is satisfied with the expressed thoughts, memories, experiences, place, time, and the future. The woven object is much the same. It goes round, through and back trying to create a solid form. Strong and stable to support inspiration, influenced by the experience, skill, memories, place, and shapes of the artist.

Words Woven - Part one (detail), 2023, yellow recycled plastic strapping, paint pen (text by Debbie Cooper). Dimensions variable.



LEA TAYLOR

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Waste Not Want Not - two random weave vessels crafted from scraps of hand dyed raffia saved over many years; because 'I might use it one day' Hand stitched to form a basket and a **Yandi** (vessel traditionally made of wood) and finished with weitj (emu) feathers. The weitj, my totem, from my grandmother's mother and her grandmother, feature in a lot of my work, they are lovingly and respectfully stitched into these contemporary pieces.

Waste Not Want Not (1) Basket (detail), 2023, natural raffia, hand dyed raffia, acrylic yarn, emu feathers, 12 x 42 x 24cm.



MARTIEN VAN ZUILEN

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Mapping a Saltlands Gaze - inspired by an extended arts residency in Western Australia's North Midlands region, a vast yet sparsely populated area where sand plains and farmland are set amongst an ancient salt lakes system that permeates the region for hundreds of miles. Startling in raw beauty, the shimmering salt lakes' expanse, and its fluctuating shorelines rippling textures of sand, soil, and sediment. Holding my gaze.

The Concept of Increment - to cultivate something is to nurture and nourish it, to let it grow, gradually and incrementally. I think of my arts practice, or a forest of trees. The online dictionary informs me that the term 'concept of increment' can be defined as 'the amount or degree by which something changes; especially, the amount of positive or negative change in the value of one or more of a set of variables.' In the blink of an eye, an entire woodland of adult trees can be cut down, in order so that something else may be cultivated. Marking the concept of nurturing anew.

The Concept of Increment, botanically dyed fine merino wool fibres and silk fabrics, various threads, embroidery hoops, paper raffia. Wet-felting and hand-stitch. Dimensions variable. Photo: Bewley Shaylor.



NIEN SCHWARZ

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Minerals form exceedingly slowly and are essentially non-renewable. Chalcopyrite, bornite, and malachite are complex, visually seductive copper minerals. Ore bodies are notoriously expensive to discover, mine and process. And mining is dangerous.

Motherlode consists of hand-embroidered high-vis workwear inspired by our collective reliance on copper, WA-based copper mining and by a recent artist residency in Queenstown, home of the Mt Lyell copper mine smelters that famously denuded mountain flanks of rain forest, and mine tailings turned the Queen River orange and lifeless. Nien's embellished workwear embodies a conceptual collision between deep time, geological processes and fleeting but penetrating human activities.

Motherlode, 2023, high vis work shirt, metallic threads, dimensions variable. Photo: Michael Wingate.



TANIA SPENCER

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The End of my Cultivating Days - noticing suddenly, I was losing a significant quantity of hair, I started collecting it. This hair loss was an unexpected signifier of the imbalance of hormones as I launched headlong into menopause. Greying hair in relation to ageing is talked about, but not hair loss or changes in texture – my hair used to be straightish, now it's quite curly.

I felted these hair losses into small, elongated ellipses reflecting the sometimes small and sometimes large amounts falling out. I mused on the golden colour of my teenage hair and explored the hair as a site for artwork, dyeing my hair bright colours. This hairnet acknowledges the end of my cultivating days, the ability to cultivate a new human.

The End of my Cultivating Days, 2023, felted human hair and copper wire. Dimensions variable.



TINEKE VAN DER EECKEN

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Ancestral making - Flemish lace serves a point of departure, ancestral as in practiced by my paternal grandmother from the lace-making region of Aalst whose spirit sits by me when making. A small series of works, each new beginnings, double-bobbin-set drawings, explorations into bobbin lace: freestyle in copper wire, imaging a vascular cast of a sea snake in cotton, a eucalypt leaf.

Three generations of daughters are in **Matrescence**, or the process of becoming mother. A corrosion cast placenta in synthetic resin. As women are born with all the eggs, the making of my granddaughter starting with my birth, took daughter Hannah to live and give birth to Sephi: a work that took 487,560 hours to create, plus 96 hours of lab-time.

Matrescence | Placenta, 2023, vascular corrosion cast human placenta, methylmethacrylate, 18 x 18 x 5cm.