



CAITLIN FRANZMANN, WARD, 2022 (STILL), THREE CHANNEL VIDEO AND SOUND INSTALLATION, CREATED IN COLLABORATION WITH JEREMY VIRAG, CAMERA OPERATION AND NICK HUGGINS, SOUND DESIGN, 8:34MIN.

NATURAL STATE

LISTENING, WALKING, UNEARTHING, TALKING AND RESPONDING; TO PLACE, IS INEVITABLY A MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONVERSATION, BOTH PERSONAL AND SHARED. A COLLABORATION WITH MATERIAL, TIME, SOCIETY, CULTURE, AND THE MORE-THAN-HUMAN, THAT CONTINUES TO HOLD AND WITNESS STORIES— MUTABLE AND EMBEDDED, LIKE ROCK. LIKE MICROBE. RE-FORMED STORIES IN PLACE/TIME MOMENTS, REVEALING AND CONCEALING PERSPECTIVE AND CERTAINTY, OF TRANSIENCE AND BELONGING. OF BEING IN 'PLACE', AND 'OUT OF PLACE'. AND OF THE REAL AND IMAGINED BOUNDARIES THAT GIVE THEM FORM.

CAITLIN FRANZMANN

26 Nov 2022 – 12 Feb 2023

Nja gan. Nja gan budirgu. Nja gan ninyangurra. Njine, ya, wandji ga:wa Yinibara Djawun. Ngali ninayinyili ngam. Ngali djagunan ninayinyili. Ngali djagunan ninayinyili ninayin gubagulabu. Ngali Yinibara, Ngugi, Gamilaraay, djagunan Yinibaran, gabiylili, yagabiliny. Niyani nuwa. Niyani ganu nuwa. Niyani yaliwunga nuwa. Ngarr-y, marama-li, guwaal-ay, dhawun Yinibara-gu. Here we are. Here we are together. Here we have always been. Sitting, making, and talking on Yinibara Country.

The words *natural* and *state* are in and of themselves, containers for ideas and constructs that perhaps sit as awkwardly together as the materials of the sculptural works themselves *brick, bacteria, glass, water, fungi, root and rust*. 'State', conjuring ideas of nationhood, hardened geo-political boundaries, fixity or stasis – a static or passive moment in place and time, now coerced into some new, augmented meaning, in **proximity** to ideas of the fluid, interdependent, and perceptibly 'without-human' spaces **conjured** by the 'natural'... as if such places ever really existed.

Outside of the gallery, is a small country town, outskirts of farmland, waterways impacted by upstream damming, agriculture and industry, and creek banks with new plantings carefully tended to by community. To the south – rolling hills punctuated by volcanic extrusions and dry bush land. To the east, west and north – ranges marking out the distinct edges of the valley, feeding water into storage dams for distant towns and cities. North of the dams, two rivers (now called the Brisbane and Stanley), flow more freely and effortlessly from their headwaters. The cooler, darker, and more damp and refreshing 'Greenhide' forest, now a small and awkward pocket, concealing a different kind of space; crisp and bright and cared for, and **coherent** with eons past.

Understandings of one's individual or collective 'natural state' may seem stable and grounded a reset to an idealised 'ground zero' from which one can effortlessly return, and be safe and assured and fortified by millennia of

evolutionary processes above and beyond what recently-arrived society could possibly design.

But where and how are we, *really*? Where have we ever been? Where to from *here*? Like the works *song fountain*, and *back into*, perhaps delicately and precariously poised and placed ... **hovering**, over some kind of absence/absenting, an abyss of blackened reflectivity. Of liminal possibility. Ready to be disturbed and unsettled? Bravely explored or further concealed? No turning back, as we continue to navigate dubious and foundational connections to the earth – to the ground upon which we walk and **touch** and connect and tell our stories. And are ultimately sustained.

Also here, the river mud of (*untitled*), full of microbial life and thresholds of **form/state**, provides a counterpoint to precariousness, and an embodied and immovable reminder of continuous, cultural connection, firmly present in both place and time. As grounded as the ground itself.

Still, **grappling** and evolving, *Natural State*'s sculptural forms are a gentle and honest, living 'monument' to place, and the people and stories that make it so. Despite their tenuous connections to the ground, they are solid and generous in honouring and holding space for the intertwining of seemingly incompatible ideas, actions, moments – of individual and collective **being** and **belonging**, both human and more-than-human. Intimate stories of **becoming**. Musings of potential, they are an active homage to the relationships between and within those stories and moments, and the *in-process* consequence of their interaction and confluence over time. Examining the subtle, or even unseen threads of connection and meaning ... *somehow*, they are held together.

Boundaries – both real and imagined, are explored and tested here. Even the 'work' itself, moving consciously and freely, 'inside' and 'outside' of the gallery walls. Everywhere, edges and **surfaces** and sites and thresholds; of connection, disconnection, tension, acceptance, possibility and limitation. In some

moments, they are **life-exhausting**, nutrient depleting. Some already depleted. In others, energy exchanging. Energy **given** freely. Some never to be fertile ground. Some, unexpectedly, like the petrified wood of *rust (a way)*, always alive and open to collaboration in deep-time shape-shifting – from tree to stone and then back again, in some distant future. Porous perimeters, like a ferment, cohesive, coherent and transformative.

Bleeding into and through the individual works of *Natural State*, is the unrestricted sound of birds and water, emanating from *ward* – a work that in and of itself brings a subtle yet heightened awareness to the various cultural, ideological, historical and ecological conditions relative to the boundaries and thresholds of place. In the work, is a quiet questioning of their presence and influence on either reinforcing **and/or** traversing. Integrating or disassociating, protecting or trusting, occupying or collaborating. And of the movements and trajectories now enmeshed in degrees of both evolved and **imposed** belonging. Spatial possibilities in all directions. The multiple channels of looping video disrupting a sense of linear time. The ubiquitous sounds disrupting the possibility that in the spaces in between each work – between each person or moment, there could ever truly be nothing. Sound waves navigate and traverse borders, walls, bodies, containers. In (*untitled*) the sounds of the Yinibara, Quandamooka and Gamilaraay, walking Country, practicing culture – growing and living culture, are present, within and without. The sound here, an invitation for quiet listening, and to be proximate, with what is seemingly absent.

In, amongst and alongside the sculptural works of *Natural State* is the activation of relationships, of the inter-relationship between materials, stories and people – in place. The maker, the artist, the participant, the object, the Country – both seen and unseen, as co-collaborator. Just like the membranous edges of air and water and mud, we too have our **relational edges**, frontiers or limits, opening and closing, holding or collapsing. Networking or dissolving.

Natural State, in its alive activation, and engaged public programming, is generative. Holding space, for place. For connection and continuance. Searching for the suitable systems, conditions and containers and forms, where life can happen.

Natural State questions and explores the **forward** and **backward**, onwards and upwards, and plays with the uncertainty and hopefulness of losing and finding again one's point of reference. A reference that begs for consistency and meaning in a vastly changing and transient place/time. A deviation, winding its way to continuity and **connection**. And in the process, discovering and questioning what is made, and what is lost. What is restricted, and what is permitted to flourish. What is consumed or displaced in the visceral acts of creation, realignment and reconnection. What has been, and what is to become. And what of this 'human' intervention ... here on Yinibara and Dungibara Country, and of the hands and breath and skin and words of the makers that blindly or knowingly shapes and moulds and **influences** and enlivens, curates and makes or takes space?

Uncertain **and** unresolved, these are perhaps the truer stories of place, in all of their beauty and their awkwardness. As sure and unsure as ever. Never overshadowing or absenting, but melding and opening ... growing new and unimagined narratives ... all the while predetermined, by the patterns and processes of Country, as it was, is, and always will be.

Generous and forgiving to **a point**, yet to be determined.

DOMINIQUE CHEN