



# RONA16

2016 Catalogue of works

# OVERVIEW

Welcome to the RONA16 catalogue, an overview of the exciting network of creative events hosted by the Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA) around Australia during September and October 2016, to celebrate the rights of nature.

On 22 October 2016, AELA held Australia's first People's Tribunal for the Rights of Nature. The Tribunal is an alternative forum for justice and was held at the Banco Court in Brisbane. It heard cases presented by citizens and Earth lawyers concerned about the destruction of ecosystems in Australia. To support the Tribunal and promote cultural engagement with the emerging movement around the Rights of Nature, AELA's intention is to blend the creative re-interpretation of environmental governance with cultural responses to the rights of the natural world to flourish.

RONA16 was a National Arts Celebration, featuring a range of activities: a national exhibition at the Brisbane Powerhouse called 'Plenty', a network of connected events and responses around Australia and an Artist in Residence program.

*Renata Buziak, Habitat II, 2015 archival pigment on paper*



*Karen Benjamin, Flinders Reef*

## ABOUT AELA

The Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA) is a national, not for profit organisation whose mission is to increase the understanding and practical implementation of Earth centred law, governance and ethics (Earth jurisprudence) in Australian society.

AELA believes that cultural change is a vital part of building Earth jurisprudence, and through Earth Arts, works to nurture the role of creativity in transforming law and governance.

AELA's Earth Arts program is dedicated to the artists from all cultures across time, who practiced in the fold of ecological health, and we continue in this tradition. If you are a creative and interested in getting involved, sharing your ideas or you're simply curious about how Earth Jurisprudence links art + governance, please visit our website: [www.earthlaws.org.au](http://www.earthlaws.org.au) Everyone's welcome to join us!

# RONA16 THEMES

## IMAGINE AND CREATE THE PARADIGM WE'RE PROPOSING - EARTH LAWS AND RIGHTS OF NATURE

- Humans are one part of nature - interconnected, interdependent with the Earth Community
- Human governance systems should be embedded in deep knowledge of local Earth communities
- Non-human agency is vital, the non-human world belongs to no-one; vibrant biodiversity is critical to life on earth
- Recognising that all life and life supporting systems on Earth have "a right to exist, thrive and evolve"
- Respects indigenous knowledge, human 'lived' experience, emotional and spiritual connections
- holds all life sacred and balances reasonable human needs with the rights of the natural world to exist and evolve; would never prize human wants over the destruction of ecosystems



Alicia Lane



David Porteus

## REVEAL, REFLECT AND CRITIQUE THE CURRENT FLAWED PARADIGM OF WESTERN LAW WHICH

- has created governance systems that do not reflect how the natural world works
- is built on the idea that humans 'own' nature - nature is property, objectified, commodified (bought and sold), caged, fenced, destroyed
- gives 'rights' to humans and human created fictions - corporations, ships. While plants, animals, ecosystems have no rights, are invisible and 'dead' in the eyes of the law
- privileges western legal, scientific and evidentiary frameworks of knowledge
- legalises the destruction of vital ecosystems and life support systems

# PLENTY

**The RONA16 National Exhibition - 'Plenty' - was held at the Brisbane Powerhouse, from September 26 to October 24, 2016**

Plenty was a national exhibition that engaged audiences with questions about our interconnectedness with, and interdependence on, the natural world. The exhibition aimed to reactivate a sense of wonder in the everyday, and to assist in the contemplation of our place on this small planet.

The industrial ruin that is today the Brisbane Powerhouse Performing art space, was an ideal site for thinking about regeneration and transformation, as it is a defunct coal fired electrical power station architecturally transformed into a healthy, historically aware and resource efficient site for creative activities.

Plenty invited us to consider the culture we live in, and which acts to shape our appreciation and perception of the world around us. The arts have a significant role to play in our continued adaptation and mitigation of change, not only through sharing unthinkable dystopian futures, but also by being part of a progressive attitude that is searching for solutions rather than creating the fear that can often arrest our action. Art brings people together in a social environment where reflection and conversation is welcome and it is through these reflections and conversations that people may develop motivation and start to participate in communities that are working to protect the things that they value. We increasingly understand that human health and happiness are inseparable from the health of the ecosystems in which we live. The fascination and sense of connection we feel while observing other living things and the environments that support them, feed our spiritual as well as our physical lives.

It is the significance of art that it can help audiences reflect on their own values and develop personal standpoints on cultural, social and environmental issues of importance.





*Photographs from sculpture installation On the Move  
by artist Merete Megarrity*



*Dr Kay S Lawrence, Plenitude*

**Plenty featured established and emerging artists, and we give thanks to those who shared their work with us**

Davida Allen  
Chris Bennie  
Renata Buziak  
Felix Cihak  
Daniel Della Bosca  
Marian Drew  
Alana Hampton  
Kelly Hussey-Smith  
Kay Lawrence  
Donna Marcus  
Merete Megarrity  
Daro Montag  
Bruce Reynolds  
Peter Thiedeke  
Aviva Reed



## “TRAVERSE”

### **Student arts exhibition, the Powerhouse**

More than 300 people attended the ‘Traverse’ exhibition, which featured a projection evening at the Powerhouse on 20th October 2016.

Traverse arose from an intensive focus on and artistic exploration of North Stradbroke Island, as part of an undergraduate arts course led by Associate Professor Marian Drew and artist Renata Buziak, at Griffith University. The art works were created during an intensive 5 day ‘in-field’ art expedition to North Stradbroke Island. Leading up to the five days on the island in July 2016, were a series of lectures about earth centred law and governance, climate change and environmental sustainability, presented by Dr Michelle Maloney, National Convenor of the Australian Earth Laws Alliance. On the island the art students met scientist Dr Jan Aldenhoven, who outlined the geological history of the island, as well as the political history involved in the extensive sand mining industry. Quandomooka elder, Aunty Joan, shared information about the indigenous history, culture and politics of the island.

The walks, talks and workshops, were all designed to heighten awareness, stimulate ideas, create dialogue and encourage participants to engage a visual response, drawing on their existing art practice and interests. It is the challenge of art to present probing narratives and refreshed perspectives that invite audiences to ask questions about their own relationships to the art and the ideas presented through the art. Much of the work focused on what it means to individuals to have the experience of natural environments and its impact on a person’s physical and mental well-being.





*Jason Cahill, screen shot from the video Melaleuca*

# RONA16 CONNECTED BIO-REGIONAL EVENTS

**As part of RONA16, AELA extended a nation-wide invitation to artists, galleries, community groups and organisations to generate creative and cultural responses to the rights of the natural world to exist, thrive and evolve. The next 5 pages feature the work of the 2016 regional events.**



## EUCALYPTUS DREAMING

Nowa Nowa Caravan Park, Gippsland - 6pm, 8 October 2016

The Eucalyptus Dreaming gathering and exhibition worked to create awareness about, and reconfirm and explore connections to, the bush, wild places and the vibrant biodiversity of Far East Gippsland. The first ever Eucalyptus Dreaming gathering was in the bush within an area covered by the mining license footprint of the Gippsland Iron Pty Ltd for the Nowa Nowa Iron Pit and Slurry Project. The pit and slurry project threatens the unique Far East Gippsland biodiversity, its Ramsar Listed Lake Tyers, and the very fabric of the East Gippsland community - socially, culturally and environmentally.

The artist presented a photography exhibition at the Nowa Nowa Caravan Park. This Park is perched on the banks of Boggy Creek - a body of pristine water leading directly to the Ramsar listed Lake Tyers that will be most effected by the pit and slurry project. The exhibition stimulated discussion and created awareness about the threats of mineral resource extraction in the wild places of Far East Gippsland that are being targeted by mining corporations.

At the gathering attendees discussed ideas about Eucalyptus Dreaming and connection to the bush, and also discussed the changes and projects that can be pursued to help promote an understanding of earth laws in our communities.

## BY NATURE

The Chalice, Northcote, Melbourne - Saturday 27th August 2016 2- 7.30pm

Wycinanki is an ancestral Polish papercutting art form linked to old rural pagan beliefs. Traditionally a very nature-centric art, its creative purpose was the celebration of seasons, of nature's offerings to humans, of humans' respect for nature.

In By Nature, wycinanki was used to further the idea of a nature-centric world by highlighting and celebrating the interconnectivity between elements of the natural world. The common origin and oneness of the natural world is emphasized by blending subjects and shapes within the subject; trees are made of animals, animals are made of flowers, forests are made of human words...

<http://www.blackbirdsandtrees.com>



## COSMIC WALK: UNIVERSE STORY

MoonCourt, Springwood, Blue Mountains - 3 September 2016

MoonCourt screened the award winning "The Journey of the Universe" DVD by Brian Swimme, who was mentored by Thomas Berry, and selections of Brian Swimme's series "The Powers of the Universe". They then invited participants to join a Cosmic Walk ceremony which celebrates the Universe Story. The event concluded with a short presentation about the work of the Australian Earth Laws Alliance.

<http://pagaian.org>



## PLAY AT THE CHALICE, NORTHCOTE - 6 PM, 27TH AUGUST

The Chalice, Northcote, Melbourne - Saturday 27th August 2016, Mandate of Heaven was a spiritual/philosophical and environmental and social commentary play that critiqued our current civilization's modus operandi-through interactive audience address and audio visual performance method.

The work reflected on the ethics of human dominance, governance and ownership, the economic imperative of worth and the foundations for life. It spoke for the community of life from the perspective of the intercessionary principle. It challenged current governance models in light of universal interspecies ethics and invited the audience to contemplation and action.

## FUTURE PROJECTS

Brunswick Street Gallery, Melbourne - 5 to 18 August 2016

Future Projects was an exhibition curated by Miriam Arbus that presented a collection of project-oriented reflection on how we can respond to our present, and promise ourselves a better future.

The exhibition included a wide variety of work, from artists and practitioners focused on the wellbeing of the natural world. The exhibited works provided constructive commentary and provoked action to create a sustainable future. The works included theoretical suggestion and discussion, blue-print plans for ideas, conceptual evocation, recycling/reusing, summations of physical projects enacted within community, and community intervention. The exhibition involved showing documentation of a culmination of such action-based projects. For example: salvaging wasted food; collecting and re-constituting garbage and re-interpreting the ways in which we create power.

It featured the following artists: Philip Jopson, Caelene Glen, Seb Kainey, Werner Theinert, Ursula Theinert, Jassy Watson, Louise Kate Anderson, Maria Richardson, Simon Duiker, Hung Lin, Hello Pony Express, Laura B. Brodie.



## HOME

Nundah Neighbourhood Centre, Brisbane - 7 to 9 October 2016

'Home' was designed by AELA National Convenor Michelle Maloney and her 8 year old daughter, Jessica Sauer. Jessica wanted to have children included in AELA's RONA16, so asked her art teachers if they could design a specific course for a term in 2016. From August to October 2016, primary school children across North Brisbane learned how to create artworks made from, and inspired by, the natural world. From detailed leaf drawings to sculptures made from found objects, this art program was designed to encourage children to connect with, think about and value the natural environment. The children were being taught by Brisbane based artists, Wendy Cumes-Rowell (BA Visual Art, Post Grade Fine Art, Masters Fine Art) and Alicia Hollier (BA Fine Art). Art classes with 'Artist Wendy' have been running since 2007 and in 2016, more than 130 students were enrolled across four North Brisbane schools. "In recognising the increasing demand for visual art expertise in Primary schools, we are acknowledging the value of creativity. To be part of that kind of forward thinking is encouraging. Now particularly, it is crucial that we are aware of the relationship between a healthy creative faculty and our children's academic, psychological and practical futures. And what better way to bring all this together, than a celebration of the amazing world we live in?" (Wendy Cumes-Rowell)



## NATURE CALLING: WELCOME TO THE ECO-MYTHIC PARADIGM

Dr Mackay Centre, 9 Page St, Moruya, NSW - 4pm, 8 October 2016

Nature Calling was a story telling journey by Dr Geoff Berry, which involved a fascinating weave of modern myths about technology, progress, profit and urban living within the context of the environmental crisis.

Geoff introduced the Ecomythic Paradigm as a new way of thinking that integrates science and feeling, technology and art, reason and meaning, embodied experience and symbolic values, and ancient and modern ideas in one holistic vision.

Dr Geoffrey Berry received his PhD for an ecological investigation of the meaning of light (Monash University 2010) and holds an MA for a piece of creative literature on modern myth (Deakin University 2005). He has lectured and presented all over the world and has recently relocated to beautiful south coast NSW, where he is creating a series of podcasts and ecomythic film documentaries City Living, Nature Calling, which inspired by the need to adapt to climate change.

Please read about more of Geoff's work at [www.belonging.org.au](http://www.belonging.org.au)

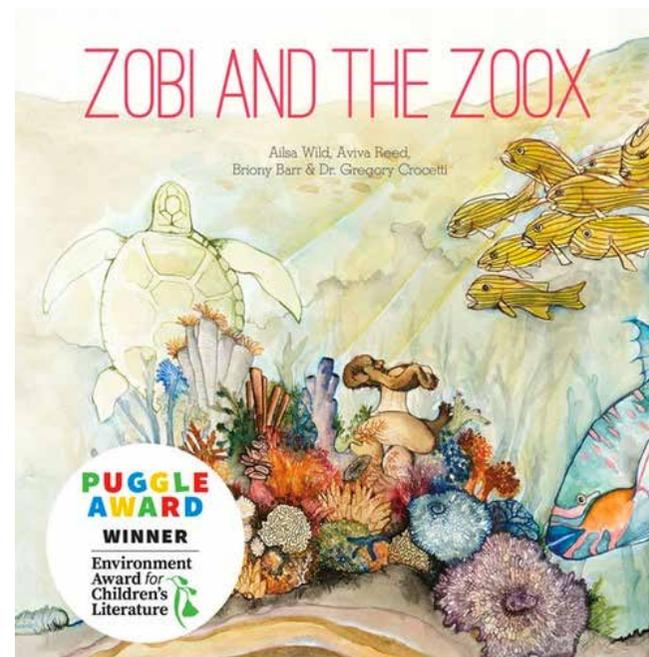


## SYMBIOSIS STORYTELLING

Collingwood, Melbourne - 18 September 2016

The Symbiosis Storytelling experience, coordinated by artist and illustrator Aviva Reed, enabled participants to explore the idea that cooperation, not just competition is a dominant paradigm of nature. It explored a coral reef and its diversity of organisms including its invisible ones, through storytelling, conversation and creative art making.

Drawn from "The Small Friends" book series, Symbiosis Storytelling tells stories about microorganisms (bacteria, fungi, viruses) and the intimate relationships they form with larger forms of life. The storytelling acknowledges microbes as having agency in the world, and hence stimulates conversation about the rights of nature, and the rights of microbes, to exist, thrive and evolve. This opens up conversations about what is life, what is alive and what deserves legal rights.



## VOICES FOR THE EARTH

Creative Regions, Pop Up Shop, North Bundaberg - 7 to 14 October 2016

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“Voices for the Earth” was a regional Queensland Earth Arts group exhibition co-hosted by Earth Circle Studios & Creative Regions and curated by artist Jassy Watson. It featured selected regional Queensland artists who are addressing environmental issues creatively.

The exhibition was inspired by the belief that to address the ecological crisis, what is required is for us to move far beyond practicalities and develop a concept of the earth itself as worthy of our highest regard—as sacred, as holy. Only then, will we care enough to resist and recraft the patterns of destruction.

The Earth is sacred, as are the people of Earth. We share a common fate. Human health, physically and spiritually, depends upon a healthy ecosphere, and this in turn depends upon the kind of relationship that we as sentient human beings create with Earth and all the life that it sustains.

Once we recognise the sacred value of Earth and its diversity we can be fully engaged and committed to protecting it. Art is a powerful voice and ‘Voices for the Earth’ worked to creatively engage the public in this very relevant and imperative ecological dialogue.



## WE ARE ONE

The Chalice, Northcote United Church, 27 August 2016

“We are One, Stories of the Earth Community” was an interactive family friendly performance in which participants were invited to explore questions such as: What is our place on Earth? What are our feelings about our Earth?

Using the InterPlay improvised movement and story telling forms, participants were engaged in these fun, playful activities that were used to initiate conversation between children, parents, grandparents. The focus was on the spiritual/physical connections we have in our world; especially upholding the sanctity of all life and the rights of the natural world to exist and evolve.

**WE ARE ONE - Stories Of The Earth Community**

The Australian Earth Law Alliance (AELA) is a national network of individuals, organisations and businesses who are committed to the protection of the natural world and the rights of all living beings. We are currently seeking members and supporters across Australia.

**SATURDAY AUGUST 27TH 2pm - 7.30pm**  
UNITING CHURCH CHALICE, 251 HIGH STREET NORTHCOTE

- Open Evening welcome - led by Day World welcome to country and Indigenous Welcome to Country - led by Day World welcome to country and Indigenous Welcome to Country
- 9.30 - 10.30am - This morning welcome, led by Day World welcome to country and Indigenous Welcome to Country
- 10.30am - 12.30pm - Storytelling and song by members of the community
- 1.30pm - 3.30pm - Storytelling and song by members of the community
- 3.30pm - 5.30pm - Storytelling and song by members of the community
- 5.30pm - 7.30pm - Storytelling and song by members of the community

**COVID-19** See person to person & family. Book through [www.aela.org.au](http://www.aela.org.au)

For more information on the event and to book your place, please contact [info@aela.org.au](mailto:info@aela.org.au) or call 08 9447 1111

# ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROJECT

As part of RONA16, Australian creatives were invited to participate in an artist-in-residence program in Brisbane. This involved 15 artists attending Australia's first Rights of Nature Tribunal, and having access to Tribunal participants for interviews and discussions. Participants were invited to sketch/document/record their experience, which would then inform works made after the Tribunal. Artists were also invited to participate in interactive workshops about Earth jurisprudence and Rights of Nature with AELA lawyers. Artworks produced as part of the RONA16 Artists in Residence Project will be shown in Brisbane in 2017.

Participating artists included: Marian Drew, Caresse Cranwell, Di James, Jude Roberts, Peter Thiedeke, Jill Sampson, Rebekah Evans, Merete Megarrity, Anastasia Tyurina, Liz Mahood, Kay Lawrence, Ciara Denham, Jenni Cargill Strong, Jesse Sciberras, Jacqui Wills.

*Image: Megan Hollingsworth, Still from video work*

RONA16 or 'Rights of Nature 2016' was a network of creative events held around Australia, celebrating the rights of nature movement that is growing globally. The Rights of Nature movement supports shifting from a human-centred to an Earth-centred world view, and for our laws to respect the rights of the natural world to exist, thrive and evolve. RONA16 included a major art exhibition at the Brisbane Powerhouse, called 'Plenty', a student art projection event in Brisbane called 'Traverse', storytelling in Wollongong, a photographic exhibition in East Gippsland, a regional art exhibition in Bundaberg, a children's art exhibition in North Brisbane and collaborative arts events in Melbourne.

