

Notions of Care

*Curated by
Kathryne Genevieve Honey
and Nina Mulhall*

*Kate Tucker, Katie West,
Polly Stanton, Arini Byng,
and Renae Coles &
Anna Dunnill (Snapcat)*

*20 April - 22 May 2021
Bus Projects*

Practicing Care / Making Art

Timmah Ball

Can I still *care* and practice *art*? Or should I stop *art* and practice *care*?

Care

Noun

1. the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something: “the care of the elderly”

Synonyms:

Trust, parenting, mothering, fathering, concern, consideration, attention, attentiveness, thought, regard, mind, notice, heed, solicitude, interest, caringness, sympathy, respect, looking after

Antonyms:

Neglect, disregard

Verb

1. feel concern or interest; attach importance to something: “they don’t care about human life”

2. look after and provide for the needs of: “he has numerous animals to care for”

Art

Noun

1. the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power: “the art of the Renaissance”

Synonyms:

Fine art, artwork, creative activity
Works produced by human creative skill and imagination: “a collection of modern art”

Creative activity resulting in the production of paintings, drawings, or sculpture: “she’s good at art”

2. the various branches of creative activity, such as painting, music, literature, film, print and dance: “the visual arts”

Care and art instinctively coalesce. Artists care for their work and audiences are cared for or experience solitude, welfare and respect by engaging with art. But there are dualities which require negotiation, tensions that need to be fixed. Care is spoken of as people acknowledge unstable working conditions in the industry but support is often absent. Instead it often feels that we are consumed by conventional definitions of art. The expression of creative skill, imagination and self-interest surpasses the fundamental elements of care i.e: nurturing, respect, feeling concerned, providing help for those who are more

vulnerable or environmental care.

Seeing the definitions of care and art together are like a puzzle that connects but is missing pieces, it is impossible to complete. The connection and disconnection between the two words reflects the challenges of practicing art. Art is time consuming and insular; we work multiple jobs to support our practices. We produce great things but this often results in neglect or disregard of others and ourselves.

Care is a vital framework within the intersecting communities of artists, activists, writers, environmentalists, academics, health and social justice workers. Its lineage stems from radical queer feminist Audre Lorde who proclaimed that:

02 *Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare.*

Lorde's definition of care is both political and personal, a framing that many of us consciously work from. To be political, to create change requires us to preserve energy and look after each other and ourselves. These thoughts and actions resonate in the works presented in *Notions of Care*.

Katie West's pillows are filled with eucalyptus leaves, bringing the smells and materiality of the natural environment into an urban setting as audiences are invited to sit and rest. The pillows are accompanied by a tea ceremony encouraging audiences to connect, listen and play closer attention to environs through smell, touch and ritual. For a moment we look beyond the impulses of city life and the time-poor tendency to rush through gallery spaces in a sensory overload of colour and form, taking little in.

Pockets to hold things we've been holding by Snapchat (Anna Dunnill & Renae Coles) show the possibilities of relationships across distance. Dunnill (Narrm/Melbourne based) and Coles (Gadigal/Sydney based) collaboratively make textile vessels, informed by items significant to each of the artists in the exhibition. They take turns starting each piece and post them in the mail to be completed by the other. The process embodies a deliberate slowness over time and space, which moves against our capitalistic desire to produce and purchase. Instead a relationship is built through the act of making. While at another scale and modality the performance work of Arini Byng brings the intimacy and immediacy of a live body. We are reminded of the artist's body as a site of work, care and creation beyond the artifice of the finished product. Process becomes something that unfolds before us rather than separate to the artist.

Kate Tucker's sculptures also demonstrate that the relationship or the making is more valuable than the result. It argues that care should be elevated over product and outcome. Paintings rest on ceramic bases in a relationship. As the artist states "*the base physically supports the painting, but reads as equally important.*" The base becomes an allegory for the work and care that goes into practice but is often invisible, de-valued in pursuit of the end product, the painting/success. Tucker's work cleverly subverts this dynamic stating that "*this non-hierarchical compression of acts and elements references broader artistic practice and the self care required as an artist, as well as the emphasis on a kind of artistic continuum, rather than any individual work.*"

Shifting the value of art away from the 'individual work' also occurs in Polly Stanton's evocative video *The*

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Spectral Field. The work brings the landscape of the Malle to urban audiences. It gently captures the salt lakes through sound and close-up, connecting audiences with environments, which are neglected. She writes it is “*a way to explore the interstitial spaces, resonances and intersections of the more-than-human world.*” Similar to Tucker’s work humans are de-centred; our egos or individual work are overpowered by more natural and caring forces.

While care imbues the exhibition it is important to acknowledge the externalities that come from making art (i.e.: exhaustion, burn out, unpaid labor, rejection, disappointment, capitalism, competition, financial insecurity, bullying, structural power, exploitation, stress, anxiety, discrimination, expectations, nepotism, ego, exclusion, etc). These causalities demand attention. They often persuade me to consider leaving as if it is the only way to care for the environment, others and myself.

As I write I am conscious that the artists, designers and Bus Project staff are most likely a little run down. Tired from the amount of work they are doing to ensure that this exhibition is important to both artists and audiences. Work that is done while balancing a myriad of other professional and personal responsibilities within tight deadlines, which often feel irresponsible and uncaring. I write while tired, cognitive that the privilege of engaging with the exhibition will be compromised by the need to slow down, to rest. I want to push further into the topic, to reveal these incongruities in the hope of finding new ways of making which resists the cycle of capitalism and connects deeper with community and the environment. But I also need to care for myself and in doing so acknowledge that pulling away, slowing down, doing less is intrinsic to a *careful* and caring *creative* practice.

Pockets to hold things we've been holding

Snapcat

In 17th- and 18th-century Europe, pockets weren't incorporated into women's clothes. Instead, women would wear a pair of pockets—a separate garment that tied on under the dress and petticoat. These were usually tear-drop-shaped with a slit down the middle, and were often intricately embroidered, despite being hidden by outer clothes. The historical pockets exist in a liminal space between clothing and underclothing, between practical container and intimate performance object.

Each of the artists in the exhibition entrusted us with a precious object—something they had held on to and that in turn held memories, connections, spiritual weight. Collaborating across two cities, we made a series of pockets designed to hold these artifacts on the body.

1. Arini Byng: a Tahitian pearl.

“My aunt gave me this pearl when I was a child. I expect she intended it to be made into something else, but I probably won't ever do that; I like it as it is.”

2. Polly Stanton: a piece of stichtite, a mineral found in lutruwita / Tasmania and also on Mars.

“Stichtite is a rare formation of minerals found in small amounts in a handful of places around the world, but none in such quantity as in lutruwita's rugged west coast. The remote ghost town of Dundas (situated in the wild rainforests of the takayna) is the main site of extraction for the mineral.



1. Arini Byng: a Tahitian pearl.



2. Polly Stanton: a piece of stichtite, a mineral found in lutruwita / Tasmania and also on Mars.



3. Kate Tucker: a scrunched up piece of foil from the top of a wine bottle.

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In 2019 I started a project based in the area, and after a research trip to visit the mine, I was given this piece of stone, which I have been carrying ever since as a way to stay in contact with the project and place. Stichtite occurs where methane [produced by microorganisms] is abundant, and it's believed that finding the mineral on Mars could indicate past life forms once existed there.”

3. Kate Tucker: a scrunched up piece of foil from the top of a wine bottle.

“At dinners and parties in my twenties I would fiddle with any malleable material I could find, usually the foil from a wine bottle. I made figures mostly, but sometimes I just squashed it into shapes like this one. A way of dealing with social anxiety perhaps, but more than that, a compulsive need to make things with my hands, coming out in moments when I wasn't required to be doing anything else. The texture and the way the colour rubbed off also appealed, and for some reason I kept it. It was the only

period of my life when I wasn't really making Art. Much later, it connects to my Art practice in various ways.”

4. Katie West: a painting of a tawny frogmouth.

“I painted this Tawny Frogmouth about 9 or 10 years ago. The canvas was coloured by my friend who uses ochres as the base for her paint and charcoal works. The first time I ever saw a tawny was the same day, or evening actually, of my grandmother's funeral. The tawny sat with us on the back lawn of our family home for ages.”



4. Katie West: a painting of a tawny frogmouth.

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5. Renae Coles: an old Bayer aspirin bottle containing two tiny gold nuggets.

“This bottle belonged to my grandmother. It was given to her when she lived in Victoria, before my mum was born. I've always had it in my head that she was given the bottle and its contents by a man when she was in hospital—but when I asked my mum about it recently, she didn't remember this story at all.”



5. Renae Coles: an old Bayer aspirin bottle containing two tiny gold nuggets.

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6. *Anna Dunnill: a glass medicine bottle, and a rusty metal button.*

“I found these objects buried in the garden of my parents’ house in York — Ballardong Noongar Country in regional Western Australia — when I was maybe nine years old. Dating from the 1920s–30s, the bottle once held a ‘cure-all’ patent medicine that was especially popular during the 1919 influenza pandemic. A quack remedy from a hundred years ago, and an object for fastening in this time of separation, as history cycles round again.”



6. Anna Dunnill: a glass medicine bottle, and a rusty metal button.

II

The Spectral Field

Polly Stanton

It's early evening and the summer sun still burns the ground below. The hard pink surface of the lake gleams and the air is dry and warm. This is Maligundidj country, the unceded land of the Wergaia peoples. A country now situated within the so-called Murray Sunset National Park in Victoria's distant northwest; an expansive region formed in 1979 that covers over half a million hectares of earth, salt, scrub and sky. The wind has dropped, and the surrounding countryside has fallen quiet; only the persistent sound of flies punctuates the stillness. The shoreline of the lake crunches underfoot and the sound of my movement's cuts through the lull as my footsteps leave deep impressions in the ground behind me. Listening to the sounds of my feet I look down and notice emu prints cross the salt in front of me and then disappear into the tall white grass that covers the surrounding hills. I decide to follow. I push my way through the grass and soon lose sight of the emu's steps. A nearby stand of bull oaks hums suddenly into life, their long thin needles vibrating in unison in the warm breeze. It's an eerie sound. Deep and soft but with a hint of foreboding, its musical tones seeming on edge amongst the flies and quiet.

The Mallee wilderness is an undefined place, corresponding to the bounds of an ancient inland sea. Its location is a shimmering expanse always somewhere in the distance – somewhere beyond the seemingly unlimited patchwork of agriculture, dusty satellite townships and dark highways that cut sharp lines through the subdued bush. It's a landscape that plays with notions of the macro

and micro through its unimaginable distance and scale. Yet on the ground the Mallee is vital and finite, teeming with life and movement. Salt is a mineral that seems to define this place. It crunches underfoot and seeps out from the soil at irregular intervals conceiving new terrains and defying cultivation. It moves yet is static also, its passage creating frozen shorelines that shift with the changes of precipitation which in turn cause the surface of salt to swell and shrink from day to day. The land seems to operate in this constant binary – new and mutable but ancient and fixed, with its shorelines fluctuating back and forth with the seasons for a thousand years. Dotted around the circumference of the lake are the remnants of a salt mine, once briefly a thriving industry that is now a collection of rusted remains and broken jetties that rot in the muddy salt. The salt engulfs this debris and hardens around it, consuming the remains with an unyielding force. Broken logs jut from the surface and crushed iron objects lay broken along the shore, their surfaces eaten away by salty crust.

These are inescapable components of this country – temporality experienced through the expansion and contraction of salt and a sense of deep underlying time that is subtly played out through its primordial shorelines and salty dry lake beds. The lakes themselves seem to lie somewhere outside an order of knowledge that contains past, present and future. They form an interval of continuous spectral moments that offer an openness rather than a determined knowing. To attend to these moments is to attune to a space bristling with material relations, contested histories, conflicting forms of knowledge and shifting bodies. As I walk along the shoreline at the end of the day, I trace my path back towards my

car only to discover that the harsh outlines of broken salt that were my footsteps have now softened and congealed, a thin layer of new salt crust forming in the impressions. Another day and my movements across this surface would have vanished as though my haphazard traversing never occurred – a spectral drift that reorders the land through a constant worlding of earthly materialities and oscillating timescales.

This work was supported by Creative Victoria. The Spectral Field was filmed and recorded on the territories of the Latji Latji, Ngintait, Nyeri Nyeri and Wergaia Peoples. I pay my respects to their elders past and present. Sovereignty of this land was never ceded, resistance is ongoing.

*Never; a little of the time;
some of the time;
most of the time; always*
Anna Dunnill

Beth's favourite colour is Torrit Grey. Torrit Grey is a paint colour made by Gamblin, a paint manufacturer. It is a combination of all their other pigments. Every spring, according to Gamblin's website, the air filtration system is cleaned and pigment dust harvested. The resulting colour is released in celebration of Earth Day.

On Earth Day we all make garlands for our hair and decorate the house with flowers and spring produce. Here is a basket of broccoli! Here is a bunch of kale, once fit only for peasants but now worth its weight in avocados, mortgages and smart watches! Here is a sourdough loaf, made from a starter whose origins trace back to the Great Lockdown Sourdough Boom! Here is a tub of grey pigment, sifted and purified, all debris and spiders removed! Genuine question: how do they know what's pigment dust and what's just regular dust? Is there a difference? Is dust just made of earth? On Earth Day we give thanks for the dust.

Torrit Grey is not a colour, it is a concept. The shade differs every year: according to the website it ranges from 'medium dove grey to dark earthy grey', often with a greenish tinge due to the prevalence of Phthalo Green in the mix. You can't buy Torrit Grey. It is available only as a bonus gift, while stocks last, to those who spend over \$100 on art supplies. A reward. An offering.

I dreamed last night that I got Beth a tube of Torrit Grey. In order to receive it I was required to fill out the K-10 form in lieu of spending \$100. The K-10 is a questionnaire designed to establish whether a person suffers from anxiety and/or depression. In the past four weeks, about how often did you feel tired out for no good reason? (Never; a little of the time; some of the time; most of the time; always.) About how often did you feel so nervous that nothing could calm you down? About how often did you feel so sad that nothing could cheer you up? About how often did you feel worthless? About how often did you have \$100 to spend on art supplies?

The K-10 checklist was devised by, and derives its initial from, Professor Ronald C. Kessler. About how often does the name Ronald remind you of a fast food outlet with a creepy promotional orange clown?

When I heard Trump got Covid I was gleeful, jubilant. I was a bit ashamed of this. Mostly I just hoped he would have a terrible time with it and repent all his evil ways and give a press conference to apologise and announce that he was dramatically altering his position on universal healthcare. But then I read that he was on oxygen and I could only see my father in his hospital bed waiting for a lung, his face a lump of yellow dough, eyes glassy, breaths coming in sucking gasps like water circling a drain. And I couldn't wish that on anyone, even a monster, even for the greater good. About how often did you think about politics? About how often were you paralysed by rage?

When I recently filled out the K-10, most of my answers were right in the middle. I remember that when I was sixteen most of my answers were right in the middle, too, although my teens were mostly a dull sludge

of depression and I almost certainly should have scored higher. But when I rated my mood back then, that's all I had to compare it to: greater or lesser despair, like the varying shades of Torrit Grey. When I fill out the questionnaire now I'm basing my answers on a wider range of emotions, the full range of pigments, anxiety that wavers blue-green to mustard yellow, grief a deep black-purple softening to lilac, joy an orange that can deepen in intensity until it's an unbearable throbbing red like blood behind the eyes, sadness a heavy steel grey. I cannot immediately identify any emotion that manifests as Phthalo Green. But even though this spectrum of feeling is now available to me, still when I scrape out the air vents of memory the pigment is much the same, blended together in a range of greys. Like all the pavements in a five-kilometre radius, or my Twitter feed through the glass of my phone, moving beneath my thumb. About how often did you fall asleep refreshing your feed?

This is the year all the shops are shut, so we learn to weave clothes out of grass. We are very resourceful. We craft hats from hedge-trimmings. We dry passionfruit vines and knit them into wraps. We take clippers to our cats and dogs and we felt their fur into warm layers; we swaddle ourselves in poodle wool, in the fur of tabbies. Our animals are naked and they are not ashamed of their nakedness. We walk daily in the garden. We learn to identify edible weeds. We bake bread and give thanks. Take, eat, we say. We are one body. For Earth Day we hold the traditional festivities, but separately, in our homes. Everyone in the world dials in to the same Zoom call. It looks like one of those pictures that's made up of thousands of other pictures, or a Magic Eye: you can only tell what the picture is if you look in the exactly right spot

and let your eyes go out of focus. Our flower garlands are just as bright as ever. Our bread is elaborately braided.

Doves and earth are appropriate shades for spring. I've got really into gardening this year, like everyone, and in the morning as I make coffee I watch the doves wandering around under the olive tree, pecking pecking pecking at seeds, at worms, at tiny insects I can't see. The dove with an olive branch in its mouth is a promise of hope; at least until it's killed by a cat, its insides opened up like a cluster of red jewels. Torrit Grey is a promise that pigments will enter neither the lungs of manufacturing employees, nor the air, water or earth of their surrounds. This is the company's pledge.

When I handed my K-10 form back to the doctor she said, Well, you're right in the middle. I scored 28/50, which is barely a pass but only just warranting intervention. A grey area, ho ho. I am immediately seized with self-doubt: did I play down my inner turmoil? Did I in fact spend more time feeling worthless than I cared to admit? Or am I exaggerating my level of angst and taking valuable resources from someone who needs it more? The doctor scribbles on my therapy referral: "No current risks, but pandemic a real bugger." I consider tweeting this.

I wonder if Gamblin is manufacturing at its usual capacity this year or whether lockdowns required the company to lower their production rate. Will this year's batch of Torrit Grey be smaller, a rare collectors' item? When I see the therapist, I don't really know what to talk about; I'm right in the middle, after all. Our session happens over Zoom. I introduce the therapist to my cat. The cat spends her days sitting in the window, glaring out at the doves. I know she can smell their insides, even through glass. She can't get to them. It makes her furious.

The dove brought an olive branch as evidence of the floodwaters receding, the promise of land emerging, of earth, of a future. The other sign, which seems cheesy as hell now but it's there in black and white, was a rainbow. A spectrum of colour. I mean, you can't make it up.

Biographies

Timmah Ball is a nonfiction writer of Ballarong Noongar heritage. In 2016 she won the Westerly magazine Patricia Hackett Prize, and her writing has appeared in a range of anthologies and literary journals.

Arini Byng is an artist who makes body-based work. Born on Gadigal land, she is of Lenape, African American and Anglo-Celtic descent. Arini works with the affective qualities of materials, gestures and settings — undertaking exercises in image, movement and form to negotiate political scenes. Arini's performances and videos are complex, intimate studies in gesture and action. Her work has been exhibited nationally including Blak Dot Gallery, Watch This Space, Neon Parc project space, MPavilion, c3 Contemporary Art Space, Blindside, Bus Projects, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, The Australian Centre For Contemporary Art, and The Centre for Contemporary Photography; selected works published by Perimeter Editions, Higher Arc, Le Roy and Photofile; and with work held in publication collections of V&A, MoMA, MOCA and Tate Modern. Arini lives and works in Naarm (Melbourne) on the unceded sovereign lands and waterways of the Boon Wurrung and Woi Wurrung (Wurundjeri) people of the Kulin Nation.

Snapcat: Anna Dunnill is an artist and writer living in Naarm/Melbourne, and Renae Coles is a Sydney-based artist and arts communicator. Since 2014 Anna and Renae have collaborated as Snapcat, using craft practice and performance to investigate bravery, feminism, collective action and physical endurance. Snapcat projects have taken place on the river (in hand-built boats), on bikes, in football fields, in the form of protests and parades, and most recently via the post. Snapcat has presented performances and exhibitions in Perth, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane and Newcastle. The performance work *The Lightning Furies*, presented at Newcastle's This Is Not Art (TINA) Festival, was listed in *The Guardian* as one of Australian theatre's "10 most groundbreaking shows by women" in 2016.

Polly Stanton is an artist and filmmaker. Her films and installations focus on contested sites and extraction zones, presenting landscape as a politically charged field of negotiation, entangled with history, technology and capital. Polly's mode of working is expansive and site based, with her practice intersecting across a range of disciplines from film production, sound design, writing and publication. She has exhibited widely in both Australia and overseas, and has been the recipient of numerous grants and Artist-in Residence programs. Recent screenings and exhibitions include Metro Arts (Brisbane), City Gallery Wellington (NZ), RMIT Design Hub (Melbourne), Alchemy Festival (UK), Mildura Art Centre (Vic) and May Space (Sydney).

Kate Tucker works across painting and sculpture, combining various media in a manner that subverts expected order. Materials are manipulated so as to maintain a rawness and familiarity whilst taking on foreign characteristics. Tucker's recent painting and sculpting process has shifted towards building slab-like substrates through repetitive layering of materials. Based in Melbourne, her recent projects include solo exhibitions at Daine Singer, Galerie Pompom and Chapter House Lane and group exhibitions at NADA New York, Sutton Projects, Dutton Gallery and Caves. Tucker has been a finalist in the Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize, Geelong Contemporary Art Prize, The Substation Prize, Albany Art Prize, Bayside Acquisitive Art Prize, The Churchie Emerging Art Prize, Geelong Acquisitive Print Awards, and The Archibald Prize. She graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in 2009.

Katie West belongs to the Yindjibarndi people of the Pilbara tablelands in Western Australia. The process and notion of naturally dyeing fabric underpin her practice — the rhythm of walking, gathering, bundling, boiling up water and infusing materials with plant matter. Katie creates objects, installations and happenings, that invite attention to the ways we weave our stories, places, histories and futures. Katie also shares a collaborative project with artist

and writer Fayen d'Evie entitled Museum Incognita. Sparked by asking what forms a decolonised museum may take, Museum Incognita revisits neglected, concealed or obscured histories and activates embodied readings of place.

Selected exhibitions include: Radical Ecologies, PICA, Perth WA; Roll on, Roll on, Phenomena (until you are no more), curated by Eloise Sweetman, Jan van Eyck Academy, The Netherlands; Warna (ground), Caves Gallery, Melbourne VIC; wilayi bangarri, wanyaarri (go for a walk, listen), Dominik Mersch Gallery, Sydney NSW; Installation Contemporary, Sydney Contemporary 2019, Carriageworks, Sydney NSW; Clearing, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville VIC.

Kathryne Genevieve Honey is an artist, writer and interdisciplinary curator living as a guest on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri people. She currently holds the position of Curator of Exhibitions at Bus Projects and Studio Manager at Public Office. She is on the Board of Caves Gallery and The Georges Mora Fellowship. Prior to this she was Development Coordinator at Chisenhale Gallery, London, and Gallery Manager at Sutton Gallery, Melbourne. Projects she produced have been exhibited both locally and internationally, including at Frieze London, LA Contemporary, Ho Biennale, and Queensland Centre for Photography.

Nina Mulball is an artist and curator, with a focus on socially engaged practice who has exhibited her work Nationally and has produced a range of projects throughout Victoria. Nina graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in 2012 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Photography and gained her Masters of Arts and Community Practice at the VCA in 2017. Her research centred around dialogical art practice, and interaction, focussing on the aesthetics of conversational art practices, and the ambiguity of roles of artists, and audiences in socially engaged practices. Since 2016, she has held the role of Curator, Public Programs at Bus Projects, where she has developed a diverse range of socially and politically engaged artist-centred workshops and projects.

Bus Projects acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate: the Wurundjeri people and Elders past and present of the Kulin nations.

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Snapcat (Renae Coles and Anna Dunnill),
Pockets to hold things we've been holding, 2021, textile works in progress.



Arini Byng, *I thought you might have needed the space*, performance still, 2020



Polly Stanton, Video still, *The Spectral Field*, 2017



Kate Tucker, *Care 1*, 2021, 45cm tall x 22cm wide x 16cm deep, Calico, linen, hemp, digitally printed linen, paper, acrylic, acrylic mediums on board, glazed stoneware base.
Image: Matthew Stanton.



Katie West, 'hold, calico dyed with eucalyptus and puff ball', 2018. Image: Ruben Bull-Milne.