



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

Sydney  
Environment  
Institute

## Environment in Practice: Artmaking through Crisis



Photograph: Dean Sewell 'Terror Australis'

**SYDNEY IDEAS: 'Artists have never been more important'**

Tuesday 27 March 2018 | 6.00 – 7.30PM

Level 6 Seminar Room, Charles Perkins Centre, University of Sydney

**DINNER:** Rubyos 18 – 20 King St, Newtown

**SYMPOSIUM: 'Environment in Practice: Artmaking through Crisis'**

Wednesday 28 March 2018 | 9.00 - 5.30PM

Level 6 Seminar Room, Charles Perkins Centre, University of Sydney

## CONVENORS:

**Assoc Prof Ann Elias** completed a PhD in art history at the University of Auckland with a thesis that investigates the history of NZ still life and flower painting. She has published on New Zealand's leading historical and contemporary artists including Rata Lovell-Smith, Michael Parekowhai, Peter Peryer and Paul Hartigan. In 1990 she was appointed to Sydney College of the Arts as head of the study area of art history and theory. Since then her research has focused on Australian subjects and her work published internationally in books and journals.

**Dr Killian Quigley's** dissertation research, which he conducted at Vanderbilt University's Department of English and completed in 2016, attended to relations among literature, aesthetic theory, and natural history in eighteenth-century Britain, Ireland, and France. At SEI, he is elaborating part of that work into a book called *Seascape and the Submarine: Aesthetics and the Eighteenth-Century Ocean*. This project observes the ocean's complex and indeterminate relationships to lastingly influential conventions in Western European poetics and aesthetics, such as the pastoral, the Rococo, the picturesque, and the sublime. The sea repeatedly functions as a limit case, or testing ground, for these conventions, and the resulting experiments and debates are consequential not only for the history of literature and art, but for cultural understandings of the ocean.

Quigley is also in the process of co-editing (with Margaret Cohen) a volume of essays entitled *Senses of the Submarine*. His writings are available in *Eighteenth-Century Life*, on SEI's blog, in the 2017 newsletter of the Australia Coral Reef Society, and in the reviews section of *MAKE* magazine. His work is forthcoming in *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* (Winter 2017), *MAKE's* print issue #17 (Winter 2017), *A Cultural History of the Sea in the Age of Enlightenment* (Bloomsbury Academic), and *Ireland's Imperial Connections, 1775-1947* (Palgrave Macmillan).

**Michelle St Anne** is the Deputy Director at the Sydney Environment Institute, where she oversees programming and operations. In her real life she is Artistic Director of The Living Room Theatre. Since co-founding LRT in 2000, Michelle has produced and performed in 19 original works in various venues and festivals, in Sydney and Melbourne. Her work explores beauty and suffering in experiential landscapes.

-----

## **SYDNEY IDEAS:**

### **'Artists have never been more important'**

Tuesday 27 March 2018 | 6.00 – 7.30PM

New Law School Foyer | Eastern Avenue \_ University of Sydney

MAP: <http://sydney.edu.au/maps/embed/?building=F10A>

William L. Fox, Director of the Centre for Art + Environment at the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, Nevada, whose extensive practice as a curator, writer and commentator crosses the arts and sciences, will address the claim that in this moment of planetary environmental crisis, artists have never been more important. Is it because artists express the inexpressible through story-telling? Leading Australian artist, Janet Laurence, who has long engaged with environment, loss and trauma, and with the meeting of art and science, will respond to Fox's presentation by drawing on her own rich experiences and her many contributions to contemporary art and society.

#### **Respondents:**

Janet Laurence, Artist

Assoc Prof. Ian Maxwell, Department of Performance Studies

#### **Chair:**

Dr Killian Quigley

#### **Biographies:**

**William (Bill) L. Fox** is Director of the Center for Art and Environment at the Nevada of Museum of Art; a writer whose work is a sustained inquiry into how human cognition transforms land into landscape. He has published poems, articles, reviews, and essays in more than seventy magazines, has had fifteen collections of poetry published in three countries, and has written eleven nonfiction books about the relationships among art, cognition, and landscape.

#### **Janet Laurence, Artist**

Janet Laurence is a Sydney-based Australian artist who exhibits nationally and internationally. Her practice examines our physical, cultural and conflicting relationship to the natural world. She creates immersive environments that navigate the interconnections between organic elements and systems of nature. Within the recognised threat to so much of the life world, she explores what it might mean to heal, albeit metaphorically, the natural environment, fusing this with a sense of communal loss and search for connection with powerful life-forces. Her work is included in museum, university, corporate and private collections as well as within architectural and landscaped public places.

Institution/Awards: Laurence has been a recipient of Rockefeller, Churchill and Australia Council fellowships; recipient of the Alumni Award for Arts, UNSW; visiting fellow at the NSW University Art and Design; Australian representative for the COP21/FIAC, Artists 4 Paris Climate 2015 exhibition; visiting fellow of the 2016/2017 Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg (HWK) foundation fellowship; and artist in residence at the Australian Museum.

#### **Assoc. Professor Ian Maxwell, Department of Performance Studies**

Ian is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts School of Drama, where he majored in Directing, Ian is now Chair of the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies. Subsequent to that training, he embarked upon academic work at the University of Sydney, where he completed his PhD, an ethnography of Hip Hop culture in the suburbs of Sydney in the 1990s in 1997.

He has published extensively on a range of topics, including his 2003 book, “Phat Beats, Dope Rhymes”: Hip Hop Down Under Comin' Upper (Wesleyan), chapters in several collections and a number of journals.

In 2008 he was awarded the Marlis Thiersch Prize for research excellence in an English-language article published anywhere in the world in the broad field of theatre and performance studies for his essay on Victor Turner.

In 2017, Ian directed Prince Bettlegend as part of the Out of the Shadows festival, a cabaret/revue devised and first performed by citizens of the ghetto at Terezin, Czechoslovakia.

**Chair:**

**Dr Killian Quigley** is postdoctoral research fellow at the Sydney Environment Institute. His academic inquiries engage, primarily, with poetic and aesthetic histories of the sea. He is co-editing, with Margaret Cohen, a collection of essays called *Senses of the Submarine: A Cultural History of the Undersea*. He is also at work on a monograph entitled *Seascape and the Submarine: Aesthetics and the Eighteenth-Century Ocean*. His writing is available or forthcoming from *Eighteenth-Century Life*, *The Eighteenth Century*, *A Cultural History of the Sea in the Age of Enlightenment*, the SEI blog, and elsewhere. He received his Ph.D. in English from Vanderbilt University, in Nashville, in 2016.

## **SYMPOSIUM:** Environment in Practice: Artmaking through Practice

Wednesday 28 March 2018 | 9.00–5.30PM

Level 6 Seminar Room, Charles Perkins Centre, University of Sydney

Map: <https://sydney.edu.au/charles-perkins-centre/contact-us.html>

---

Wireless Internet Access

Guest Username: EnvPractice

Guest Password: 19580499

Twitter: [#environmentinpractice](#) @SEI\_Sydney

---

9.00 – 9.15                      Welcome Annamarie Jagose, Dean of Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

---

**9.15 – 10.40                      Session 1: ‘How Do Images Act?’**

David Ritter, Marilyn Fairskye and Dean Sewell  
in conversation with Ann Elias

10.40 – 11.00                      Morning tea

---

**11.00 – 12.15                      Session 2: ‘Engaging Extremity’**

David Burrows and Philip Samartzis  
in conversation with Belinda Smaill

**12.30 – 1.45                      Session 3: ‘Surpassing Humans’**

Ceridwen Dovey and Judith Beveridge  
in conversation with Iain McCalman

1.45 – 2.30                      Lunch

---

**2.30 – 3.45                      Session 4: ‘Composing Loss’**

Genevieve Campbell and Michelle St Anne  
in conversation with Danielle Celermajer

3.45 – 4.15                      Afternoon tea

---

**4.15- 5.30                      Discussion with Killian Quigley**

## SESSION ABSTRACTS & SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

(in order of presentation)

### Session 1: 'How Do Images Act'

The session addresses questions relating to the role of images in communicating environmental crisis and in mobilising environmental action. We live in an image-saturated society yet the power of the image to capture attention, to communicate, affect, and move audiences is undeniable. What makes a visual image effective in mobilising environmental action? How do images communicate and what makes some images more successful in making people think about the environment and environmental issues? Speakers in this session will analyse the distinction between artistic images and polemical images.

**David Ritter** is the CEO of Greenpeace Australia Pacific where we are campaigning for a green and peaceful future for all. On this page you can connect with me and find out about what I'm doing in my role as Chief Executive Officer.

In the past, he's worked as a lawyer and an academic, before spending five years with Greenpeace UK. In July 2012 he returned to Australia to head up Greenpeace Australia Pacific, determined to make their campaigns as effective as possible. He often writes and speaks about issues that he cares deeply about. You can also refer to his catalogue at Global Policy, Griffith Review, The Huffington Post and The Drum.

**Merilyn Fairskye** is a visual artist living in Sydney whose recent video and photographic work explores the effects of powerful events of real life on humans and the environment. Current projects that explore the relationships between technology, atomic landscapes and community have taken her on location to the Polygon in Kazakhstan, Sellafield, Chernobyl, and other key nuclear sites. This has resulted in an art film, video installations and photographic series that have been exhibited in Australia and internationally.

Her work has been presented in over 180 exhibitions and festivals. She is Honorary Associate Professor at the Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney.

**Dean Sewell** has made his name as an independent documentary photographer concentrating his gaze on the social implications of the new globalised world economy and the environmental consequences exerted by climate change. Through his acute colour studies Sewell also explores the dichotomy between the urban environment and its human habitation. This sits in stark contrast alongside his more reserved the apocalyptic representations of drought and fire ravaged landscapes.

Sewell was the winner of the 2009 Moran Contemporary Photography Prize for a work borne out of a three year study of the Murray-Darling Basin in Australia. He has been the recipient of the three World Press Photo Awards in 2000, 2002 and 2005 for works covering the transition of East Timor to an independent state, Australian Bushfires and the 2004 Tsunami aftermath in Aceh, respectively. Sewell was awarded Australian Press Photographer of the Year in 1994 and 1998. In 2005 and 2008, Sewell's art practice has seen him awarded artist residencies in the remote gold-mining town of Hill End, NSW which takes its place in Australia's art history as arguably one of the nation's more significant contributions to post-war art.

Sewell is represented by Charles Hewitt Gallery, and has work regularly exhibited in leading Australian International galleries.

He is a founding member of Oculi.

**CHAIR Assoc Prof Ann Elias** completed a PhD in art history at the University of Auckland with a thesis that investigates the history of NZ still life and flower painting. She has published on New Zealand's leading historical and contemporary artists including Rata Lovell-Smith, Michael Parekowhai, Peter Peryer and Paul Hartigan. In 1990 she was appointed to Sydney College of the Arts as head of the study area of art history and theory. Since then her research has focused on Australian subjects and her work published internationally in books and journals.

---

## Session 2: 'Engaging Extremity'

Climate change trains minds on margins: on communities marginalised by politics, economics, and conflict, and on places beyond the pale of human population centres. It is a vexing irony that little-known sites – such as the East Antarctic ice sheet – become more familiar as their vulnerability and degradation become better-known. Bringing margins home involves complex imaginative, narrative, affective, and ethical energies. This session contemplates some of the practices that attempt to render environments like the Antarctic accessible – to senses, minds, emotions, and future ethics.

**David Burrows** is a Melbourne based visual artist who's practice is concentrated on photographic media. Principally concerned with exploring spatial perception, his interest extends to both the physiological means by which we sense volume as well as the psychological ways we read place. His work has involved extensive research into the phenomena of stereoscopic vision and techniques of stereo-photography. In 2010 David was awarded the Australian Antarctic Division's Arts Fellowship which granted him a 2 month residency at Casey Station principally to create a stereoscopic installation *The Mirage Project* [iceberg] for public/outdoor spaces. Originally commissioned by Melbourne's Federation Square in 2012 this work has also been shown on the dusty salt pans around Mildura (2013) as part of the biannual Palimpsest Festival. Various manifestations of *The Mirage Project* series have been commissioned and exhibited in France and Australia beginning with the LUX de Valence commissioning Nullarbor (2006), Linden Gallery in St Kilda commissioning Belleville (2010), L'Ososphere in Strasbourg commissioning Forest (2012).

David is the recipient of numerous grants and residencies including the Cité International Paris through the French Ministry of Culture (2007-09), Bundanon Trust (2010) Nillumbik Shires' Laughing Waters (2010) La Trobe University VAC Bendigo (2010) and Bogong Center for Sound Culture (2014). David was trained at the Le Fresnoy National Studio for Contemporary Arts in the North of France where he was mentored by both Ryoji Ikeda and Chantal Akerman.

**Assoc Prof Philip Samartzis** is a sound artist, scholar and curator with a specific interest in the social and environmental conditions informing remote wilderness regions and their communities. His art practice is based on deep fieldwork where he deploys complex sound recording technology to capture natural, anthropogenic and geophysical forces. The recordings are used within various exhibition, performance and publication outcomes to demonstrate the transformative effects of sound within a fine art context. He is particularly interested in concepts of perception, immersion and embodiment in order to provide audiences with sophisticated encounters of space and place. Philip is an Associate Professor within RMIT School of Art, and the co-founder of the Bogong Centre for Sound Culture.

Philip has exhibited and performed widely including presentations at The Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art, Paris (2001); The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh

(2002); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2002); The Mori Arts Centre, Tokyo (2003); The Sydney Opera House (2004); The National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung (2007); The National Center for Contemporary Art, Moscow (2009); The Art Gallery of South Australia (2012); The National Gallery of Victoria (2013); and The Merz Foundation, Turin (2016). Philip has received two Asialink Scholarships - Performing Arts (1999) and Arts Management (2006), which he used to research contemporary Japanese sound culture, leading to numerous transnational collaborative projects. Between 2010 and 2012 he undertook a survey of three indigenous settlements in The Kimberley region of Western Australia through TURA's regional residency program in order to document the social and environmental conditions of remote communities. Philip is also the recipient of two Australian Antarctic Division Arts Fellowships (2009 and 2015), which he used to document the effects of extreme climate and weather events in Eastern Antarctica, Macquarie Island, and on the research vessel Aurora Australis.

**CHAIR Belinda Smail** is an Associate Professor in Film and Screen Studies at Monash University. She is the author of *The Documentary: Politics, Emotion, Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and co-author of *Transnational Australian Cinema: Ethics in the Asian Diasporas* (Lexington Books, 2013). Her new book, *Regarding Life: Animals and the Documentary Moving Image* was published in 2016 with SUNY Press.

---

### Session 3: 'Surpassing Humans'

Language has been invoked – frequently, if not uncontroversially – as an emblem of human exceptionalism. But language has always been haunted by extra-human worlds. Literature contemplates, represents, addresses, and even gives voices to plants and animals, not to mention viruses, rivers, celestial bodies, and countless entities and energies besides. In so doing, writers can seem to commit the kind of solipsism that John Ruskin termed the “pathetic fallacy.” On the other hand, by striving to transcend “natural” limits of human thought and experience, writers might enact and enable acts of empathy. This session meditates on literary practices of thinking and speaking beyond the bounds of human cognition and subjectivity.

**Ceridwen Dovey** was born in South Africa and grew up between South Africa and Australia. She studied social anthropology at Harvard and New York University before returning to Sydney, where she lives with her husband and two young sons.

Her debut novel, *Blood Kin*, was published in 15 countries, shortlisted for the Dylan Thomas Award, and selected for the US National Book Foundation's prestigious '5 Under 35' honours list. The Wall Street Journal named her as one of their 'artists to watch.' Her second book, *Only the Animals*, won the inaugural 2014 Readings New Australian Writing Award.

Her new novel, *In the Garden of the Fugitives*, will be published in 2018.

**Judith Beveridge** has been writing poetry since 1974 and has published six books of poetry. *The Domesticity of Giraffes*, published by Black Lightning Press in 1987, received the Dame Mary Gilmore Award, the NSW Premier's Poetry prize and the Victorian Premier's Poetry prize. Poems from that volume were subsequently put on the HSC curriculum. In 1995 she edited with Jill Jones and Louise Wakeling, *A Parachute of Blue*, an anthology of Australian poetry. She has also worked on the literary magazines *Hobo* and *Kalimat* and is the current poetry editor of *Meanjin*. She published her second volume, *Accidental Grace*, with UQP in 1996, and it won the Wesley Michel Wright Award and was short-listed for other awards. In 1999 she attended the International Poetry Festival in Medellin in Colombia, and in 2003 was one of ten poets invited to Berlin to participate in the poetry translation project. In



2003 she published her third volume of poetry, *Wolf Notes*, with Giramondo Publishing. In 2004 it won the Judith Wright Calanthe Award for Poetry and the Victorian Premier's Poetry Prize. In 2005 she was awarded the Philip Hodgins Memorial Medal for excellence in literature. In 2009 she published *Storm and Honey* with Giramondo publishing. It was awarded the Grace Levin Prize. Her most recent volumes are *Devadatta's Poems, 2014*, (Giramondo) and *Hook and Eye: a selection of poems* published by George Braziller for the US market. In 2013 she was awarded the Christopher Brennan for outstanding contribution to Australian Poetry.

**CHAIR Professor Iain Duncan McCalman AO, FRHistS, FASSA, FAHA, FRNSW**, was born in Nyasaland (Malawi), Africa, was schooled in Zimbabwe, and earned his BA, MA and PhD in Canberra and Melbourne, Australia. He was awarded the Inaugural Vice Chancellor's Prize for Teaching Excellence at the Australian National University in 1994, and was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2007 for services to history and the humanities. He is a Fellow of four Learned Academies and is a former President of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. He was Director of the Humanities Research Centre, ANU, from 1995-2002.

Iain has written numerous books, including *The Last Alchemist: Count Cagliostro, Master of Magic in the Age of Reason* (Harper Collins, New York, 2003), which was translated into twelve languages and *Darwin's Armada: how four voyagers to Australasia won the battle for evolution and changed the world*, which was published in separate editions in the USA, UK and Australia, won three book prizes, and was the basis of a TV Series (ABC, Canada, Germany, NZ ) and an exhibition at the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Iain, a former Federation Fellow, is currently a Research Professor in history at the University of Sydney and co-Director of the Sydney Environment Institute. His award-winning book, *The Reef – A Passionate History, from Captain Cook to Climate Change* (2014, 2016), was published by Penguin in Australia and by Farrar, Strauss and Giroux/Scientific American in the USA.

---

#### Session 4: 'Composing Loss'

Although in the field of translation studies, theorists have long rejected the idea that a constant message simply moves through the media of different languages, the idea of artists' 'translating' of research to 'improve its impact' remains prevalent in the academy. In this panel, two artists, Genevieve Campbell and Michelle St Anne, will speak about the distinctive ways in which their chosen medium allows them to convey experiences, emotions, connections and ideas in ways that may be unavailable to more traditional academic modes of transmission. In particular, they will consider questions of loss and our relationships with loss, and how they work to compose theatrical and sound pieces that evoke and make loss present in ways that may move audiences to deeper understandings. Loss, by its nature, can be resistant to representation, and attempts to represent it may end up sealing over the very experience of irredeemability that needs to be held open. Through its suggestive, ambiguous and embodied nature, sound art and performance can perhaps make loss present without providing the resolution so often required for academic analysis. Taking the representation of loss as a starting point, the panel will consider how different artistic media may offer universities ways past some of the impasses they face in conveying the issues of our times. .

**Genevieve Campbell** has been a professional orchestral Horn player for 30 years, working in a variety of ensembles across a broad spectrum. She has played in most of

the major Music Theatre shows including *Les Misérables*, *Phantom*, and *West Side Story* as well as everything from *Musica Viva* to *Australian Idol*, *Opera Australia* to the *Wangarratta Jazz Festival*, and Australasian tours for *Anthony Warlow*, *Barbra Streisand*, *Michael Crawford* and (her favourite) *Shirley Bassey*.

In 2007, Campbell instigated *Ngarukuruwala – We Sing Songs*, a collaborative music project between a group of Tiwi strong women and jazz/classical musicians from Sydney. Working with Tiwi elders, Campbell has been involved with a number of song-based projects aimed at re-engaging Tiwi children with their language and culture and - importantly with their grandmothers – by learning traditional Tiwi song. Central to their work together is acknowledging the impact of the loss of song culture on social, mental and physical health. Her professional interest in Tiwi music in the context of contemporary performance and the desire to be part of the preservation of old Tiwi songs led her to facilitate the repatriation to the Tiwi community of previously unheard ethnographic recordings of song and ceremony dating back to 1912. Her most recent work brings these archival recordings into recorded new work and live performance in which Tiwi singers and non-Tiwi instrumentalists create a series of 'duets' with deceased Tiwi ancestors.

**Michelle St Anne** is a theatrical artist and founding member of *The Living Room Theatre*. Since 2000 she has created and performed in 19 original works. These works sits in the framework of 'Composed Theatre' – a philosophical lens used to view the fragments of images, sounds, text that organises and reorganises, to evoke a circuitous environment where the viewer enters a constructed reality.

Obsessed with the state of suffering, her recent body of work has led her to examine the degradation of the environment and society's responses to it.

In her spare time she is the Deputy Director of the *Sydney Environment Institute*, which feeds her fascination with the Public lecture.

**CHAIR Danielle Celermajer** is a Professor of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Sydney. Her research stands at the interface of theories exploring the multi-dimensional nature of injustice and the practice of human rights. She recently completed a European Union funded multi-country project on the prevention of torture, focusing on everyday violence in the security sector. Her publications include *Sins of the Nation and the Ritual of Apology* (Cambridge, 2009), *Power, Judgment and Political Evil: Hannah Arendt's Promise* (Routledge, 2010) *A Cultural History of Law in the Modern Age* (Bloomsbury, 2016) and *Preventing Torture* (Cambridge, 2018). She is now moving in to work on the relational intra-space between human and non-human animals.

-----