

COOL CHANGE CONTEMPORARY

7 MARCH - 28 MARCH, 2020

415 PARTS PER MILLION

ESTHER MCDOWELL / YABINI KICKETT

DANNI MCGRATH

SOPHIE G NIXON

DEXTER ROSENGRAVE

RACHEL SALMON-LOMAS

CARLY LYNCH

PVI COLLECTIVE

PATCH SINCLAIR & TESSA REX

SNAPCAT



415 PARTS PER MILLION

As the effects of climate change cut through stratifications of culture, *415 Parts Per Million* brings together individual voices of protesters and artists. Physical symbols of outcry from the September 2019 Global Climate Strike are exhibited alongside artworks examining both individual relationships with the environment and the power of protest.

415 Parts Per Million was originally presented by Cool Change Contemporary at Rosny Farm (TAS) for HOBIENNALE from 17 November - 15 December 2019 with the work of Esther McDowell/Yabini Kickett, Danni McGrath, Sophie G Nixon, Dexter Rosengrave and Rachel Salmon-Lomas. This expanded exhibition spanning all galleries at also includes work by Carly Lynch, pvi collective, Patch Sinclair & Tessa Rex and SNAPCAT to explore individual artists' acknowledgements of their relationship to the environment, plus the power of acts of protest (both big and small) in the face of the climate crisis and other social and political issues.

CORFLUTE

Corflute is the common name of corrugated polypropylene, a rigid yet lightweight fluted plastic beloved by the sign industry for its ability to cheaply print and cut to size hundreds of signs. During election time it's impossible to avoid, with every primary school, town hall or community building plastered with the faces of smiling candidates. Last election I volunteered for the Greens in my area. We tied our signs to what little space was available (the Liberals beat us there) with frozen fingers, struggling to get the jute – I bought jute in an attempt not to use more plastic! – through the holes in the corner and into firm knots. The Liberals used cable ties which they sliced off and chucked with the rest of their materials in the skip. During the day a lady in the voting queue told me off for flyering for the Greens because we 'should know better not to waste all that paper' then told me to fuck off when I told her the paper was recycled and the ink was non-toxic vegetable based.

Corflute is very difficult to recycle, as the plastic fluting requires specialist machinery that isn't available through most local councils. After the election, we took all our signs back to the Green headquarters for future use. They tend to design the signs so they can be reused; the same slogans and images year after year, an absence of any specific date, electorate, or candidate in the hope that the message is as valid next year as it will be in decades. This act of forward planning, of considering where and how these material remains will occupy space necessarily leads to the question of whether the messages will actually remain valid in the future without becoming stale or overdone. How do they retain their magical power, their calls to action,



Danni McGrath, *I'm here for the hairy marron* (climate strike 2019) (detail), 2019, screen printed posters, 29.7 x 42 cm each.



Placards from the September 2019 Global Climate Strike, exhibited in *415 Parts Per Millions* for HOBIENNALE 19 at Rosny Farm Schoolhouse

their pleas for change? Does the message stand for itself, or does it require a person behind the sign, marching amongst hundreds or thousands of others, taking up their own space in the world?

I once used about 200 corflutes donated from a union office for a project, onto which I painted black and rewrote slogans. It was a 40-degree day and I rolled the signs black in the blazing sun in my backyard, the corflute softening and bending in the heat. As I painted over each sign the recent history of Australian protests was obscured in what felt like an obscene act of censorship; slogans that I fundamentally agreed with at the time arising again several years later and making me remember all the things I'd forgotten I was so furious about. In the never-ending deluge of injustice and incompetence, specificity is lost. Messages float to the surface in unexpected combinations, the longevity of the signs' materials ironically dating the urgency of the messages and placing them firmly in the past, regardless of whether a particular battle continues to rage.

You can generally pick which organisations have resources and which don't by the nature of their signs. If it's printed on corflute it suggests they have some level of legitimacy, authority. On the contrary, a person attending a march alone or unaffiliated will often bring something more handmade – a sign painted by their kids, or the result of a community workshop using recycled cardboard boxes, or banners made from bedsheets – a different kind of detritus that we all manage to accumulate over the course of our lives.

This act of hand-making and embellishing is still an assembly line of production, but one of discussions and debate, careful hand-lettering, coming up with the

perfect punchy slogan. The sign speaks for more than just the movement, it needs to perfectly encapsulate an individual stance. On the other hand, one sign among many can stand out for its perfect message, but it's the weight of all the hundreds of messages bolstering it up that provide the perfect backdrop for a single line of dissent.

These handmade signs carry a different kind of legitimacy, the halo of 'ordinary concerned citizen' that groups such as Extinction Rebellion have mobilised to give their movement that irresistible flavour, the combination of authenticity and grassroots power. But it's not always such a direct dichotomy. There's no such thing as a professional protestor, despite what Scott Morrison would have you think. People pick up and reuse different slogans, different politics and different messages throughout their lives, carrying them along in a secret arsenal of rebellion. Bedsheets, soggy cardboard, and corflutes too are the remains of a life lived the best way one can at the time. They can be painted over or flipped back to front, appropriated, edited or kept intact, waiting for the perfect moment to rise.

Miranda Johnson

Miranda Johnson is a writer and curator based in Perth.



Sophie G Nixon, *Dad's Wool Socks* (detail), 2018, Dad's worn wool farm socks from New Zealand, circa 1980, coloured wool yarn.



SNAPCAT, *Tiny Parades*, 2015. Commissioned by the Perth Public Art Foundation as a part of PerthFLUX. Photo by Emiko Watanabe.

LISTEN TO US, WE PARADE FOR ALL: SNAPCAT DISCUSSES TINY PARADES

Renaë Coles: Okay, I'll ask you the first question. Why did we make *Tiny Parades*?

Anna Dunnill: We were thinking about spectacle and about bravery. We were also thinking about feeling very small and powerless, and how there's something quite poignant about a single person, or in our case two people, rallying against a force.

Our work has often used really silly, basic materials, craft materials, things that are really feminised and infantilised—even when the content actually has a much more serious base. And there's the idea of the protest: using cardboard, using things at hand, using anything to make yourself as bright and big and visible as possible.

RC: I think there were lots of different ways we were feeling small and powerless.

AD: We decided that these parades weren't going to be about important issues—or issues of world importance, in any case. They were going to be very small things.

RC: We felt like we couldn't take on, say, the refugee crisis, which was probably one of the biggest issues at the time. I think this has changed in the last couple of years with the climate rallies, but in Perth the rallies were just always really small.

The activists we spoke to while we were working on *Tiny Parades*—this project really resonated with them.

Our project was saying, 'We want to put ourselves out there and put our bodies and identities out in public, for a cause'...but we wanted to do it for causes we felt we could take on. Like, at our scale.

AD: The silliness ultimately, of those things, is definitely what brought some criticism. Like, what were we doing, why were we doing that? But the real thing that we were trying to talk about was feeling small and powerless, and the subject matter was just the vehicle for that.

RC: Something that was important to us, with all of our projects, was doing something that felt real. Not making an image about something, or making something that would just sit in a gallery space and feel safe. Even for the times we did make something to sit in a gallery, there was always another part to the project that was real people, in the world, doing real things, even if the real things were just kind of abstractions.

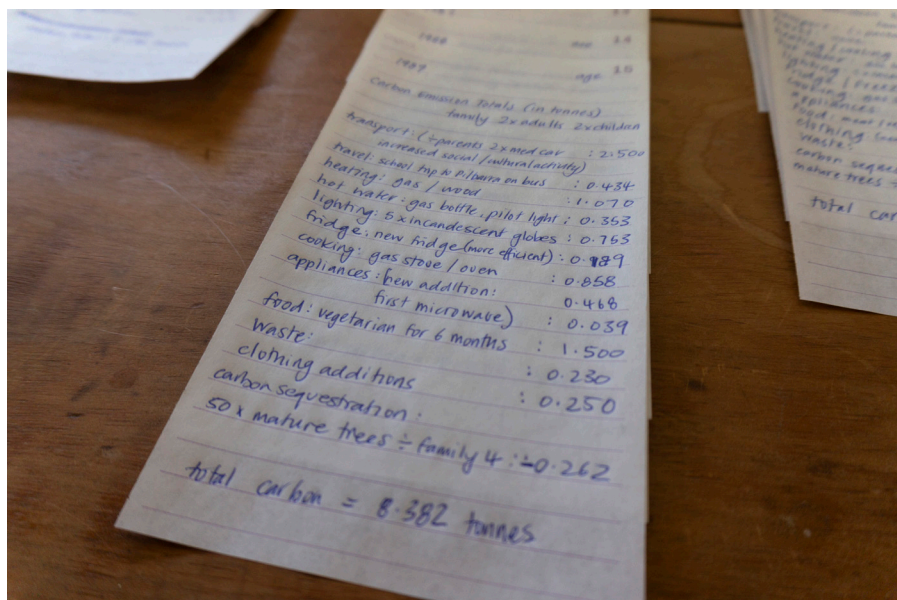
AD: We also only had two weeks between each parade. That's kind of important, actually.

RC: There was something very in the moment—the rain parade was literally designed the day before, because of this giant crazy storm. That was very much the feeling of this whole project. We were responsive, we were constantly thinking, strategising, making connections, trying to find more cardboard...

AD: Oh my god, yeah, stockpiling cardboard! We were working on them in the evenings, and the night before, and then usually the morning of, and I just remember every single time—no matter how hard we worked during the week—we were pretty much always fixing



Dexter Rosengrave, *Brunch with the Birds* (a performance for the camera) (still), 2019, single channel video (07:47)



Rachel Salmon-Lomas, *Time Horizon 1.0* (detail), 2019, pages from carbon book, ink, unique state prints, 20 x 12 cm each.

something or finishing something in the morning before the parade; and then just like pumping with adrenaline, going through chants in the car, with the back seat filled with cardboard, on the way to Council House.

RC: I think that kind of way of making is very connected to the 'protests' world. People aren't generally planning their placards a month in advance, they're usually a night before, the morning of. It's very, like, 'Okay, this is actually happening, I've got to do what I can, make this as good as I can.'

AD: Shall we talk a bit about the the parameters we had to fit into? I'm thinking about things like the parade route, and how it was really long...

RC: Oh my god, it was so long.

AD: It had to be in a loop for our purposes; but it had to extend along Beaufort Street, and it ended up taking 20 minutes to walk...

RC: We had to "activate" a certain area of the city.

AD: In some ways that made it more effective. The length was really gruelling! The first one where I was like, 'I'm going to sing the Ship to Shore theme song through a megaphone, but really slowly like a lament'... and then the megaphone broke and I was just singing it...

RC: You were hoarse for a few days! And in the rain parade, the wind whipped the sign I was holding and twisted my wrist and sprained it—that was right at the beginning, I had to keep carrying it the whole way. All of them were a feat of endurance. Like the hula

hooping! The next day was agony. But—that's kind of what we wanted!

AD: Yes! We wanted it to be silly, but endurance.

RC: We wanted it to be really real—real for us. It wasn't something where we just wanted to be like, get the right photo and then, okay, we're done. We wanted to really put our bodies on the line.

AD: And we actually did. It was exhausting. It was one of the most exhausting projects I've ever done.

RC: It asked us to be quite brave—to forget all sense of shame and humiliation and just do the job we'd written for ourselves.

AD: And to stop being worried about whether something was good art, even.

RC: We didn't have time.

AD: Yeah, there was something very liberating about that. We've talked before about some of the conversation around the parades at the time; the way there's a default expectation that if a work is 'serious' it also must be saying something important. Whereas if you make work that seems playful or silly it's like, you're doing that because you're a little bit simple, not because you've made an artistic decision. As hard as it is for me to watch myself hula hooping dressed as an earthworm—it's extremely cringeworthy, let's be real. But we were trying stuff out.

The project also had to have an online component, so getting a public conversation around them was what we were trying to do...which we did ultimately succeed



Esther McDowell / Yabini Kickett, *Kirlar-berniny (Ants digging)*, 2018 - 2019, photographs, 20.32 x 30.48 cm each.



Patch Sinclair and Tessa Rex, *the lizzard bites back (still)*, 2017, Super8m telecine (3:44).

in doing!

RC: We did. Some of it was great—like the public response to the Don't Leave parade was amazing, with people tagging their friends, saying 'See, this is what I've been telling you, don't go!' And other people being like, 'Oh my god, I can't believe they think this is going to change anything'...which is literally the response to any form of activism ever. I really enjoyed that response because it's not like we really thought we would stop people from leaving Perth...

AD: No...and it really came back to haunt us a few years later when we said we were leaving...

RC: [laughs] Maybe we were saying to ourselves as well! We hung in as long as we could.

AD: We were definitely the audience for that parade.

Danni McGrath (VIC) is an artist and printer interested in the mediation of language and communication through distributed media. She is from Perth (Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar) and lives in Narm / Melbourne.

This unlimited edition of posters has been screen printed by Danni McGrath. Screen printing is a method of fast and cheap reproduction of images commonly associated with political protest.

Esther McDowell / Yabini Kickett (WA) is a self taught multimedia artist. Through her art, Esther shares her love for endemic flora and landscapes within Bibulmun country. She depicts stories, places and people important to her. A lot of her inspiration comes from local environments, her mother's home and the deep connection to country.

Kirlar-berniny (Ants digging) is a series of photographs taken at spots around the artist's home town Kellerberrin over the past two years. From a sacred women's site, local salt lake to prolific and vibrant flowering boodja. "I didn't grow up here but feel it as home, this is where my moort are from and where I feel safest. A lot of my homeland is now decimated farm land - these are remaining patches of hope and love."

Sophie G Nixon (WA) is an early career artist and emerging curator working primarily with textiles to create gentle sculptures and installations. Currently, she is interested in worn and damaged textiles, searching for unconventional modes of mending and repair.

Dad's Wool Socks and My Worn Socks were born out of an anxiety over the imagined lives of them in landfill. Repairing and mending became a way to soothe



Carly Lynch. *Remembering (Smiths Beach Action Day 2001)*, 2018, acrylic, pastel, fly wire applique on canvas.



pvi collective, *tiny revolutions: conbank*, 2018, Originally commissioned by 52 artists 52 actions.

anxieties for Nixon, and continued wear became a soft rebellion against fast-fashion and throw-away culture.

Carly Lynch (WA) has exhibited in a number of group, collaborative and solo exhibitions both locally and interstate including the Fremantle Art Centre Print Award, and Perth Institute of Contemporary Art's Hatched Graduate Exhibition

Remembering (Smiths Beach Action Day 2001) draws upon a historical protest which took place at Smiths Beach, on Wadandi Boodja, in the state's south-west back in 2001 against the development of a hillside area of community, environmental and cultural significance into a vast subdivision by Canal Rocks Pty Ltd. As a child, Lynch attended the protest with her family and witnessed her father's immense involvement in various coastal protection efforts throughout this time. The work points to the strength that can be drawn from intergenerational resistance and collective action.

pvi collective (WA) are a tactical media art group who create agitational participatory artworks intent on the creative disruption of everyday life. They use gameplay alongside emerging, familiar and diy technology to explore the social dynamics of the cities we live in.

tiny revolutions; is a provocation to develop a climate of resistance that responds to the current social and political crisis brewing. By generating a space for play this work aims to explore temporary social change to confront the new realities of the present.

The banking royal commission hearings revealed tales of reckless lending by banks, gross foul play banking, superannuation and financial services industries - from bribery rings, to charging dead people, forged

signatures and fraudulent financial advice. At the heart of the action is a critique of the banking industry's' aggressive sales driven culture which emphasises profit at all costs

task: appropriate commbank's current advertising campaign with 'can your bank invoice you even when you are dead? conbank can'

action: insert replica leaflets into local branches and document.

Dexter Rosengrave (TAS) is a multimedia artist who creates art about language, metaphor, queerness and identity. Their recent work explores different archival ways to subvert the loss of queer history and communicate future queer liberation.

Brunch with the Birds (a performance for the camera) is a parody of Jill Orr's 1979 work Lunch with the Birds and responds to the subject of the Anthropocene through video and performance. During this performance, Rosengrave dresses up in drag to look like Orr and scatters hot chips over their body in preparation to share brunch with the birds. The work is a playful exploration of our guilt, the tension between humour and seriousness in debate, and the tangled boundaries between individual and collective action in our environment.

Rachel Salmon-Lomas (WA) is an artist and educator. Her creative practice largely focuses on themes of isolation and connection, both through the urban landscape and character-based investigations using traditional print processes.

Time Horizon 1.0 documents an imperfect record of

the artist's yearly carbon emissions, a page per year of Salmon-Lomas' life. Each year considers life events such as the advent of mobile phone and laptop technology, the increase in the use of plastic packaging and recycling and also reflect the life events of the artist herself- moving out of home, living in share houses, breaking up with her long term partner and the passing of a parent. It becomes a living document for an ever expanding invoice from the earth.

Patch Sinclair (NSW) is an intermedia artist with interests in film+video-making, drawing, comics, zines, props and textiles. **Tessa Rex (NSW)** is a documentary artist and video producer working across photography, radio and video with a focus on social justice. By day, Rex is Director of Video and Audio at Bauer Media.

A haze of Super8 captures the Lizard Bites Back 'protestival' at Olympic Dam uranium mine, Roxby Downs, South Australia. An activist reads the names of nuclear testing sites. The lizard enters.

SNAPCAT (VIC/NSW) is a collaboration between Renae Coles and Anna Dunnill. Originally from Perth, the duo have made socially engaged, performative work together since 2014. Snapcat's work is both political and humorous, using colour, spectacle and a DIY attitude. Their projects often take place in outdoor public spaces, on bikes, football fields or in the form of protests and parades.

Tiny Parades was a series of five public processions that wended through the Perth CBD. Both solemn and tongue-in-cheek, the parades championed a selection of human-scale struggles and joys, while examining the nature of protest and public action.

Cool Change Contemporary acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation, the traditional and rightful custodians of the land on which we operate. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

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