

The ethereal remnants of fire, ash is what is left after combustion: the result of an intense transformation. As a material, ash teaches us the intimate interplay between damage and nourishment, destruction and renewal. It is fertile and nutritive, providing enrichment for new growth. Cleansing, medicinal and ceremonial, ash symbolises the potential for healing and change. This exhibition lingers on processes of grief and healing that follow devastation. Here, feelings that are often compressed or put aside — despair, fatigue, alienation, melancholy, and mourning — are slowly unfurled and released.

Ash is used as a material in Sylvia Griffin's paintings, alongside charcoal and pigments, to create discoloured patches reminiscent of bruises — the stained areas of our skin that simultaneously indicate past injury and underlying recovery. The incorporation of marble dust hints at the disintegration of monuments, subtly questioning the role of memorialisation. The artist's embodied mark-making process forms an alternative to institutional ways of remembrance.

Emily Greenwood's video work is a personal and cultural exploration of grief. In the video, the artist performs a Tongan mourning ritual for their absent father and their subsequent disconnection from Tongan culture. Through this process, the artist mourns someone who hasn't died, someone they've never known. Here, grief is not about death or loss, but letting go of what could have been.

In Sofiyah Ruqayah's work, the image of a rotting eel is digitally contorted to form paper letters that have been pinned onto the wall. The twisted script, at the threshold of legibility, invites us to linger until a sentence emerges: "I suspect I shall die disappointed". Wry, morbid and a bit elusive — Ruqayah's work suggests emotional depths that, like the bodies of slick eels, slip beyond our grasp.

While ash is the result of transformation by fire, Linda Sok's installation is the residue of ritual by water. Fabric from Cambodia meets water from the Parramatta River, retracing the route of many families who come to western Sydney fleeing the Khmer Rouge. Through evaporation, the fabric is encrusted with delicate salt crystals, the remnants of this gesture of preservation and intergenerational healing.

Olivia Chin has converted the corner of the space into a shrine-like assemblage of paintings, ceramic pieces and spices. Elements of the installation were made as therapeutic responses to the artists' experiences of illness. The paintings aggregate marks and memories: green lines suggesting leaves, a cluster of red dots, thick strokes of purple. The layers morph, refusing to be pinned down, always on the precipice of transformation.

In Cynthia Florek's double exposure photograph, the artist has layered a portrait of her mother smiling against an image of the sunset. The dreamlike images melt into one another, the mother's smile becoming part of the sky. The work invites us to celebrate the joys and desires of people of colour, to locate reprieve in the moments that are gentle to us.

While grief and trauma are felt deep within the body, they can also draw attention to much larger systems and institutions — especially those that inflict harm in the first place. Located on Dharug Country in North Parramatta, not far from Pari, the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct has a long history of incarceration and institutionalisation of women and children. Beginning as an institution for women

convicts in 1821, the site has transitioned through many functions — a women’s asylum, an orphanage, a girls’ institution, a children’s shelter and most recently, a women’s detention centre until 2012. The VR film, *Parragirls Past, Present: Unlocking memories of institutional ‘care’*, uses personal accounts from former residents of the Parramatta Girls Home to map the institution and rewrite its history through their memories. Here, healing from trauma is a monumental, ongoing project — but one that can be worked on iteratively and collectively.

Alannah Dair’s installation titled *The patient. The doctor. The host. The vessel.* can also be read as an intervention into harmful institutions. Lycra is stretched and contorted around metal poles, reminiscent of skin and bones as well as medical equipment. Parts of the work have been burnt, acting both cauterising procedure and ritual — to grieve the experience of chronic illness and draw attention to how the medical system leaves some bodies neglected.

Julia Bavyka’s *On Snapping* reflects on living, working and surviving through the relentlessness of capitalism. Mounted onto the wall is a small textile depicting a red figure lying down: the resting worker. The installation also includes a seat on which a visitor can rest and read from the artist’s self-published pamphlet. The work is a reminder that fatigue can be instructive, that our bodies are telling us to slow down, or to stop entirely. Exhaustion becomes an opening to ruminate on the structures that push us to breaking point.

This exhibition holds space to process, dwell, rest and heal as we need. It resists attempts to move too quickly, get to work, hide from discomfort; sometimes holding these experiences with each other, with patience and care, is enough. *Ash* rests inside heavy feelings, honouring them not only as embodied responses to neglectful systems around us, but as vital resources in generating collective action, nourishment and hope.

### **Emily Greenwood**

*In Loving Memory*, 2020

video, 1080 x 720

10 min 10 sec

When a Tongan father dies his daughters are expected to cut their hair in mourning. The ritual is to take place after the tenth day also known as pongipongi tapu. The cultural tradition is only meant to be carried out by the deceased father’s oldest sister or someone outside of the Tongan ranking system. It is generally taboo for Tongan womxn to cut their hair outside of this occasion. My Tongan ‘father’ left before I was born. I mourn everything he took with him. I have now spent 26 years on Earth searching for connection to my Tongan culture, traditions, rituals and ancestry. Leading up to my 26th birthday, the last 7 days of my youth I cut my hair in mourning. I mourn the things my Tongan father took with him when he left. This is in loving memory of the things I have been left without.

**Olivia Chin***A Rolling Swarm, 2021*

oil paint on canvas, stoneware ceramic, Chinese herbs  
dimensions variable

*king parrot, 2021*

oil paint on canvas  
76 x 61 x 4 cm

*It's a dance keep stepping, 2021*

oil paint on canvas, 44 x 34 x 6 cm  
ceramic vase, 24 x 17 x 12 cm  
ceramic vase, 22 x 16 x 12 cm  
small ceramic dishes x 6, sizes vary

This installation was developed as a response to illness and through a process of acceptance. In an environment of lockdowns and constant adaptability, you can confine yourself to the present moment through each glance.

The work draws from sketches layered upon memories that reimagine and metamorphosise themselves. Each piece plays with perception of the winding wet path as you grip on to the rungs. Turn directly towards the approaching darkness and you might find yourself sitting in the sun face forward.

**Sylvia Griffin***Second Skin #3, 2021*

natural pigments, pigment sticks, ash, marble dust, marble grit, charcoal on unstretched Belgian linen  
96 x 146 cm

*Second Skin #4, 2021*

natural pigments, pigment sticks, ash, marble dust, marble grit, charcoal on unstretched Belgian linen  
96 x 146 cm

*Second Skin* reflects my interest in expressing grief and trauma through artwork that seeks to challenge the norms of memorial culture. In this piece I have worked natural dry pigments, pigment sticks, charcoal, ash, and marble dust by hand onto unstretched linen.

These materials each have a connection to trauma and violence; ash and charcoal to the destructiveness of fire, pigments to environmental destruction, and the marble dust references the tradition of marble as a memorial material.

The overall effect is reminiscent of bruising and recalls the dictum that the healing progress of a bruise can be determined by its colour.

**Parramatta Female Factory Precinct Memory Project***Parragirls Past, Present: Unlocking memories of institutional 'care', 2017*

immersive 3D virtual reality film

23 min 16 sec

*Parragirls Past, Present: Unlocking memories of institutional 'care', 2017*

360 degree monoscopic trailer

2 min 32 sec

*Content warning:* Please note that this work discusses death and illness, incarceration and abuse. Some viewers may find this distressing.

*Parragirls Past, Present* is a deeply moving immersive experience, presenting former residents' visions of the Parramatta Girls Home today. Commissioned for the Big Anxiety Festival 2017 and launched for the public debut of the EPICentre UNSW, *Parragirls Past, Present* is a creative collaboration with Parragirls PFFP Memory Project and UNSW media artists that rewrites the public history of the former child welfare institution, Parramatta Girls Home, unsettling myth and memory.

Returning after 40 years, Parragirls seek out traces to substantiate what really happened here, continuing the visionary work they have pursued as members of the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct Memory Project.

Parramatta Female Factory Precinct Memory Project is a contemporary art and social history initiative established by Bonney Djuric OAM and Lily Hibberd in 2012.

Located at the former Parramatta Girls Home, the Memory Project centres on transforming the Parramatta Female Factory Institutions Precinct from a place of trauma and suffering to that of a creative cultural hub as Australia's first Site of Conscience so that the history, heritage and legacy of institutional 'care' is not forgotten.

Many achievements have been realised through the efforts of Parragirls/PFFP Memory Project including the listing of the Parramatta Female Factory Institutions Precinct on the National Heritage register in 2017 and more recently, the precinct's designation by the NSW Government as an arts and cultural centre.

**Artists & creative team**

Writer/Narrators: Bonney Djuric, Jenny McNally, Lynne Edmondson Paskovski, Gypsy Hayes & Toni Nicholas

Art Director & Production Design: Volker Kuchelmeister

Sound Design/Editor: Alex Davies

Co-producers: Bonney Djuric, Lily Hibberd, Jill Bennett

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Department of Communication and the Arts and the Arts Catalyst – Australian Arts and Culture Fund. PFFP Memory Project is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW and is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

**Cynthia Florek***Sunset Teeth, 2017*

35mm film printed on paper

59.4 x 42 cm

In *Sunset Teeth*, a Peruvian woman floats in the sky: she wears a knitted top with pastel pink, purple and white hues which match the shades of the clouds. This is Beatriz at the end of a day where she had gotten dressed up for a family outing. Here, she smiles with her teeth; she has often complained about how her teeth are yellow and they're not perfectly straight, but these details do not detract from her beauty. Her teeth may reveal histories which she might not be proud of, but this photo captures the artist's mother in a moment of joy and confidence. For a second, one can forget the childhood years soaking up lectures on how to best maintain good teeth, how to avoid expensive fillings and more gruesome tales of old fashioned dentistry...

**Sofiyah Ruqayah***Self-fulfilling prophecies, 2020*

digital collage print on paper

124.9 x 42 cm

A found image of a dead eel being eaten by a fly is digitally collaged and mutated to form the statement "I suspect I shall die disappointed". The eel corpse has been stretched, blended and reframed through digital interventions, then physically cut into sinewy forms that echo both Gothic and Arabic calligraphy. Born out of a period of sustained disappointment in personal relationships, this work is a playfully morbid litany that reflects on self-fulfilling prophecies and the tautological nature of disappointment.

**Julia Bavyka***On snapping, 2022*

tapestry, wool, self-published pamphlet

*Resting worker, 2022,*

tapestry, wool,

18 x 22 cm

*The moment you realise what you don't have to be, 2022,*

self-published pamphlet,

13 x 19.5 cm

*Resting worker* and *The moment you realise what you don't have to be\** are a tapestry and a poetry pamphlet complementing each other under an umbrella title *On snapping*. Both are a reflection on exhaustion, burn out, survival and transformation.

The work is a weaving through and from the bedspread of fatigue as a place with revolutionary potential and quietly takes back time that was stolen by capitalism.

\*The pamphlet takes its title from Sara Ahmed's writing about the snap.

### **Alannah Dair**

*The patient. The doctor. The host. The vessel., 2022*

flesh-coloured lycra, metal hooks, safety pins, metal poles, metal clamps, steel wire, LED light

dimensions variable

I have a complex relationship with medicine. Without some form of birth control I wouldn't be able to work, create art or function on a daily basis. Yet over the years I have been prescribed many medications that have caused more harm than good. I've also had countless medical practitioners who have dismissed me, gaslit me and made me feel isolated in my experience with endometriosis (a chronic inflammatory condition).

These experiences have forced me to become my own advocate and play the role of the doctor in deciding the best management of my pain and presenting symptoms. Currently the gold standard for treatment of endometriosis is laparoscopic surgery. Due to Covid19 I have been on the waitlist for my second laparoscopy for over 16 months.

Whilst I've waited in limbo for a call from the hospital I have become obsessed with videos from endometriosis excision surgeries. I am particularly struck by the removal of endometriosis through electrocauterization; through use of electrical currents metal clamps burn away the skin to isolate affected areas. As the skin burns it coils up and seals the blood vessels, creating warped areas of seared skin.

With this imagery in mind I have trialed applying heat to my work to elicit a subtle violence acted onto and within the skin of the work; acting out what is yet to come for my own body.

Burning the fabric is both an act of care (removing the disease) and an act of resentment for how the disease has affected my life. After grieving my former self (who I was before the onset of my symptoms) I've come to understand the fluctuating limitations of my body as I continue to negotiate a state between health and illness.

### **Linda Sok**

*Salt Water Deluge (Tucoerah River), 2021*

silk from Cambodian artisans, salt, water collected from the Georges River, rattan, wire

210 x 330 x 80 cm

*Salt Water Deluge (Tucoerah River)*, is a work that centres around healing and preservation of culture following the brutal regime of the Khmer Rouge. The art of silk weaving, a matrilineally handed down tradition, was one of many art forms targeted and came close to being erased by the Khmer Rouge perpetrators. This iteration of *Salt Water Deluge* was produced in collaboration with the artists' sister Solina Sok

P A R I

ASH

13. 02. 2022

– 27. 03. 2022

JULIA BAVYKA, OLIVIA CHIN, ALANNAH DAIR, CYNTHIA FLOREK, EMILY GREENWOOD, SYLVIA GRIFFIN, PARRAMATTA FEMALE FACTORY PRECINCT MEMORY PROJECT, SOFIYAH RUQAYAH, LINDA SOK

CURATED BY TIAN ZHANG, NAOMI SEGAL AND HAREEN JOHL

and uses salt, water collected from the Tucoerah River (Georges River) and silk fabrics sourced from Cambodian artisans. The water was collected with permission from Darug Elders.

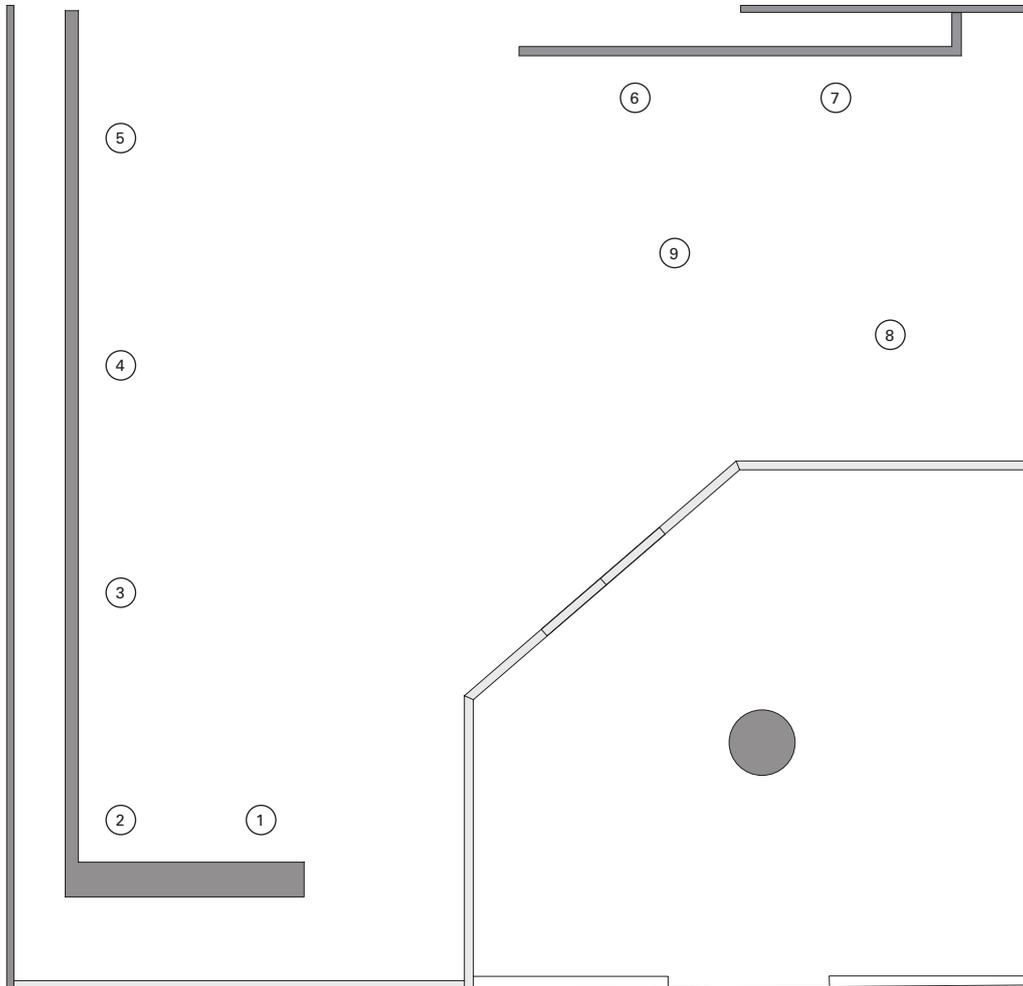
Silk fabrics are submerged in a saline solution, a process similar to a method the artists' parents use to pickle vegetables. Harnessing the preserving and curing properties found in salt and water, the work acknowledges how trauma embeds itself within objects and survivors and looks towards remedial actions and processes of healing.

Commissioned by Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre.

13. 02. 2022  
– 27. 03. 2022

JULIA BAVYKA, OLIVIA CHIN, ALANNAH DAIR, CYNTHIA FLOREK, EMILY GREENWOOD, SYLVIA GRIFFIN, PARRAMATTA FEMALE FACTORY PRECINCT MEMORY PROJECT, SOFIYAH RUQAYAH, LINDA SOK

CURATED BY TIAN ZHANG, NAOMI SEGAL AND HAREEN JOHL



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Emily Greenwood                                   |
| 2 | Olivia Chin                                       |
| 3 | Sylvia Griffin                                    |
| 4 | Parramatta Female Factory Precinct Memory Project |
| 5 | Cynthia Florek                                    |
| 6 | Sofiyah Ruqayah                                   |
| 7 | Julia Bavyka                                      |
| 8 | Alannah Dair                                      |
| 9 | Linda Sok   |