

# Feminist Responses to Climate Change|2021

Lyndall **ADAMS** | Lilly **BLUE** | Yabini **KICKETT** (Esther **MCDOWELL**) |  
Cissi **TSANG** | Sebastian **CRITTI-SCHNAARS** + Gabriel **CRITTI-SCHNAARS** |  
Sam **FOX** + Children of Perth Montessori College |  
Maitland **SCHNAARS** + Jo **POLLITT**

***Feminist Responses to Climate Change: Unruly experimentations for unstable times*** is a suite of newly commissioned work by emerging and established artists responding to anthropogenic crisis in unruly ways. Forging new research practices to extend reparative possibilities for alternative climate futures via multispecies worldings, what has emerged are a set of ethical propositions for living well together in these uncertain times.

A project of **The EDITHS**, the exhibition shares work developed across three Western Australian research collaboratories: Water, Weather, and Waste. The Ediths are a feminist interdisciplinary research collective based at ECU's School of Education, and co-founded in 2019 by Professor Mindy Blaise, Dr Jane Merewether, Dr Jo Pollitt, and Vanessa Wintoneak. As a research collective, The Ediths attend to feminist criticality through creative projects, activities, and events that respond ethically to the worlds we are all a part of.

*This exhibition is made possible by the Vice Chancellor's Professorial Research Fellow appointment of Mindy Blaise*

Curated by Dr Jo **POLLITT**

## Gallery25

To be opened by **Bobbi-Jean HENRY**  
Thursday 23 Sept 2021 5pm–7pm including a performance at 6.15pm  
Exhibition open: 24 Sept - 14 Oct 2021  
Gallery opening hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am - 4pm  
Building 10, 2 Bradford St, Mount Lawley

ECU Galleries



## Curatorial Statement

Welcome to *Feminist Responses to Climate Change: Unruly Experimentations for Unstable Times*. An exhibition in two overlapping parts, the first features a suite of five new works from emerging and established artists commissioned by Professor Mindy Blaise, responding to anthropogenic crisis in unruly ways. Inspired by an edited collection in the *Australian Humanities Review* by Deborah Bird Rose and Thom van Dooren (2011) entitled “Unloved Others: Death of the Disregarded in the Time of Extinctions” the five artists were invited to respond to the provocation of ‘the unloved and disregarded’. Each of the artist’s works are a response to creatures (blowfish, mud snail, djenark, and moonjelly) that children encountered while taking part in a research project that involved walking-with Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River). The second part of the exhibition features two video works developed across two Western Australian research laboratories: Weather and Waste, undertaken as projects of The Ediths.

The movement running through each of the artworks speaks to the increasing instability of the world we are living with. Forging new research practices to extend reparative possibilities for alternative climate futures via multispecies worldings, what has emerged is a set of ethical propositions for living well together in these uncertain times. Whether in Lilly Blue’s unpredictable pouring of ink jellies to the page, the personalities of Lyndall Adams’ lively blowfish, Maitland Schnaars’ inhabiting of child-made rain, a class of children embodying building demolition with Sam Fox’s animations, stories of djenark sounding with Cissi Tsang and yarning with Gabriel & Sebastian Critti-Schnaars, or the eerie resting of Yorga bones by Yabini Kickett (Esther McDowell), human and nonhuman bodies connect through this work in relational (e)motion.

The intersections of feminist grappling in our times situates these works as unfixed and imperfect responses to a world in unjust crisis. In attending to climate crisis through an intersectional lens, care is taken to open conversations and provoke creative ways for acknowledging and living with where we are.

This collected body of work asks how prioritising intersections and movement might make room for thinking otherwise about the worlds we are a part of and how investing in connections might allow for change. We invite you to take the time to interact with the artworks...to make connections ...to feel...to ask questions ...and to think with your own responses and experimentations.

Dr Jo **POLLITT**

A project of The Ediths - [theediths.com.au](http://theediths.com.au)

Initiatives of The Ediths include an ongoing Roundtable series // The Ediths Press // Postgraduate research forums // Reading with Reciprocity // and multiple projects including Conversations with Rain // Children and Soil // Walking-with Derbarl Yerrigan //

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Acknowledgements: Thank you to Danielle Fusco, Roxanne Fozard, Lyndall Adams, Lilly Blue, Bobbi-Jean Henry, Gemma Smith, Ellen Hope-Thompson and Mahala Parkins.

## Artist Biography, Statement and List of Works

### Cissi **TSANG**

#### Biography:

Born in 1982 in Hong Kong, Cissi Tsang is a nonbinary audio-visual artist living in Perth, Australia. Their work explores the emotional nature of landscape, and the main focus of their practice has been on their response to the natural landscape as a composer and performer. Part of their practice involves incorporating audio and visual elements of place into compositions, and using the landscape as a narrative device. Cissi has performed and exhibited works in Australia, Asia, UK, Ireland and the USA as samarobryn, and has been nominated multiple times in the WAM Song Of The Year Awards in the experimental category. Cissi has also been nominated in the 2019 WAM Awards for Best Experimental Artist. Cissi is currently a PhD candidate at the Western Australian Academy Of Performing Arts (Edith Cowan University).

#### Artist Statement:

Djenark (The Silver Gull) is an audiovisual series of four pieces, based on the bird and one of its habitats - Pelican Point / Booriarup. As a scavenger, the silver gull has made a remarkable adaptation to urban environments, to the point of being seen as a pest and derided as an unwanted annoyance. However, it is also highly important in Noongar spirituality as the bringer of spirits trapped on Rottnest Island (and other islands), allowing these spirits to rejoin with other spirits in the land.

This series explores the spiritual dimensions of Djenark, as well as concepts of change, longing and loss. Booriarup explores the area around modern-day Pelican Point / Booriarup, using an automated musical instrument drawn from a current map of the area and field recordings. Djenark and Gathering Of Souls uses a recording of the silver gull (slowed 32x) to explore the hidden depths and harmonies behind the calls, and how a spirit might feel as they are transported back to the mainland. The Call reflects on the feeling of spirits left behind as they await reunification. The piece also reflects the artist's own experience with being separated from their homeland (Hong Kong) and the uncertainty of return, with the characters 海鷗 translating to "seagull".

Digital Audiovisual series: Field recordings, music visualisation, audio processing, sonification, vocals.

- 1 Booriarup [05:16]
- 2 Djenark [07:48]
- 3 Gathering Of Souls [05:22]
- 4 The Call [10:02]

### Biography:

Lilly Blue is an interdisciplinary artist with a background in pedagogical practice, studio research and social justice. Currently Head of Learning and Creativity Research at the Art Gallery of Western Australia she collaborates on projects that amplify the experience of children as critical and valuable in developing culture with multigenerational public audiences. Lilly was instrumental in the development of the Creative Leadership in Learning Program and The Creativity Framework for Sydney Opera House. She is co-director of contemporary arts publication BIG Kids Magazine, and has worked internationally delivering arts residencies, professional learning, creative commissions and exhibitions as well as co-creating bespoke projects with young audiences drawn from a rigorous personal practice. Lilly exhibits her work regularly and has been commissioned by Sydney Opera House, Belvoir Theatre Company, Manly Art Gallery, SCAF, co-works and myriad private investors.

### Artist Statement:

“I believe that the current extinction crisis is an Earth-shattering disaster, one that cannot be unmade, and in that sense cannot be mended, but yet one toward which we owe an ethical response that includes turning toward others in the hopes of mending at least some of the damage. “Turning toward”(Tikkun)\* [...], is an ethics of motion toward encounter, a willingness to situate one’s self so as to be available to the call of others.

It is a willingness toward dialogue, a willingness toward responsibility, a choice for encounter and response, a turning toward rather than a turning away.”

- Deborah Bird Rose, *Wild Dog Dreaming*

\*Turning toward is a philosophy developed by Emil Fackenheim. Tikkun Olam is a Jewish concept defined by acts of kindness and social justice towards repairing the world.

In thinking about how to live with the unloved and disregarded, and in response to the increase in jellyfish blooms, this work experiments with speculative reproductive techniques of generative doubling. Working in collaboration with the unpredictable movements of indigo ink and water, the work arrived through a nexus of painting/drawing and print techniques honed through repetition, experimentation and trust. As miniature seascapes emerged the initial ink bodies were pressed against an open page to create a not-quite-identical double in a deliberate action of turning toward. This investigation of watery inked repetitions led to a growing body of forms that are at once lungs, forests, reflections, organs, x-rays into future waters and imagined ocean-scapes.

*pouring pressing attending printing drying pouring layering printing pouring pressing*

5

*ink bloom rising*, 2020, giclée print on rag paper, 2 x 1.3m x 1m

6

*ink bloom rising*, 2020, indigo and white ink/water on paper, 85 of 100 10x6cm

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*ink bloom rising: a not-quite-identical card matching game*

## Lyndall ADAMS

### Biography:

Associate Professor Lyndall Adams is a contemporary visual artist and Senior Research Fellow in the School of Arts & Humanities at Edith Cowan University. She is Director of the Centre for Research in Entertainment, Arts, Technology, Education & Communications (CREAtec) which provides a nexus for interdisciplinary research excellence and includes ECU Galleries. Lyndall also supervises Higher Degree by Research students across the material and performing arts.

Lyndall's arts-practice articulates the feminist body; the lived body that is determined and specific though paradoxically in a state of flux, constantly defined and redefined by changing practices and discourses. She draws influence from corporeal and new materialist feminist thinking. Lyndall has participated in solo, collaborative and group exhibitions in Australia and internationally. She has published scholarly work on: the role of ethical arts practice, public art, collaboration and interdisciplinarity.

Lyndall is the Treasurer of the Australian Council of University Art & Design Schools (ACUADS), the peak body representing Australian universities in the visual arts, craft and design sector. ACUADS is committed to leadership, advocacy, policy development, research and community service for the sector.

### Artist Statement:

The beach was a constant as I grew up. I wandered for hours, alone. Driven home only by failing light or hunger. Looking, touching, making, dreaming. I knew the tides, seasons, eddies, flows, rhythms. I loved the storms. They washed up all sorts of treasure. Sea foam, shells, seaweed, driftwood, entire trees, and dead fish—Tetraodontidae amongst them. I loved these little puffed up corpses. Dad spent many hours teaching me about fish. How to bait a fishhook. How to cast from rocks and beach. With the provocation for this series of drawings: *unloved and disregarded* memories flooded back.

The common blowfish (*Torquigener pleurogramma*)—also called the banded toadfish, the weeping toado or simply, blowie—belong to the family Tetraodontidae, which includes over 100 species of toadfish and pufferfish, of which more than 25 are to be found in Western Australia. Members of the Tetraodontidae family typically have torpedo-shaped bodies, soft skin instead of scales (sometimes imbedded with small spines) and fused teeth that form a beak. Another characteristic of this family is a highly lethal toxin, called tetrodotoxin, present in the fishes' skin, flesh and internal organs. In Japan, fish from this family are known as 'fugu' and are considered a delicacy [1]. Here the weeping toado are mostly unloved. Disregarded as puffed-up carcasses on the beach or foreshore. An annoyance to anglers. A concern for anxious dog owners and parents. In reality blowies contribute much to marine ecosystems, keeping waterways clean by eating up waste, bait and berley.

There are few references to blowies in literature; unless to compare human appearance or personality negatively: "...eschewed his presence as an extended toad-fish would the broadside of a voracious shark"[2]. I on the other hand imagined many possibilities in the weeping toado's dark vertical 'tear' lined cheeks. Imagined lives underwater. The work of artists is to rouse inattention, to reveal what is concealed, to love the unloved. This set of drawings is my response. Rendering the living, swimming bodies of these

small, vital but underappreciated creatures was the everyday focus through many days. Drawing is the most direct, unmediated of art forms, simultaneously a “material and gestural act” [3]. Each mark intimately tracing our bodies into the drawing with regard, with love, with the simple tools of pencil on paper—embodying Beatrix, Frankie, Trixie and Winonah [4].

Sight not only preserves the object from a tactile encounter that might change it but also reifies it as a singular physical entity, preserved ...in a frozen time capsule. By contrast, touch...implies a more direct interaction with an object, one that makes the object inescapably plural [5].

The coloured pencil and graphite surface of the drawings are not fixed—if not handled with care, over time the graphite will smudge, erasing them in the process.

[1] *Common Blowfish*. (2011). Government of Western Australia, Department of Fisheries. [http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/documents/recreational\\_fishing/fact\\_sheets/fact\\_sheet\\_blowfish.pdf](http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/documents/recreational_fishing/fact_sheets/fact_sheet_blowfish.pdf)

[2] R. Jacobus as cited in Forrest, M. (1861). *Women of the South: Distinguished in Literature*. Derby & Jackson, p. 503

[3] Meskimmon, M., & Sawdon, P. (2016). *Drawing Difference: Connections Between Gender and Drawing*. I.B. Tauris, p. 18.

[4] The names given to each Torquigener pleurogramma drawn. Alliteration also holds some meaning; for example, Beatrix comes from Viatrix, a feminine form of the Late Latin name, Viator meaning “voyager, traveller”.

[5] Harris, J. G. (2010). *Untimely matter in the time of Shakespeare*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 150.

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*Torquigener pleurogramma: School*, 2020, graphite and coloured pencil on paper (300gsm arches aquarelle), 76 x 57cm

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*Torquigener pleurogramma: Beatrix Blowie*, 2020, graphite and coloured pencil on paper (300gsm arches aquarelle), 76 x 57cm

10

*Torquigener pleurogramma: Frankie Fugu*, 2020, graphite and coloured pencil on paper (300gsm arches aquarelle), 76 x 57cm

11

*Torquigener pleurogramma: Trixie Toadfish*, 2020, graphite and coloured pencil on paper (300gsm arches aquarelle), 76 x 57cm

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*Torquigener pleurogramma: Winonah Weeping Toado*, 2020, graphite and coloured pencil on paper (300gsm arches aquarelle), 76 x 57cm

## Yabini **KICKETT** (Esther **MCDOWELL**)

### Biography:

Yabini Kickett (Esther McDowell) is a descendant of the Kickett and Hayden families of the Bibulmun Nation. Having grown up with an artist and poet mother, as well as a photographer and land conservationist father, her practice as a multimedia artist is heavily influenced by language, endemic plant species to Bibulmun Boodja, family and found objects. In recent years Yabini has begun to explore textiles in homage to her maternal Kabarli (Grandmother) and the use of bush medicines as well as animal remains in recognition of her maternal Dembart (Grandfather) Clarence. These textile works are heavily rooted in place and solastalgia, being homesick in her own country and vocalising hidden narratives within Bibulmun land due to continual land degradation, improper farming practices and colonisation.

**Artist Statement:**

This work is in response to Mud Snails (*Batillaria australis*) and a specific area where I've encountered them before - Bells Rapids. I haven't visited the area in some time as the last visit left me upset and shocked at the state of the water and local environment - For such a sacred and important space to be so degraded and disrespected I couldn't face it. I did however return to make this work.

It incorporates organic material (Yorga bones, Eucalyptus rudis for dyeing, among other things) from around the water as well as smashed glass from a bottle I found discarded on the ground. The photograph shows how poisoned the rapids are as a result of farming pollution and re-routing of water - The caption below reads "They killed your water home. They killed my home country." - The Mud Snails and I have felt similar pain, our homes don't look or feel like they should.

I often focus on smaller things in my work - parts of the environment that are ignored or taken for granted. I firmly believe that everything has a place and a role, so when this opportunity came up I was interested to see what I could make. I started thinking back about encounters I'd had with these snails and immediately remembered the last visit I made to Bells Rapids in 2016/17, it prompted me to go back and revisit the area, something I didn't think I could do.

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*Noitjed Kep*, 2020, Mixed media, dimensions variable

**Gabriel CRITTI-SCHNAARS + Sebastian CRITTI-SCHNAARS****Biography:**

Gabriel and Sebastian Critti-Schnaars are Greek Noongar men. They first started learning dance with Jodie Marshall Dance Company at the age of 8 years. They learnt Contemporary, Jazz and Ballet. They both are graduates of the Gifted and Talented Dance Programme at Hampton Senior High School. They were both an integral part of WAYTCO's award winning production "Rest" in 2019. In 2021 they were part of the development and performance of WAYTCO's production for the 2021 Perth International Arts Festival "Beside". Gabriel is also a graduate of the Aboriginal Theatre Course at WAAPA and is currently studying the Diploma in Acting at WAAPA. Sebastian is currently studying the Aboriginal Theatre Course at WAAPA.

**Artist Statement:**

Djenark. Silver Gull. *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*. All names for an animal which most people in Australia consider unworthy of respect. They're seen as gross sky rodents, creatures of unbridled thievery that consistently pester and harass the human population. Loud, obnoxious, and aggressive, they make beaches unpleasant and annoying.

We look down on them because they aren't as pretty or as cuddly as the normal choices for activist movements, such as koalas and pandas, but they are just as valuable to the ecosystem as any other animal. Take them out, and the whole ecosystem tower of Jenga comes chaotically crashing down.

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*Djenark*, 2020, choreography spoken word video, [05:34]

## **Sam FOX with Children of Perth Montessori School:**

Alice Lowth, Alison Sui, Amelie Zimmermann, Arlo Mattaboni, Beck Thompson, Evie Stojanovski, Inari Patselis-Lyon, John Raines-Marsh, Kaedin Local, Lachlan Williams-Stephens, Lorelei Barnes-Smith, Mia Kuhar, Nikolas Mikhail, Phyrne Barnes-Smith, Poppy Zimmermann, 'Stella Luna', Thinley Pem, Valentina Serra, 'ZAC'

### **Biography:**

Sam Fox is a director, writer and choreographer who lives and works in Boorloo, upon the lands of the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation—sovereignty never surrendered. Sam works across contemporary performance, prose fiction and community based collaborations. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Western Australia where he is writing a novel exploring collectivity and radical cultures of resistance.

As director of interdisciplinary company Hydra Poesis, his performance and media works have been presented in a wide range of national and international contexts. Highlight works/projects include: Didactic Tools—co-facilitated with Kynan Tan (Fremantle Arts Centre 2015); PROMPTER—co-written with Patrick Pittman (Artshouse, Melbourne 2013); and Personal Political Physical Challenge (Malthouse Theatre 2012, PICA 2010). Sam is a regular facilitator and collaborator with artist Patrick Carter and members of the Seven Collective. In 2021, Sam worked with Carter as a mentor and collaborator on his Perth Festival/ PICA exhibition YEDI / SONGS. He also works as an independent producer with choreographer Rachel Arianne Ogle, and robotic sculpture/new media artists ololo. He is currently co-producing Ogle's and the earth will swallow them whole.

In 2019, Sam was the artistic director of DADAA and Circus WA's Experience Collider—a project exploring exchanges across language, movement and expression with a group of 30 young people, many of whom live with high support needs. Experience Collider premiered at the State Theatre Centre as part of the Awesome Festival. As an educator, Sam has taught in a wide range of settings including: dance technique in myriad studios; movement for screen acting at the Film and Television Institute; and high-school English at Ellenbrook Secondary College. He currently teaches creative writing at UWA. Sam was an inaugural recipient of the Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship. He is an alumnus of the WAAPA contemporary dance program, English and Cultural Studies at UWA, and has a Masters of Education from Deakin University. He is a former artistic director of STEPS Youth Dance Company, a former festival associate producer of ARTRAGE, and has served as a panellist with the Australia Council for the Arts, the Department of Culture and the Arts, and as a board member of Contact Inc (Qld) and Hold Your Horses (WA).

### **Artist Statement:**

This work emerged from research initiated by children in response to the demolition of a building across the road from their school: Building 153. Filming took place on Whadjuk Noongar Country (Perth, Western Australia) in October 2020

Teacher: Jayne Kaiko

Death of a Building Story: Children from Cycle 2 as told to Jane Merewether

Video creation and design: Sam Fox Direction: Jo Pollitt

Researchers: Dr Jane Merewether (Edith Cowan University), Professor Mindy Blaise (Edith Cowan University), Dr Jo Pollitt (Edith Cowan University)

A building across the road from a suburban school in Perth, Western Australia, goes unnoticed until it is scheduled for demolition. Children are dismayed at what they perceive as the waste of the building which is used by homeless people, rats, birds, bacteria and countless others. The insatiable capitalist quest for the new renders even buildings as disposable. Vibrations from the demolition are felt in the classroom. Children move with the building. Dust billows into the air and enters the classroom where they breathe it in. Land, building and children become protagonists



in a collaborative activist dance. The question we ask is not, “how can children be activists?” but instead, “what happens when dance becomes a space for expanded relations?” The impact of affective engagement experienced by children during the demolition was revealed through dance. We argue dance offers a site of expanded relations and collective activism.

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*Death of a Building*, 2020, video, [05:18]

## Maitland SCHNAARS + Jo POLLITT

Maitland Schnaars is one of Western Australia’s premier Indigenous contemporary theatre artists. He co-founded the international theatre company Corazon de Vaca and has performed in and co-created a number of their productions, both in Spain and Perth. He has recently performed in productions for Black Swan and a co-production for Queensland Theatre and Griffin Theatre. He has worked with many independent theatre companies in Perth and continues to work with artists from various backgrounds such as dance, multimedia and music. In 2016 he won the Performing Arts WA Best Actor award. Most recently he has appeared in the sell-out productions of Heckett and York. He is also a member of Wadumbah Noongar Dance Group.

Jo Pollitt is an interdisciplinary artist and postdoctoral research fellow at Edith Cowan University (ECU) in the School of Education. Her work is grounded in a twenty-year practice of working with dance improvisation as methodology across multiple performed, choreographic and publishing platforms. Jo is co-founder of the feminist research collective The Ediths, artist-researcher with #FEAS -Feminist Educators Against Sexism, and core member of ECU’s Centre for People Place & Planet. She is co-director of BIG Kids Magazine (since 2010) and her book *The dancer in your hands* < > was published in 2020.

Co-creators/performers: Jo Pollitt and Maitland Schnaars

Co-creator/artist educator: Lilly Blue

Sound Child-made rain exhibited in 2019 in association with / as part of the exhibition *The Botanical: Beauty and Peril* at the Art Gallery of WA, created by children in Conversations with Rain AGWA Learning workshops

Director: Dawn Jackson

Camera: Darren

Editor: Matt

Researchers: Dr Jo Pollitt (ECU), Lilly Blue (AGWA), Professor Mindy Blaise (ECU)

*Kep Waangkiny* is part of a research project called *Conversations with Rain*, a partnership between Art Gallery of Western Australia, AGWA Learning and Edith Cowan University, School of Education. *Conversations with Rain* is part of the Climate Action Network, a research project funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Canada (SSHRC) exploring children’s creative relations with weather as a way of potentially transforming our climate futures.

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*maara kep waangkiny (water talking hands)*, 2020, video [02:55]