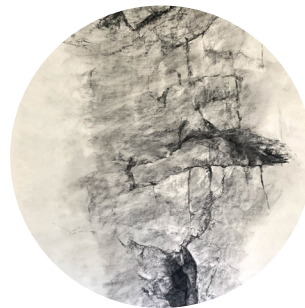Amanda ALLERDING

Brenton ROSSOW
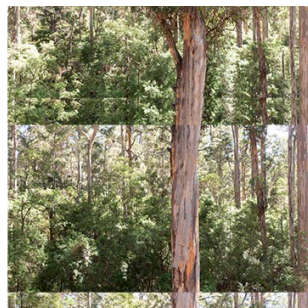
Jane WHELAN
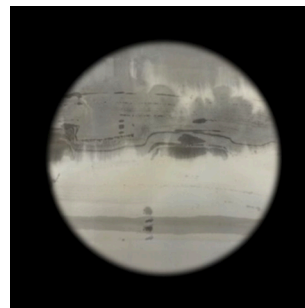
Jenni SKINNER

Patricia AMORIM

Steven BAITZ

Xinwei XU

Xue LI

+ AI artist Brad NISBET

Nexus Postgraduates|2023

Curated by Brad NISBET I Lyndall ADAMS I Nicola KAYE I

Amanda ALLERDING I Brenton ROSSOW I Jane WHELAN I Jenni SKINNER I
Patricia AMORIM I Steven BAITZ I Xinwei XU I Xue LI I + AI artist Brad NISBET I

Spectrum Project Space

ECU Galleries

AUSTRALIA
ECU
UNIVERSITY
EDITH COWAN

Brad NISBET | Lyndall ADAMS | Nicola KAYE |
Curatorial Statement

> …it's important to shape exhibitions as projects of long duration and to consider issues of sustainability and legacy. Fly-in, fly-out curating nearly always produces superficial results; it's a practice that goes hand in hand with the fashion for applying the word 'curating' to everything that involves simply making a choice. Making art is not a matter of a moment, and nor is making an exhibition; curating follows art. (Ulrich-Orbrist, 2014, p. 24)

Each year as the Director and Deputy Director of ECU Galleries we curate an exhibition of the School of Arts & Humanities', Visual Arts Higher Degree by Research candidates (HDR) work in progress. Nexus Postgraduates|2023 showcases the creative works of: Amanda ALLERDING, Brenton ROSSOW, Jane WHELAN, Jenni SKINNER, Patricia AMORIM, Steven BAITZ, Xinwei XU, Xue LI + AI artist Brad NISBET.

We curate the exhibition for various professional practice reasons. While many of our HDR have an established arts career, others have less experience. We see this exhibition as a mentoring exercise in real world contexts for exhibition practice. The mechanics behind working galleries are hidden behind a façade, an invisible cloak glosses over the work behind the scenes: marketing (invitations, catalogues, artist's statements, media statements, social media) installation (artworks: photographing, deliver, unpacking, placement, hanging, technical, lighting, cleaning, documenting), opening night (food, wine, gallery attendants, speakers, cleanup), keeping the gallery doors open (invigilation by artists and volunteers), floor talks, and deinstallation (pack artworks, putty/sand/ paint walls, clean) not to mention the administration (gallery agreements, insurance, Occupational Safety & Health, risk forms, security access, etc.).

This year a HDR candidate from another area of Creative Humanities approached us with an idea for an exhibition. Little did Brad know what he was getting himself into. Brad is a multi-disciplined technologist working with AI, Virtual Production, Real-Time Engines, VR, 3D additive manufacturing, digital twinning, and motion capture. Brad's practice revolves around facilitating, instructing, and educating artists on the potentials and possibilities that emerging technologies present to enhance their artistry. With a background in the Film and Television industry, Brad is always branching out to collaborate in cross-disciplinary work.

ECU Galleries Spectrum Project Space

The idea of pairing an Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated artwork with artists work was the seed (the explosion in popularity of GPT-4 was months away, synchronicity!). We immediately thought of the visual arts HDR cohort and have worked with Brad as co-curator and AI artist to develop the exhibition.

Pivotal to the annual exhibition is that we do not make extra work for the HDRs, that is, the artwork needs to be a part of the research they are conducting. The HDR cohort were provided with a table of prompts from which they had to choose (and directly linked to their research):

- Proper prompts consist of at least two parts, the Content (1–4 required) and the Modifier (1–2 required). Content describes the motifs you want to get from the AI model. Modifier drives visual features, character and 'vibe' of the image.
- A 3rd section called Medium/Style (0–1 required). These are modifiers that would not play nicely together.

They were also required to supply:

- Images of artwork in process.
- A paragraph using the prompt to explain their work.

The curatorial team visited the HDR studio several times to discuss in detail their thinking/making. These were dynamic sessions discussing the diverse processes, ideas, and how the artworks might evolve. At times this has had a profound impact on how the HDRs' individual practices might be impacted and has raised possibilities of how they could absorb AI into future practice. Such discussions are part of current debates concerning creative integrity, materiality, appropriation, remuneration and the impact on the art market. Rather though than be concerned or dissuaded by the adverse and controversial possibilities afforded by AI, all the HDRs grasped the potentiality.

Brad took in the visuals of the artworks and considered the artists' statements before offering a suggested action plan for an AI generated artwork that would complement the artists' artistic goals. Working with the artists to determine what aspects of the piece and methods used in their practice were key to the artistic intent, Brad started working on the prompts for the AI model. Using *GPT-4*, *Stable Diffusion*, *LLAMA*, and *DALL-E*, Brad has generated a complimentary AI artwork for each of the artists' works.

Reference

Ulrich-Orbrist, H. (2014). *Ways of curating*. Faber and Faber.

Amanda ALLERDING I

Biography

Amanda Allerding is a Perth based practicing artist and researcher whose work strives to engage with shifting perspectives afforded through her transcultural experiences in China. Currently a PhD candidate in the School of Arts and Humanities at Edith Cowan University, Amanda is also the recipient of an ECU Higher Degree Research Program Scholarship. Her recent creative practice is investigating correlations in spatial and material practices of traditional Chinese gardens and embodied perceptions of the gardens—she questions how these have impacted her art practice. Amanda's art practice spans printmaking and artist books, assemblage and installation, ceramic sculpture, and video techniques.

Artist's statement

This work explores spatial ideas through fragile forms and their interrelations between the component parts as an assemblage. The assemblages are open and interpretative structures that can be reassembled into different assemblages and have a non-fixed character. Looking into metaphysical questions, the forms begun through questions about how internal structures are affected by external relationships. Visual patterns in material structures through printmaking and sculptural assemblage techniques, have been employed to work through these ideas. Initial forms are created through processes that I call flow-to-shape through practice-led research in studio. The idea of creating forms from fluid flows of ink in micro-experiments, explores the cause and effect of external force applied to ink droplets. Wind, blowing, or the point of a brush, are used to excite movement. By asserting a minor force on ink drops to produce a change in their shape, a flow results in a new shape that is determined by the internal structure and viscosity of the ink in relation with the force. Enlarging the shapes and reproducing them in other materials uses scale and repetition to consider a notion of structure and provoke new ways of seeing through them. This is a resonant link to work through transferable ideas between the chemical microcosmic world relating to substance, materials and their behaviours, and more complex human systems. Building on the idea of internal and external relations, the surface becomes a meaningful point of interaction that is articulated through the printing matrices. These matrices made from materials such as wood or plaster and ground stone, transfer the natural patterning that occurs in the structure of the materials of the matrix. These free-standing forms, currently constructed as maquettes from paper, are testing their fragile and interdependent status, juxtaposed between the related component parts—metaphorically grappling with the concept of interrelatedness.

In addition to generating images that explore similar themes to Amanda's work *GPT-4* was asked to generate GCODE to 3D-Print an object based on the vectors of Amanda's original works.

Brenton ROSSOW I

Brenton Rossow is an interdisciplinary artist, educator and filmmaker who has a passion for telling stories through photography, video, and mixed media. Focusing upon people from diverse cultures and social groups, Brenton has made several films, such as Shanghainese Parklife: Cultivating the Taoist body (2017), Clouds and 4 cigarettes (2017), and Lindsay's Story (2022). As a filmmaker in Western Australia, Brenton has been involved in creative projects that include the 2018 SeeMe Festival at the State Theatre Centre of WA, The Rockingham Nyoongar Stories Project 2019, the West Australian Museum 2019 Migrant Stories Project, the City of Kwinana Business Development Project 2020, and the Moorditij Footprints Project 2021-22. Brenton's research on Taoist body cultivation practices and the anthropocosmic perspective in film were presented at the Revelation Film Festival's academic conferences in 2018 and 2020, and in 2022 he was awarded a grant from Rev and The City of Vincent to make a film about Noongar families who grew up in East Perth in the 60s and 70s. His creative works can be found in The Emerson Review, Spectrum Literary Journal, The Perch: An Arts and Literary Journal, among other publications.

Artist's statement

Adapting filmic techniques used in slow cinema, cinema vérité, and direct cinema, this practice-led research aims to gain a greater understanding of the ways in which viewers are drawn into multidimensional spaces that examine anthropocosmic and anthropocentric practices in Shanghai and the Kwinana bushland. Through the editing of observational video footage and diegetic and non-diegetic soundscapes, the cinematic long take and its ability to facilitate meditative phenomenological experiences is assessed within this PhD project. Examining Paul Schrader's film theories outlined in *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* (2018), and Bill Nichols (2010) and Erik Barnouw's (1993) poetic modes of documentary filmmaking, this visual ethnographic study further applies philosophical concepts discussed in Brian Eno's *Ambient Music Manifesto* (1978) to harness the varied auditory possibilities of collective spaces. Investigating slow cinema techniques in films, such as *Cemetery of Splendor* (2015), *Central Park* (1989), and *Memoria* (2021), the cinematic devices used within this short segment from the feature length film *The Junksaw Puzzle* (2024), reveal an intimate window into the landscapes of Shanghainese parkgoers and Kwinana bush bashers. Inside these culturally and socially divergent spaces, a cornucopia of humans, fauna, and discarded objects poetically interweave to create a reconfigured object that bleeds into the collective uncanny reservoir of the doomed era of the Anthropocene. With minimal manipulation to the ambient soundscape, *The Junksaw Puzzle* (2024), investigates notions of dissociation through the inclusion of non-diegetic sounds that shadow naturally occurring noises within these incongruous environments. Instead of adopting a classic 3-act narrative structure, this research engages the viewer through phenomenological experiences that metamorphically embed disparate places and experiences within a new location that contains its own characteristics and shared narratives to create a unified blend of human and posthuman experiences.

AI prompts
content: landscape, built environment, found object, montage | modifier: avant-garde, film | medium/style: photograph

AI companion generator: *Stable Diffusion, Automatic-1111, GFPGAN, Deforum*

work in progress

Stable Diffusion, GFPGAN, and *Deforum* were used to generate a filtered and altered version of Brenton's work using prompts and keywords from Brenton's artist statement.
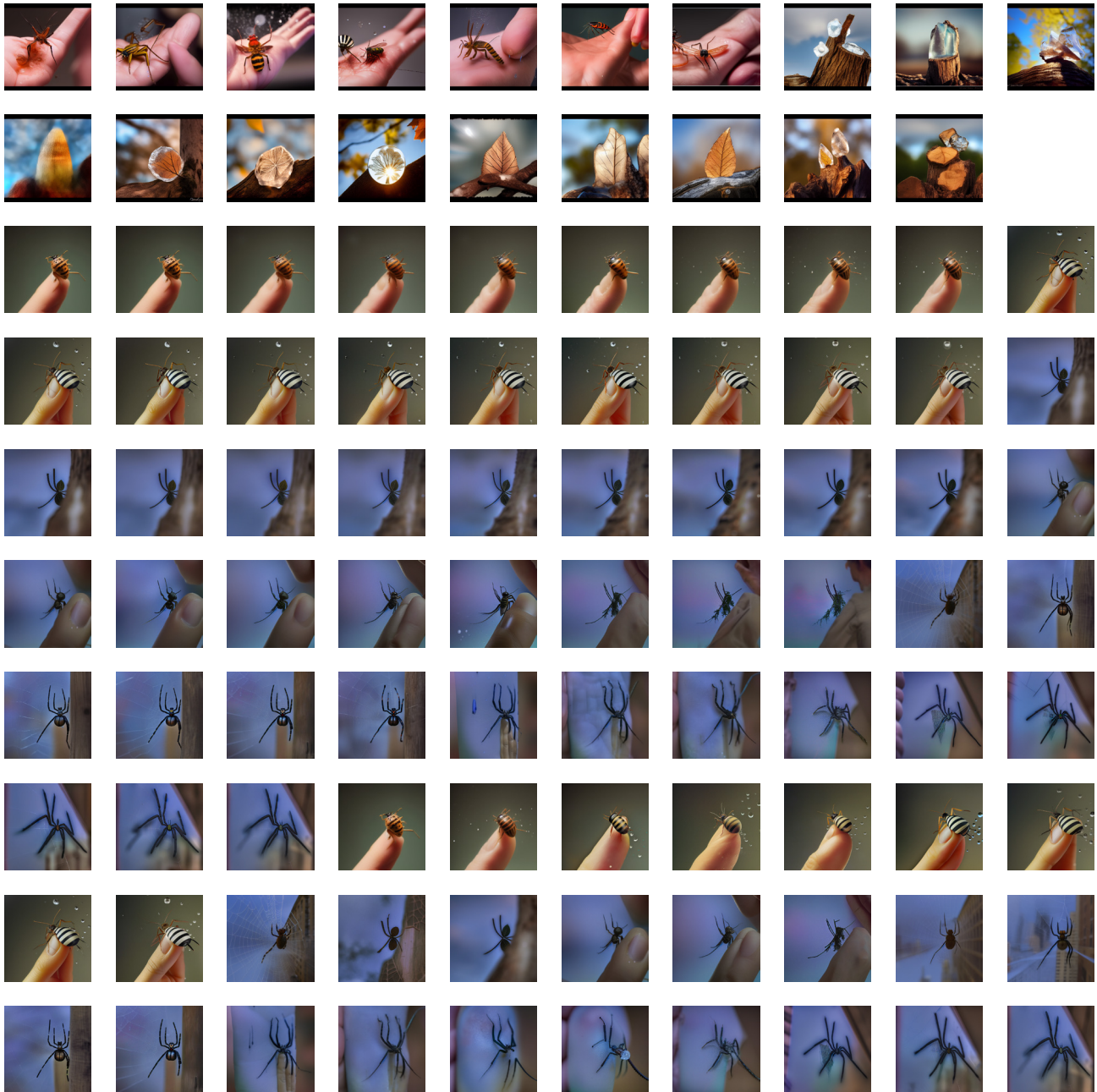
Jane Whelan studied Visual Arts in both London and Leeds (UK), emigrating to Australia in 1976. Immigration led her work to focus on landscape. She completed an MA at ECU (2016). Whelan's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including Third Space Project (2015), with the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology. Other exhibitions include: the 2016 Spectrum Project Space Artist-in-Residence, Drawing Breath (2016); Thresholds and Thoughtscapes Bunbury Regional Art Galleries (2017); Talking Place at IMPACT10, Spain (2018); Talking place: unfolding conversations (2019) at Mandurah Performing Arts Centre; and Talking Place: emerging connections (2020) at Gallery25 ECU, Mt Lawley.

Artist's statement

This project focusses on non-linear time through the lived experience of memory drawing from three cultural landscapes in my lifeworld: UK; Australia and China, focusing on a key event in each.

My practice involves the natural environment; a deep interest, leading to embodied responses to landscape experienced through the lens of phenomenology. I respond to these ephemeral moments through drawing, acknowledging the fluid, organic interconnections of sensory perception.

Key theorists who assist my thinking include Moxley, who argues that time is not universally uniform nor linear, and Zehou Li for whom aesthetics is the driving force of human evolution, talking of the layers of sedimentation in 'self' as a mixture of culture and nature.

I acknowledge the porous and dynamic exchange in our physical and cultural relationship with the environment and am intrigued by the remark that in memory 'time becomes place' (Portelli, 1997). Subjectively interpreting the embodied experience held within each window of memory leads me to interrogate how the culture of place might influence the aesthetic understandings that inform my response to that landscape.

This body of work references my fall from a cliff in Cornwall, UK at twelve years old. Though aware of the drama, my memories of this event, as a child touch on the stillness of small moments. Responding through drawing I am conscious of Heidegger's concept of the 'thoughtful hand', the gesture of my marks become the handwriting and signature of thought linking mind and body, a creative space where the potentiality of the marks collaborate with the surface.

Using in charcoal I have relied on the traditional unity of monochrome but I seek to purposefully extend these parameters, exploring new possibilities and considering if colour might participate as it does in the memory for this I seek insights across time, culture, and place.

AI prompts
content: ephemera, landscape,
gesture | modifier: aesthetic,
organic, colour, monochrome |
medium/style: drawing

AI companion generator:
Stable Diffusion

work in progress

Using the cliffs in Cornwall, England, as a reference, *Stable Diffusion* generated a monochrome mathematically based fractal pattern similar to the artist's work. Here we can examine the difference between recalled memory and organic artistic creation and the AI's generated digital replication.
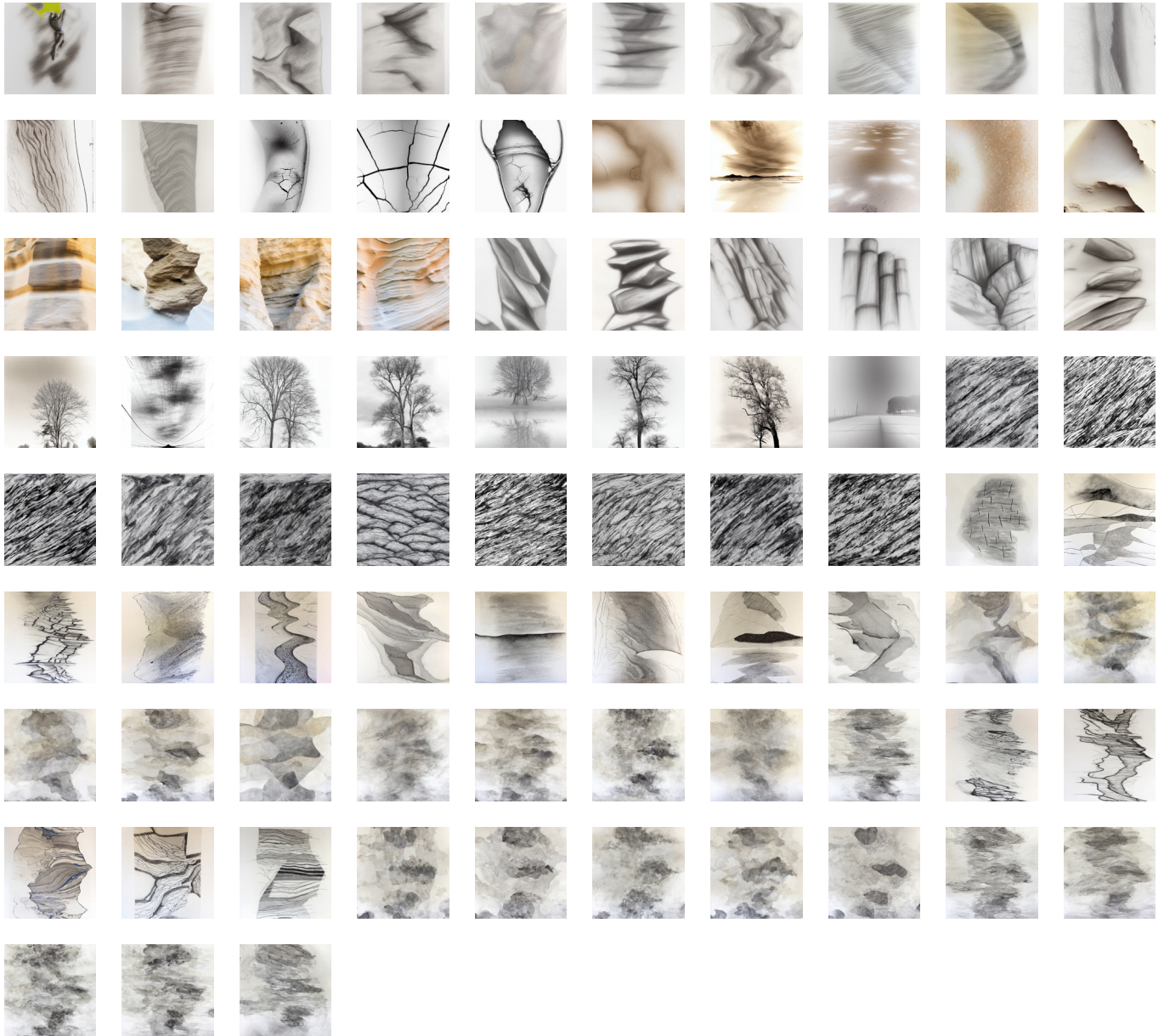
Jenni Skinner is a Perth based artist and researcher, interested in exploring the intimate and cultural aspects of modern life, in particular class and identity under the conditions of advanced globalisation and more broadly the wealth of the Western world. Her practice incorporates social and personal documentary photography to investigate the visual tropes of capitalism and to create a satirical critique of contemporary consumer behaviour. Skinner has studied film and photography at Edith Cowan University, graduating with Honours and a PhD in Arts and Humanities in 2023.

Artist's statement

This artwork documents the condition of American mythology under late capitalism, incorporating the collapse of neoliberalism and the rise of populism in an inclusive contemporary contribution to the burgeoning manifesto of American street photography. These images provide an institutional critique of the ways in which consumer capitalism has woven itself into the American mythology and national identity and critiques the efficacy of finding liberation through participation in consumer culture. This work was created as a satire to mass media propaganda — using the same bright and garish mass marketing techniques as advertisers these photographs tell a conflicting narrative and provide a figurative critique of modern consumption. Americans are continually exposed to images of propaganda — for them it is commonplace, no longer requiring a second glance. The rhetoric of consumer capitalism was so pervasive that it no longer bothered with subtlety — it was the image of a flag and a fried chicken drumstick. Through a foreign and critical lens, the prevalence of capitalist propaganda appears absurd and clichéd. This work captures the inconsistencies between mythology and reality, exposing the cracks in the façade of the American Dream.

AI prompts
content: façade, figurative, propaganda, satire | modifier: colour, institutional critique, street photography | medium/style: photograph

AI companion generator: *Stable Diffusion* and *DALL-E*

work in progress

Stable Diffusion and *DALL-E* were used to generate additional artworks using the prompts and artist's statement and the original photos. Exploring the similarities of fictionality of the AI generated content and the propaganda and mythology presented to American's as factual reality.
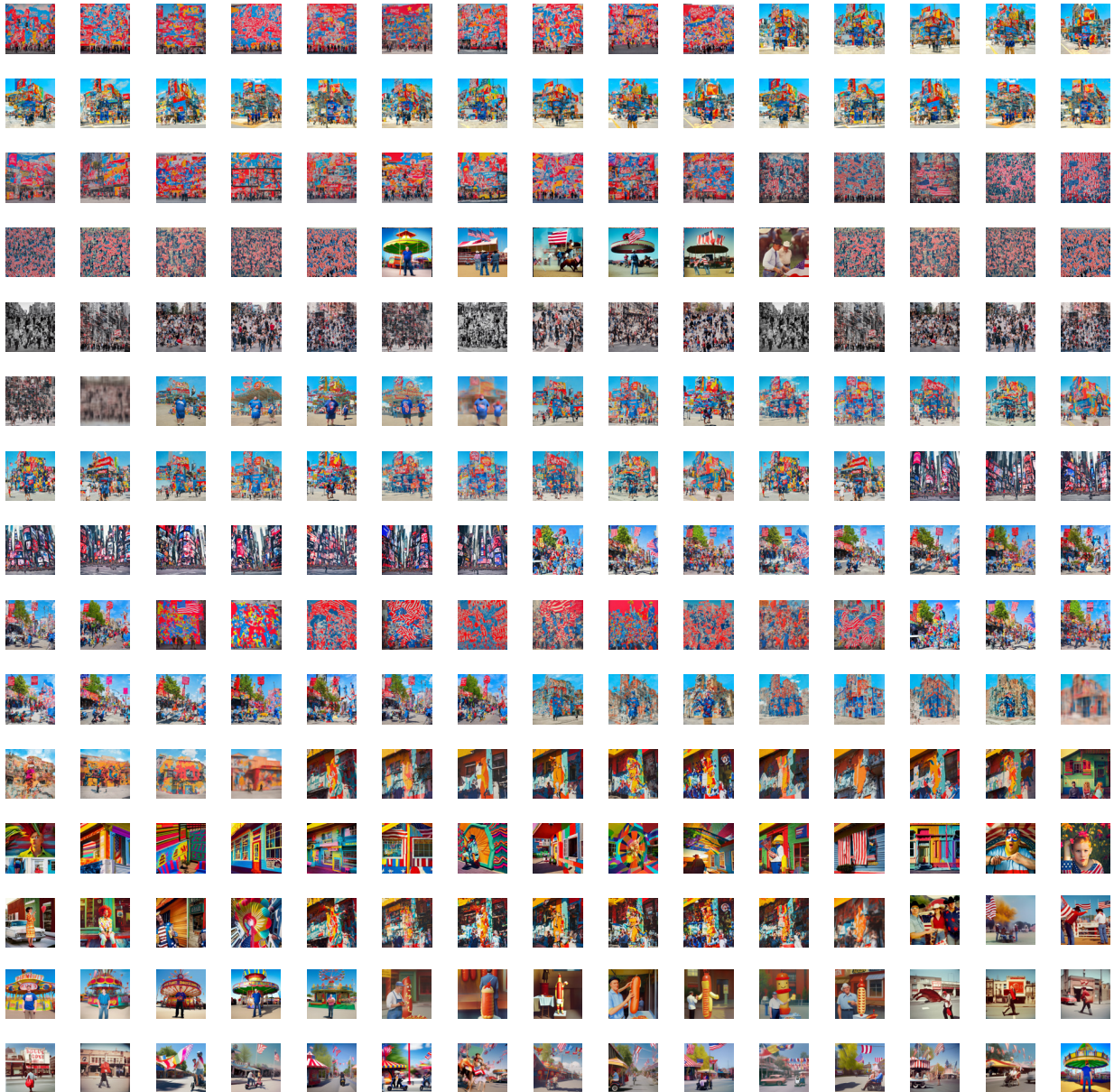
Patricia Amorim is a Brazilian contemporary artist and researcher interested in exploring how identity can be perceived through gendered bodies from a feminist standpoint. Her practice-led research examines how contemporary digital photography affects the concept of gendered bodies and the possibilities of inscriptions of digitally altered gendered bodies in a cross-cultural setting, considering cultural aspects inherent to Brazil and Australia. Her studio practice integrates photography, digital technology, and image modification to challenge gender and cultural identity. Amorim is a PhD candidate in the School of Arts and Humanities at Edith Cowan University and is also the recipient of an ECU Higher Degree Research Program Scholarship.

Artist's statement

Through a feminist perspective, my self-portraiture photographs explore the influence of my cultural identity, and experiences as a Brazilian artist living in Western Australia. These photographs use colour, contour, form, and gesture to investigate cultural aspects inherent to both Brazil and Australia as I negotiate how I perceive my identity in a cross-cultural setting. My self-portraits capture how these cultural aspects impact my identity, as enacted through my body. In this way, I approach my body as a palimpsest to explore how I am perceived as a Latin American woman based in the territory I inhabit. A palimpsest is described as an object where text or images can be removed or reinterpreted. My body is re-inscribed by the images and text that I project on me. As I shift between territories, I identify with the space between cultural boundaries; this puts my identity in transit. In this space, my body becomes a territory where I legitimise my complex mix of positionalities. Further, my self-portraiture is influenced by the feminist art of Cuban artist, Ana Mendieta, who embeds her body into the territories of North and South America as she explores her identity as a woman living on the boundaries of these two continents.

My series of self-portraits emerge from my experiences as a Brazilian woman who negotiates social expectations in Western Australia. Specifically, my photographs focus on the intersection between my gender and cultural identity, which has been recontextualised in Western Australia. The recontextualisation of my identity delve into the cultural differences and similarities between the two divergent territories. Using my own body in my practice enforces the complexities of subjectivity which locates my personal narrative.
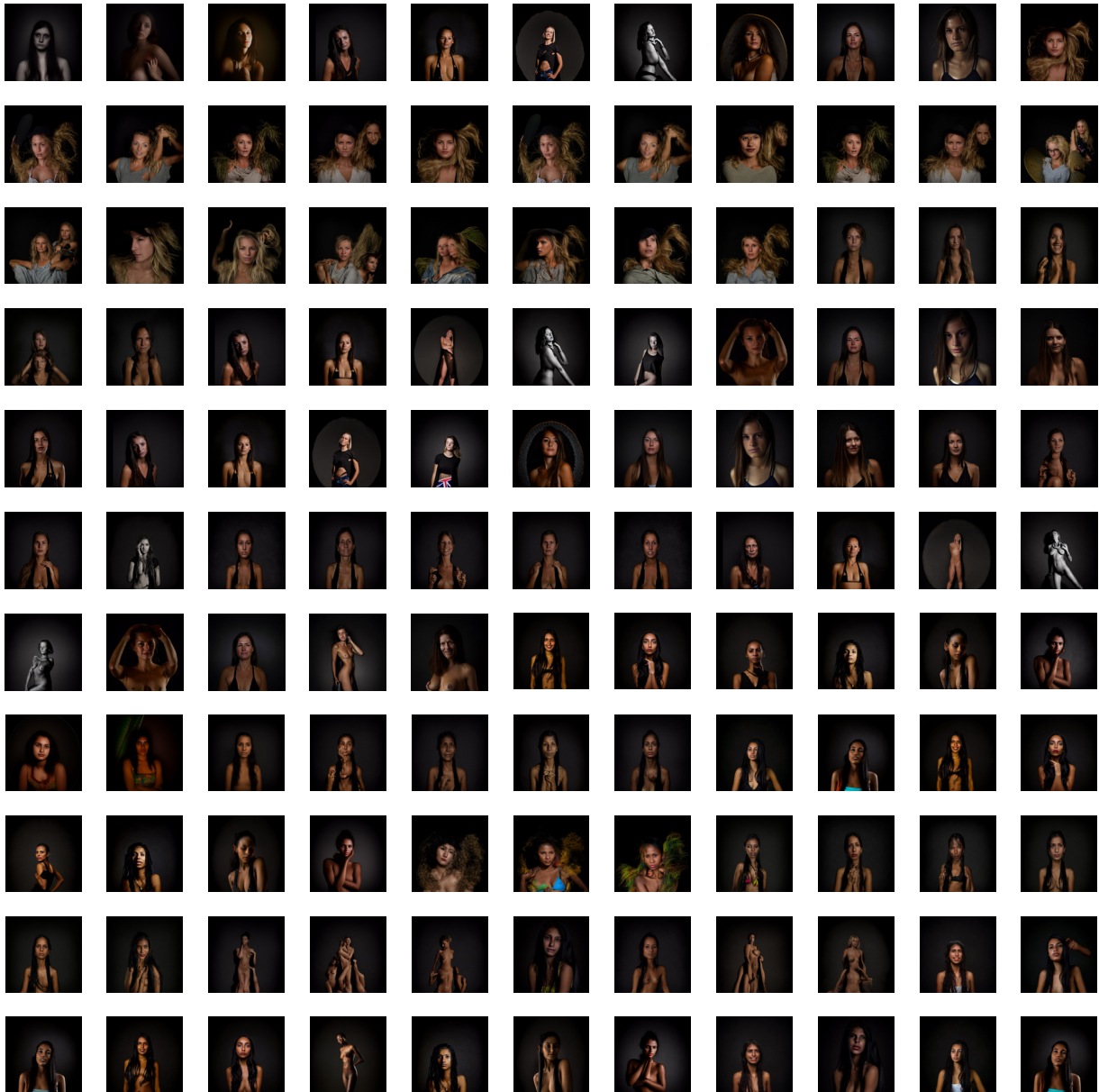
ECU Galleries Spectrum Project Space
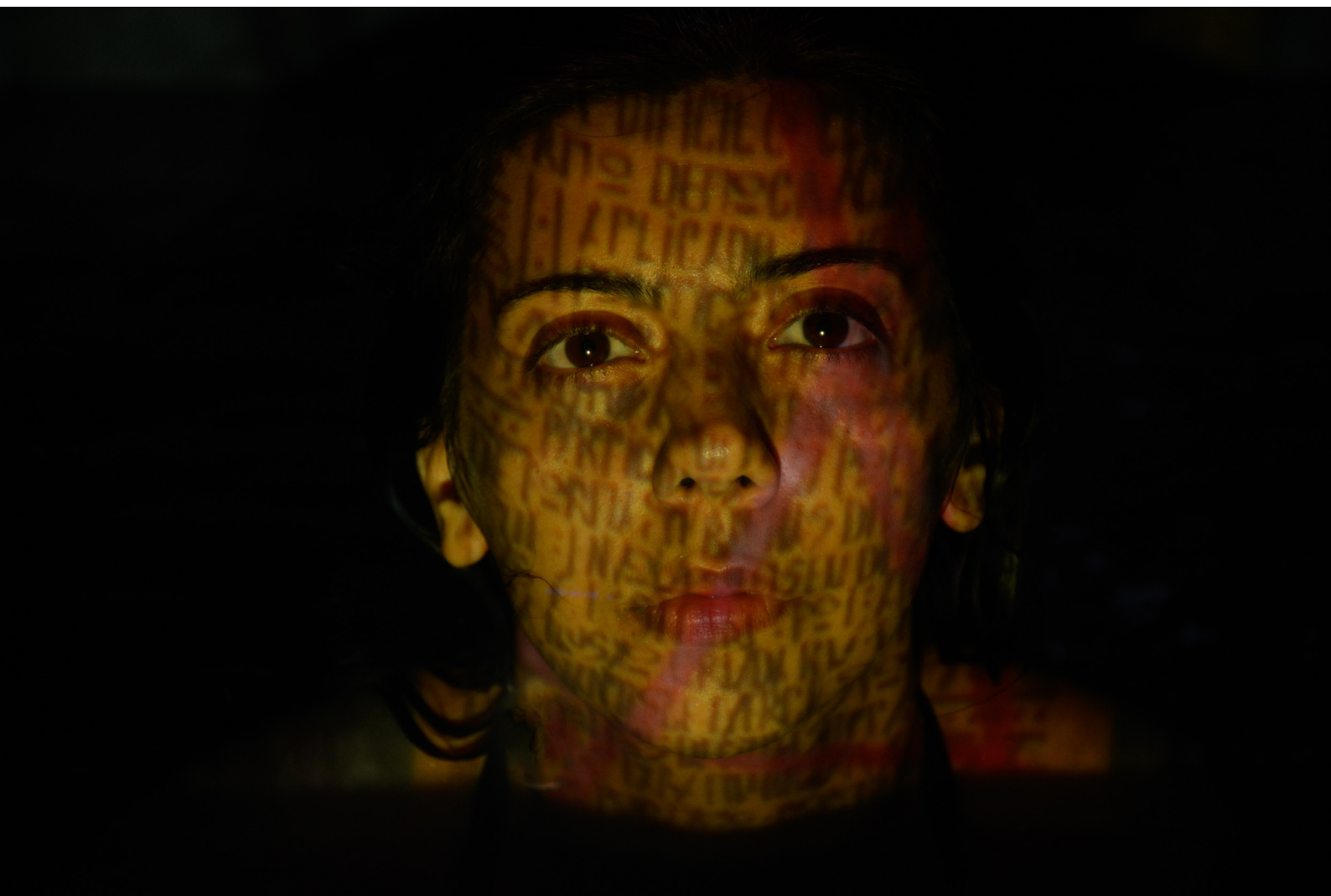
Taking a self-portrait, we had the AI use prompts generated from keywords to explore the duality of the artist's Brazilian and Australian experiences: personifying each side of her by having the AI manipulate her image with bias and perceptions of what is 'Brazilian' and what is 'Australian'.

Steven BAITZ

Steven Baitz is a Perth based practicing artist born in Zimbabwe where he developed a keen interest in photography during his early teens. This passion for photography has stayed with him through a successful career and travel which took him from Zimbabwe to South Africa, Canada and then in 1986, to Australia. Currently a Masters by Research candidate, Steve has a Bachelor of Creative Industries from ECU, in which he majored in photography, revitalising his lifelong interest. Steve's practice-led research examines how movement, walking and vision can be depicted and experienced through photography. Previous work has been exhibited during Nexus 2022 in the form of a triptych also designed to promote the feeling of walking.

Artist's statement

My photographic practice-led research investigates walking, vision and physical movement through specific places in Western Australia's South-West. I work in both digital and analogue formats using a range of cameras, digital, 6x6cm analogue and increasingly, a Holga and a drone, as they provide less control and a sense of play and unpredictability. My artwork combines multiple images to evoke a sense of complexity; circumventing the camera's natural linear or geometrical perspective as I capture walking and movement through various locations, and specifically in this work, Pemberton.

The trees in the National Park, and particularly as experienced through the Karri Valley Explorer route, has always given me a sense of belonging and peace. The very tall trees, the feeling of wind running over my head, the sounds of the insects and birds and the general "quiet" of this space and sense of nature give me a feeling of being an integral part of the world I am experiencing and seeing. This work is constructed purposefully large, encouraging the viewer to move around the work, as movement is a critical aspect of my research—the movement of the camera both laterally and horizontally, the gentle movement of the leaves rustling in the wind and finally the movement of the viewer, through time, to absorb the image in its totality.
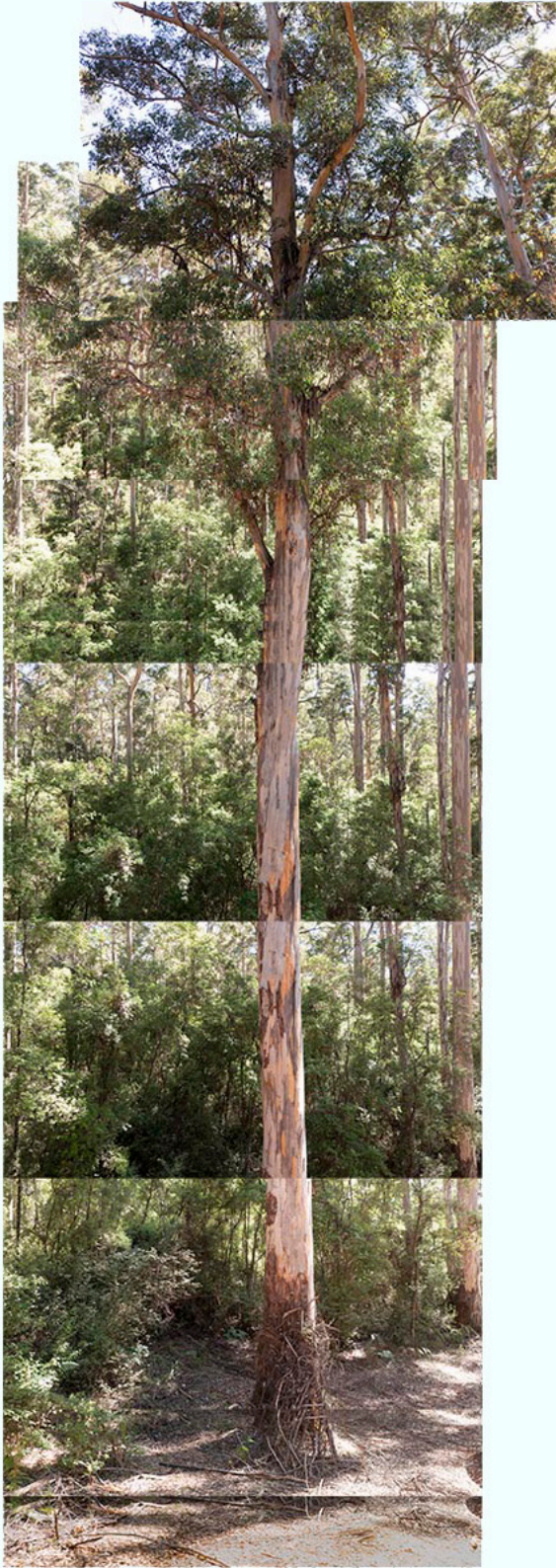
AI prompts
content: landscape, figurative, multiple, representation
modifier: aesthetic, photomontage, print
medium/style: photograph

AI companion generator: *Stable Diffusion +Inpainting*

work in progress

The AI generated images of a tree from various perspectives and *inpainted* them; asking how does the AI generated perception and experience of the natural world differ from the constructed image?

Xinwei Xu is an artist, translator and researcher and currently a PhD candidate immersed in her practice-led research at Edith Cowan University. Her artwork concerns cross-cultural themes, non-linear time and Buddhist emptiness. She now focuses on the study of the 868 printed Diamond Sutra, as well as doing art practices pertaining to the non-linear temporal structure and content of this sutra. Since 2016, she has been translating books on art and design history. She also worked as a lecturer for 3 years in a collage in Jiangxi province, China.

Artist's statement

My video installation The Unfolded is inspired by The Diamond Sutra (868), now known as being the world's earliest dated printed book. This Sutra is nearly five meters long, containing a frontispiece showing the representation of Buddha teaching this sutra in 500 BC. This sutra was found in Dunhuang, China and transported to the UK in 1909. After this, the sutra was stored in the British museum, preserved in Wales, and sent to the British Library where it is now a significant part of its holdings. Over its long history, this sutra as a cultural relic, has suffered from numerous conservational repairs, been mounted on Western papers, Japanese paper, Chinese paper and recently repaired with Japanese paper.

In my practice, I fold a very special kind of bamboo paper and create marks on this paper. The bamboo paper that I use is called liansi paper [连四纸], produced in Yanshan [铅山], Jiangxi Province. This paper has been used for printing for hundreds of years in China, being expected to hold the prints and survive thousands of years. I create marks on the first layer of the folded paper. The ink then permeates the paper and creates shapes, leaving stains or blemishes formed spontaneously beneath the first layer. I then carefully take photos of the shapes to make a video related to the marks. The video is both a moving collage of all the stains and an organic unity constantly changing over time.

Through the idea of The Unfolded, I aim to comment on the non-linear temporality of the Diamond Sutra. The trauma of how this sutra, along with other documents were moved to other places is still felt in Dunhuang where this sutra was firstly found in the modern era. This trauma and all the other unmentioned historical events behind this sutra are like stains folded in the pleats of time. In-between the unfolded and the folded, the 'emptiness' that this sutra teaches also creates another space for understanding the temporal structure of the Diamond sutra.
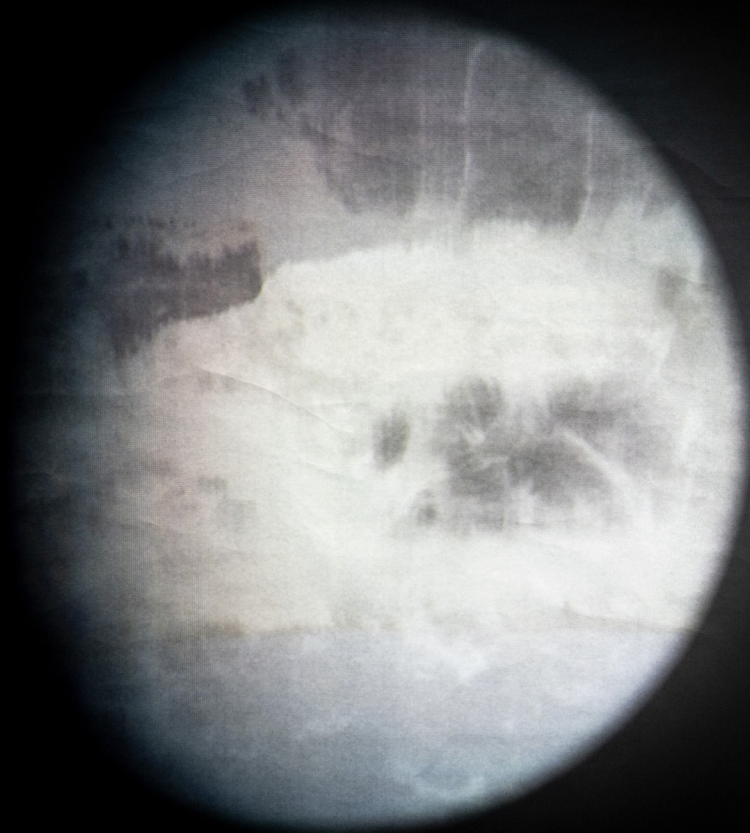
A video recording using *Deforum* showing the generation process of manipulating the artist's statement using the AI model created a shifting evolutionary pattern to compare the organic process used by the artist's work against the artificial structured process used by the AI.
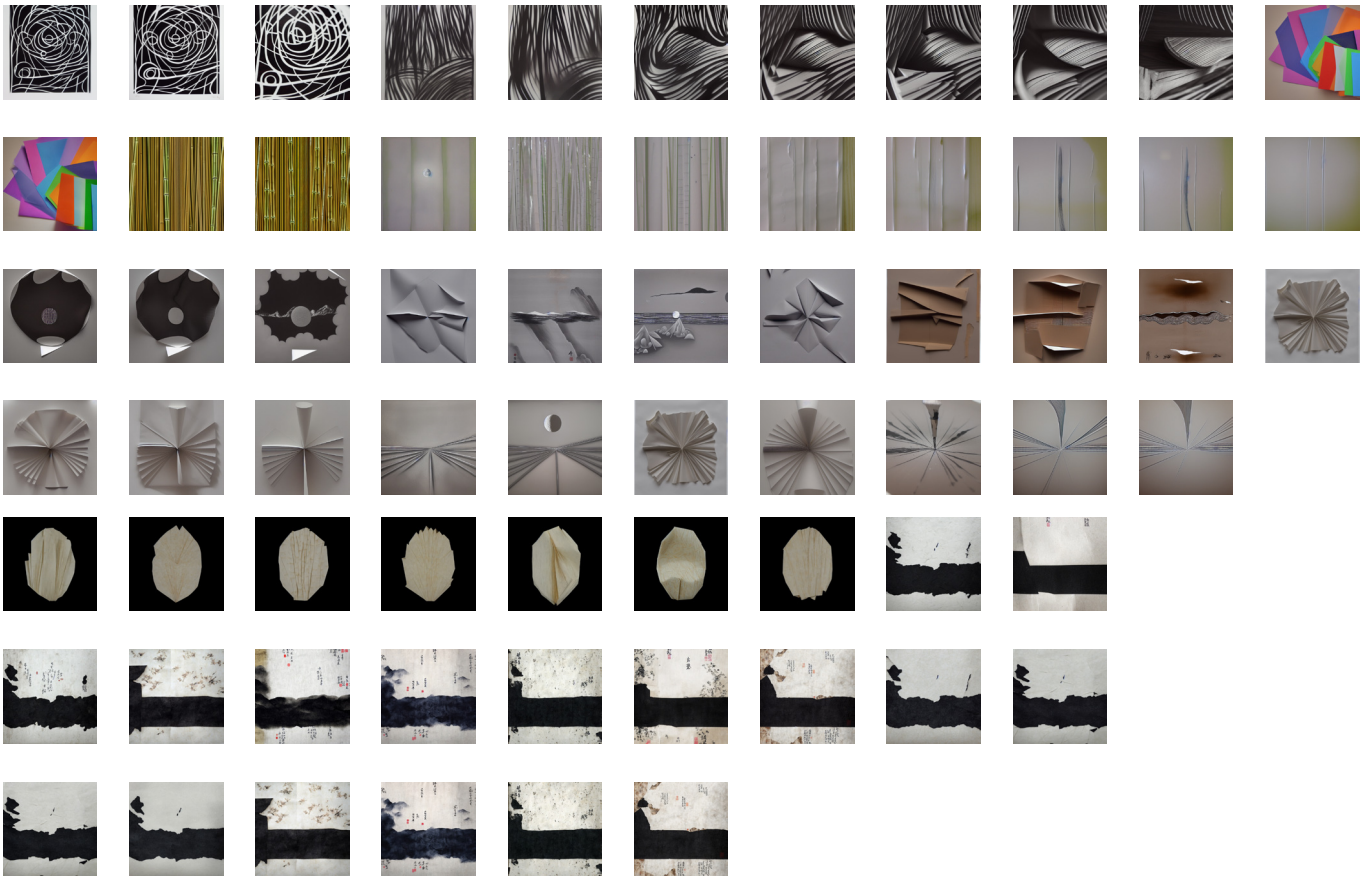
Li Xue, a Chinese artist, earned a master's degree from Luxun Academy of Fine Arts top 3 art academy in China and has since worked as a university teacher and artist for over a decade. Currently pursuing a Ph.D. in visual arts at Edith Cowan University, her works have been exhibited in solo and group shows in the United States, France, Korea, and China. Xue blends traditional Chinese painting techniques with Western academic methods, creating a fusion of artistic form and cultural thought. Her pieces address themes of pure form, women's images, landscapes, inner emotions, and personal experiences, while exploring feminist perspectives on Chinese art history and contemporary female artists.

Artist's statement

As a mixed-media artist I use mineral pigment paint, oil pen drawing, invisible ink, and fishing line to create a composition on paper. My research focuses on the predicament of Chinese female artists in China. In this work, I use my self-portrait in a landscape representing the Chinese social environment to explore this dilemma.

My self-portrait is inspired by a Tang Dynasty painter named Zhou Fang and his painting titled *Ladies with Flora Hairpins (Zan Hua Shi Nv Tu)* (Fang, Tang Dynasty/1985). The woman he depicted was trapped in a palace, living a good life but within an empty spiritual world. Behind her is the traditional Chinese landscape with rocks and plants. By blending my image with Zhou Fang's *Hairpin Lady*, I allude to the situation for the female position in China as not having changed very much since this time. We see the same Asian face and antique clothes but with a modern casual hairstyle. Questions are raised through this image about whether the trend of wearing antique-style clothes in contemporary China is in admiration of ancient culture or a reaffirmation of the ancient female situation it represents.

Behind me is China's current landscape, a reinforced concrete forest stacked with tall buildings, which I depict using the traditional texture method *Cun Fa* (Maria CHENG, 2018) to allude to shadows of mountains and rocks. As a Chinese feminist woman artist, I carry a mobile phone to signify the tools of contemporary China to reach out the world. The Internet is an invisible net constructed by fishing lines in my work and pertains to today's globalized world. *The Great Firewall* (Pătruţ & Pătruţ, 2014), depicted by the words *404 not found* is written with invisible ink, it blocks my view, making it impossible to see other cultures which are represented by abstract landscapes. While access to these cultures is not entirely inaccessible, the ways of access are hidden, like hiding in fog, confusing me. Through my artwork, I hope to bring attention to the challenges faced by female artists in China and explore the complex interplay between contemporary culture and traditional heritage.

AI prompts
content: self-portrait, landscape | modifier: abstract, mixed media, paint | medium/style: drawing

AI companion generator: *Stable Diffusion*

work in progress

Using *Ladies with Flora Hairpins* as a starting point (as did the artist) *Stable Diffusion + DEFORUM* generated images using prompts taken from the concepts of the lived Chinese woman's experience from the artist's statement and using the artists' work as a style guide.
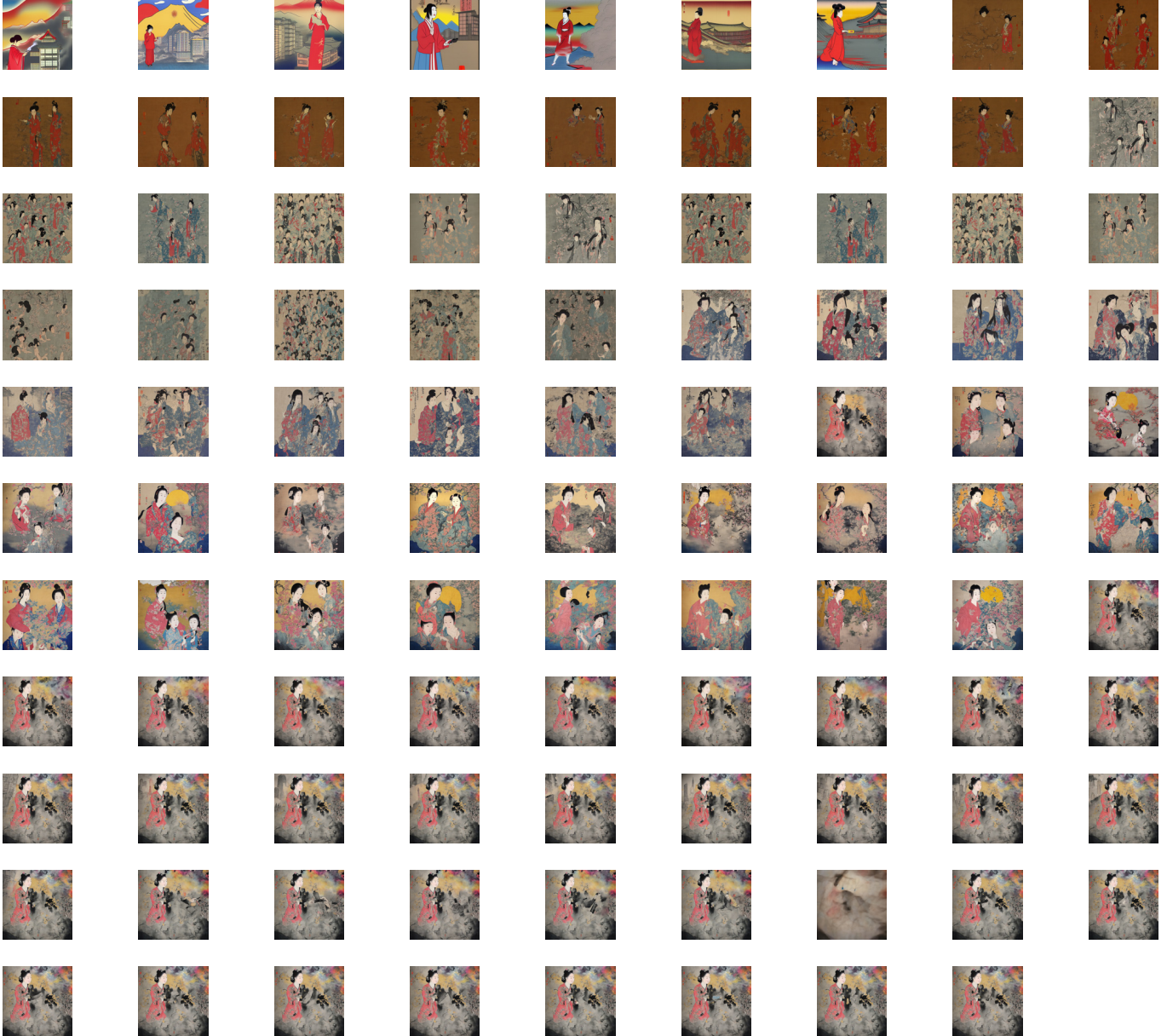
Nexus Postgraduates|2023

Curated by Brad NISBET I Lyndall ADAMS I Nicola KAYE

Nexus Postgraduates|2023 showcases the creative works of candidates undertaking a Masters or PhD by research in Visual Arts in the School of Arts & Humanities at ECU, and features artists:

Amanda ALLERDING I Brenton ROSSOW I Jane WHELAN I Jenni SKINNER I
Patricia AMORIM I Steven BAITZ I Xinwei XU I Xue LI I + AI artist Brad NISBET I

Spectrum Project Space

To be officially opened by Professor **Verena Thomas** at 6:15pm
Opening: 5pm–7pm Thursday 18 May
Exhibition dates: 17 May–15 April 2023
Floor talks: 31 May 12:30pm–1:30pm
Gallery opening hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am–4pm
Building 3, 2 Bradford St, Mount Lawley

ECU Galleries