

Josephine Mead,
Zoë Bastin, Kari Lee
McInnenty-McRae,
Jazz Money, Bridget
Griffiths, Katie Paine
Relics of Survival

Curated by
Zoë Bastin and
Kari Lee McInnenty-McRae

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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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We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which this exhibition takes place the Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations. We pay our respects to elders both past, present and emerging and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded on this land. It is a privilege to make and exhibit art on these Countries. Those of us who are settlers acknowledge our implicit role in the invasion, colonization and occupation of the stolen lands on which we work. As curators we acknowledge that this land was and always will be Aboriginal land and we stand with you.

Josephine Mead,
Zoë Bastin, Kari
Lee McInnery-
McRae, Jazz
Money, Bridget
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Relics of Survival
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Slowly translated into words and understood through language. *Relics of survival* asks how feelings become form. How rituals form relics that capture or harness affective potential. 6 artists respond to the theme of survival.

The surviving of ;

Bruises on her skin

Scars on her knees

She shows you again and again.

She fights and she falls

She is still here.

Look , we are still here.

Kari Lee McInnery-McRae

Redemption for the Redeemer

The future is an interesting concept. We plan for the future as if it's a far-flung hypothetical. As if our thoughts and decisions now don't determine some far-off destiny of ours. As if the bones we walk around in now aren't the same ones we walk with in fifty years. I guess the cells of the body regenerate; the bones may not be the same. But the way we walk carves them into becoming the bones they will be. We will our future selves into being.

In thinking about this show – a show about the affect of rituals, about the relics left behind – I reflect on my smaller self, making me. Spending hours alone in their room making potions of flower petals from the back yard. Writing diaries and love letters. Dancing on the school oval when they were meant to be playing footy. I wonder how many of those things inform who I am today? How I move and operate in the world? From drawings and love letters to cheeky texts. I guess they're the same thing? So many of that kid's decisions allowed me to become; to survive.

The relics of this earthly survival¹ have become pictures, have become drawings, have become fragmented memories of selves once been. But they have also become strategies, learned behaviours, phrases to use in times of doubt. Relics of bygone eras calcified in the psyche. Left there as remnants, as reminders of lives once lived, people once known. Like a psychological archaeologist, I walk through the museum of feelings once felt. Trying to find something that looks familiar, trying to re-create a situation that was once known. Tying memories to the present to work out how to act (what to do next).

Resilience is the ability of a substance to recover quickly from difficulties; it describes a toughness. It describes an elasticity of form. How something springs back. The relics I describe as fragmented experiences, calcified over time, seem fragile. In sculptural casting processes there is often a mould that has to be broken to release the form inside. Bits of hulking plaster chip, chip, chipped away to reveal a bronze statue. Maybe our relics serve as moulds for the forms of our lives to be cast within. Maybe their shape forms the molten plasticity of our resilient selves. Kari Lee McInnery-McRae's work casts fragments of

1 I'm borrowing Donna Haraway's term here to describe a way of telling stories, stories of earthly survival. A kind of story telling that values human connection to the non-human; that posits a kind of ontology that acknowledges the earth as interconnected and equally important. Terranova, Fabrizio, Ellen Meiresonne, Donna J. Haraway, Rusten Hogness, and Cayenna Pepper. Donna Haraway: *Story Telling for Earthly Survival*. , 2018. Internet resource. <https://earthlysurvival.org>

the relics, going back to the place where they were formed. Collecting sand as evidence of what forged her there.

Resilience is a crucial aspect of survival. How we work out a way to continue onwards. Rebecca Solnit says "Having the right to show up and speak are basic to survival"². In her seminal text *Men Explain Things to Me*, she describes silencing as an infringement on female liberty, that being silenced and not being listened to, is an abuse of power. And how this de-valuing of voices often discounts violent crimes and silences victims. When making her work, Bridget Griffiths and I spoke about how structures can hide and reveal violence. What it might mean to be broken apart and put back together. In a patriarchal society the way womxn/non-binary/trans/queer voices aren't valued breaks us apart. Not speaking, not being allowed to speak, being spoken over. Left behind as pieces, we put ourselves back together.

There are times when the actors of speech aren't equal. There are times when words, rendered into the world as sounds, cause substantial harm. Breaking things in their wake. There's a work by Katie Paine that hangs above my bed. On its Perspex face is engraved "Tracherous Vernacular": a typological allegory for the landscape of speech. I imagine this phrase as an impassable terrain, the kind that requires high-tech equipment: special walking sticks and shoes with spikes. I imagine trying to climb over large rocks, navigating narrow paths cut into sheer cliff faces, one step wrong and a deep fall awaits. Sometimes speaking can mean a great deal; the performativity of it, its consequences.

These high stakes mean there are also times when we can't speak. When we have no words to say. Paralysed in doubt before the fall, our voices are rendered incapacitated. The story of Papageno and Papagena, referenced in Paine's work, is about two characters who found a way out of speech³. Who found a way of communicating, born out of love. A mate of mine is known in her family for being softly spoken, though her friends say she's quite loud. Sometimes words are spoken but not heard. After not having our words listened to it's understandable that we might stop trying to speak, find alternative forms of communication. Van Morrison sings, "I'm a dweller on the threshold... and I don't want to wait no more"⁴ and I think about those syllables suspended in motion... not able to escape the lips. Suspended in the door frame, where thoughts become words, we stop to consider the fallout. To

2 Solnit, Rebecca, and Ana T. Fernandez. *Men Explain Things to Me*. , 2014. Print.

3 Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, 1756-1791. *The Magic Flute = (Die Zauberflöte) : an Opera in Two Acts*. New York :G. Schirmer, 1941.

4 Morrison, Van. *Dweller on the Threshold, Beautiful Vision*. Record Plant Studios. 1982. Song.

consult with our allies about how to phrase terms. To check in with a reality outside of our own consciousness. It is not always a simple process to speak one's mind.

We are taught to understand feelings as happening before speech, before logic, outside and apart from rationality. Feelings, apparently, exist in a different realm to language. A plain full of opaque shapes that we don't comprehend but rather respond to. One that is slowly translated into words and understood through the actions of writing and speaking. Josephine Mead's work reads, "To utter aloud or render in speech" like it's a choice, like there's a moment before sound when these opaque shapes hang around undefined, not pinned down. Speech is rarely a straightforward translation of thought and feeling into sound. To be listened to, to speak like no one's listening, or to simply speak the words you think whoever is listening wants you to say.

A type of choreography is formed in the process of listening and being listened to. Of reading the words I wrote, now through your own body. Eyes darting across the page. The body is always moving. Constantly engraving into its gestures its own rituals. The precise distance between holding the fridge open with my foot and reaching the sink, so I don't have to close and re-open the door again. Rituals formed through proximate relations. Patterns found that exist between us, and the things around us. Animate in their connection.

I often light candles for reflection. At points when I'm not sure what else to do.

Alongside speech, we think through actions. There are moments of performance that enact spiritual realities: lighting a candle, dancing in the dark, picking flowers. I've been thinking about my own rituals of survival and the relics they leave as traces. Taking selfies, singing out loud, writing my thoughts down. Trying to prove an existence outside of my body. Trying to mark on the wall of the cave some futile note-taking of presence. A record of my being here.

The title of my work references an Anselm Kiefer painting that hangs in the Kunsthalle in Zürich. Kiefer depicts a huge wooden attic; large hulking planks of wood show swirling patterns of the grain. At the centre of the painting is a cauldron full of blood. Written above it in messy white paint is, "Höchsten Heiles Wunder! Erlösung dem Erlöser".

Loosely translated this means: The holiest of miracles! Redemption for the redeemer! Raised in the Anglican church as a child I was an alter girl; it was my role to carry the light. Sundays were filled with ritual. Counting steps up the aisle. Trying to look serious (read: to be straight) in front of a congregation of judging stares. There are times when we can't speak at all. Rendered mute by the ritual itself.

Lauren Berlant says, "A negative state isn't only an oppressive relation that might induce resistance: it is also a structural sense of incoherence and internal antagonism among concepts, in individuals, or among persons and worlds"⁵. I wonder what it means to make a record of existence, to push up against the systems we exist within that silenced our voices, that have limited our power. There's a vulnerability that comes from making the personal political as second wave feminism taught us⁶ and with it an acknowledgement that it always was anyway. Art comes from those who make it. A politics of acknowledging the work acknowledges the person. Of giving credit to the survival of a practice that under the oppressive relation of this neo-liberal society is hard to do. An acknowledgement that through this work we make our own worlds.

As Gordon Hall says, "Specific questions produce specific kinds of answers – they outline a world which our answers must then inhabit"⁷. And I think about who is allowed to speak and why? Whose voices are heard. We birth our words into the world. From us, of us, they begin a life of their own as heard by ears and read from the page. Wiradjuri poet Jazz Money's poem *To Fanny Cochrane Smith* reminds me how important words are in worlding. White history says Cochrane Smith, born in 1834, was the last fluent speaker of her Palawa kani language. The wax cylinder recordings made of her singing have been integral to the preservation and revival of the languages of Lutruwita (Tasmania). There are multiple worlds, multiple perspectives that exist here competing for attention. A record, a tracing, a poem, a rendering into language that proves sustained existence. Under the push of colonial power to wipe out all language, all kinds of survival it cannot control.

Despite all the forces that render us voiceless, we still speak. We are still here. Relics as remainders reminding us that we have survived. I heard Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson speaking about Indigenous Sovereignty and the thought systems that govern a (my) western

5 Berlant, Lauren Gail. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham : Duke University Press, 2011. Print.

6 Carol Hanisch, *The Personal is Political*, Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation, edited by Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt. 1970

7 Hall, Gordon. *Among Things*. *Art in America Magazine*, 2018. Print.

understanding of land and property⁸. Robinson describes Indigenous Sovereignty as being a sustained connection to the land. Not as owners (in the sense of property), but as an unending interconnection

of reciprocal relation with the non-human. An entanglement that isn't hierarchical. It is a sustained relationship, unending; although colonialism has tried, this was and always will be Aboriginal land, cared for by the people who were here first. Pushing up against colonial relics this resilient survival seems particularly impressive.

Through the evidence of our making, the objects cast out here in this space, we are able to prove our survival. We are able to come together in our rituals. Kari says "Look, we are still here", let this community, this connection, this network be evidence of our enduring survival; a testimony to our resilient selves.

Written by Zoë Bastin to accompany *Relics of Survival*.

8 Moreton-Robinson, Aileen. *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

Zoë Bastin is an artist and curator living in Narm (Melbourne). Bastin works in-between sculpture and dance creating choreography, objects, videos, photos and performances. Exploring the materiality of bodies and objects, her practice re-imagines her body and its connection to spatial, material and social contexts. Her recent project choreographic project Volition tries to queer movements inherited from dance training to find the body anew. Currently undertaking her PhD at RMIT University Bastin researches the materiality of bodies and objects to understand ontology. Bastin has previously exhibited and performed at The Substation, Paradise Hills Gallery, Wyndham City Council, Seventh Gallery, MADA staff Gallery at Monash University, Testing Grounds, School of Art Gallery RMIT University, Tinning St Presents, c3 Gallery and BLINDSIDE Art Space. Bastin's current projects include organising the Queer(y)ing Creative Practice Reading Group, ongoing choreography That which was once familiar and Waves are Disturbances for BLINDSIDE.

Jazz Money is a writer, filmmaker and educator of Wiradjuri and European heritage. In 2018 she came first in the University of Canberra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Poetry Prize, and was shortlisted for the Nakata Brophy Prize. She was included in the 2019 Australian Poetry Anthology and is a 2019 First Nations Fellow at Varuna, supported by Copyright Agency. Jazz is currently based in Sydney, where she lives and works on the sovereign lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation.

Josephine Mead works through photography, sculpture, installation and poetic text to investigate her standing and sense of self, as a woman. Josephine's current areas of interest include seeking support through her female familial lineages; time and history as metaphorical matter; the body as a site of discursive practice; and language and translation as embodied experiences. Josephine Mead is a Melbourne-based artist and writer. She graduated from the Fine Art Honours Degree (First Class) at Monash University in 2017. She has exhibited at a range of venues including c3 contemporary art space, Bus Projects, Stockroom, Craft Victoria, Blindside, Kings Artist-Run, Seventh Gallery and Blue Oyster Space. In 2018 she was shortlisted for the John Fries Award; undertook the Kings Emerging Writer's Program, the Arquetopia Foundation Residency (Mexico) and the Macfarlane Fund Residency. In 2019 she will undertake the Tasarim Bakkali TAB Residency in (Istanbul, Turkey) and the Cortex Frontal Residency (Arraiolos, Portugal).

Bridget Griffiths is a multidisciplinary artist currently residing in Melbourne. Bridget's work currently deals with ideas surrounding communication, interpersonal relationships, film theory and popular culture.

Kari Lee McInnery-McRae works predominately with sculptural materials, considering the way that materials can be in a state of flux, in parallel to the way that memories change over time. She reconstructs memory through imagery, voice, textures, sounds, sculptures and physical performance. Through abstracting something intangible, such as memory, into a sculpture, she explores how memory can warp with time. Kari Lee McInnery-McRae is a Melbourne-based artist. McInnery-McRae holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Drawing from Victorian College of the Arts, a Bachelor of Fine Art in Ceramics from RMIT and Bachelor of First Class Fine Art in Honours at Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. She has shown her work in multiple galleries across Melbourne including Craft Victoria, McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park and various artists run initiatives.

Katie Paine is a Naarm/ Melbourne-based artist and writer whose practice investigates systems of meaning-making, specifically, the role images and language play in constructing narrative. She investigates the acts of speaking, reading and writing: these tools are often used to successfully communicate knowledge but in her work she explores the ways that they can be fallible, porous and mutable. Within her work Paine uses text, drawing, video, assemblage and installation to explore our collective conceptualisation of time and the way systems of meaning-making are culpable of perpetuating fraught narratives, particularly in relation to our understanding of history. In her research, Paine looks at the fallacies of bureaucratic institutions: the way in which they are hostile to living bodies and also the limits of the archive's capacity to communicate lived experience of an event. Paine has exhibited at c3 Contemporary Art Space, Kings ARI, Seventh Gallery, Channels Festival, Blindside ARI and La Trobe Art Institute.

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Bus Projects
25-31 Rokeby Street,
Collingwood,
VIC 3066 Australia.
busprojects.org.au/

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