

In *Companions*, materials are active partners in each practice, and the subsequent works are collaborations: the result of a push and pull between human and non-human companions.

The artists in *Companions* choose to work with materials and processes that are not stable or fixed. Things that respond, often unpredictably, to light, air and time. Some of the materials are living, and continue to grow and morph. Others will dry, decay or eventually die. The artists are not in complete control throughout the process of making, nor once a work is 'finished' and presented for exhibition.

It is somewhat of a paradox that the independence of these materials is what makes them companions to the artists. Rather than inert matter to be mastered and shaped to human will, they work alongside the artists in shaping the trajectory of each work. These materials also carry strong visceral and symbolic associations. They tell stories, hold memories and desires, and are important in the practice of culture.

The draped pearlescent forms of Audrey Newton's *You Said I had Golden Skin but I Wanted You to Stop Talking To Me* evoke oil slicks and shed skins. Latex is unpredictable, and even after years tussling with this material - testing and observing, requesting and acquiescing - Newton is often surprised by the turns it takes. Like the subconscious, this process follows paths that are sometimes inexplicable, invariably symbolic, and rarely arbitrary.

Reanne Chidiac's *In Your Wake* reflects on the power of smell and taste in evoking a particular time and experience. 'Ahwe' - Lebanese coffee, is part of a cultural ritual, and its smell and taste is a companion to the mourning experience. The coffee grounds are offered up in small cups, and embedded into paintings that evoke loneliness and grief, and their alleviation by community and togetherness.

Dianne Turner created a collection of porcelain smoking pipes in response to her involvement in research around colonial artefacts unearthed in Parramatta. Pipes themselves are intimate objects: transmitters of ephemeral smoke and breath, extensions of the body. They embody that curious paradox of fired clay, which is at once fragile and enduring. The pipes feel fragile, clinking hollowly when they touch, but fired clay can last millennia, carrying with it stories of people, place and time.

Dried fungi encased with beeswax in glass are fixed in time and preserved as objects, while new growth sprouts below. Kath Fries' living oyster mushrooms in *Murmurings* and *Quietly* are sharing our air, breathing alongside us. Rather than exhaling oxygen like plants, fungi breathe out carbon dioxide as humans do. The dried mushrooms in *Respire i-vi* are preserved, held in a kind of afterlife-limbo, communing with us to reflect on ecological endurance and fragility.

Miška Mandić looks at materials and objects that are symbolic, and at times contradictory companions to the preservation of life and memory. The impermanence of life and the earthiness of the human body motivate us to build permanent monuments to loved ones. Polished granite slabs and synthetic flowers sweating in perspex cases will persist long after a body has returned itself to the elements. The absurdity of this fight against natural cycles is underlined by flowers that wilt, shrivel and decay.

The flax in Hasset's work is both a living companion and a conductor of history, gesturing to failed colonial attempts to cultivate the plant on Burramattagal land.

There are complex histories between Māori and the area now known as Parramatta, encompassing trade, kidnapping, weaving, weaponry, war and religion, and flax acts as a stand-in for this: a living storytelling device, or a prompt to remember.

These works are living, breathing, dying and shapeshifting. Their futures, like ours, are uncertain and strange. The artists, installers and Pari's volunteer Keepers do our best as temporary custodians, setting up conditions for life or preservation, and caring for these companions with as much care and attention as we can.

Akil Ahamat, Rebecca Gallo and Talitha Hanna

#### Acknowledgements

First and foremost, much love to those who connected with the *kaupapa* (project) and offered to contribute your *mauri* and *mana* to the *mahi toi*, as well as the *whānau* of Te Korowai o Te Reo and Te Wairua Tapu for being welcoming and allowing us to incorporate your beautiful *waiata* in *Tū-Ramarama*. Without your contributions, the *toi* would have no *mauri* of its own.

Secondly, Kiri and Kerry Morcombe for your manaakitanga and your grateful donation of the flax plants. I'm privileged to have the support, especially during these times, and I'm humbled to include your plants within the work *Te Manawa Ora*.

Last but not least, a big thank you to the Pari team for their commitment and support throughout the past months. A great team and it has also been a privilege.

*Ngā mini maioha ki a koutou*

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Chevron Hasset's artwork *Tū-ramarama* is powered by  
Lūpa Media Player. More information at [lupaplayer.com](http://lupaplayer.com)



Audrey Newton

*You Said I had Golden Skin but I Wanted You to Stop Talking To Me*, latex, pigment and decorative pearls, dimensions variable

When have we pushed a thing to its limits? Can we keep embedding our wisdom, knowledge, advice, bias and desires to construct its narrative? Does symbology and meaning mean anything to the material itself?

Sometimes the things you say add or detract to the value of the thing. If it is a thing, can it celebrate its own alchemy?

Miška Mandić

*Loved ones don't die while those who love them live I*, 2020, archival cotton rag print on Alupanel, 56 × 40 cm

*Loved ones don't die while those who love them live II*, 2020, archival cotton rag print on Alupanel, 29 × cm

*Loved ones don't die while those who love them live III*, 2020, archival cotton rag print on Alupanel, 56 × 40 cm

In 2015 I visited my grandmother's grave in Danilovgrad in Montenegro. Scattered across the graveyard were colourful plastic flowers in transparent plastic boxes. The heat of summer had made them sweat, water droplets collecting on the inside of the plastic as if the flowers were tearing up. Underneath the earth the bodies of loved ones were slowly returning to dirt in a way their shrines never would.

Dianne Turner

*Inhaled*, porcelain clay and crushed white earthenware, iron rich red and terracotta clays, dimensions variable

This collection of porcelain smoking pipes was made in response to Di's wide-ranging research and work with colonial artefacts unearthed in Parramatta and surrounds. Pipes themselves are intimate objects: transmitters of ephemeral smoke and breath, extensions of the body. They embody that curious paradox of fired clay, which is at once fragile and enduring. The pipes feel fragile, clinking hollowly when they touch, but fired clay can last millennia, carrying with it stories of people, place and time.

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ORGANISED BY AKIL AHAMAT, REBECCA GALLO AND TALITHA HANNA

Kath Fries

*Respire i-vi*, air-dried oyster mushrooms and beeswax in glass terrariums,  
38 x 16 x 16 cm each

*Murmurings*, yellow oyster mushrooms growing in bark, 12 x 14 x 80 cm

*Quietly*, yellow oyster mushrooms growing in beeswax and glass terrarium,  
36 x 16 x 16 cm

The process of breathing reaches into our bodies and beyond our skin's porous boundaries. Breathing is fundamental to humans, as it is to the metabolism of all living beings and systems of the Earth's biosphere. Breathing is meditative and interconnective, each breath we take is a reciprocal exchange with our surroundings.

Fungi – just like humans – breathe in oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide, the opposite to plants. *Respire* features lung-like glass terrariums containing dried oyster mushrooms, sealed with beeswax and preserved like a scientific collection of extinct specimens. Quietly conjuring a sense of grief, these works resonate out into an expansive awareness of loss, as Anthropocene multi-species mass extinction rates climb and the variety of life in our biosphere shrinks at apocalyptic rates. Beeswax leaching from the base of each cylinder echoes this crisis, conjuring Colony Collapse Disorder and the accelerated loss of insect populations globally. Although often overlooked, both insects and mushrooms are fundamental to the functioning of all ecosystems (as food for other creatures, pollinators, recyclers of nutrients and vital to soil health) so their declines will be catastrophic for all life on Earth.

As our human populations rapidly escalate, the diversity of life in our biosphere is shrinking dramatically, yet there is still hope to rebalance how we live and breathe with others in the Earth's shared airspace. With each breath we are absorbing and releasing into our surroundings, interconnected with the matter-flows of our immediate and extensive environment.

Reanne Chidiac

*In Your Wake*, acrylic, *ahwe*, charcoal and chalk on canvas board; ceramics, timber,  
ground *ahwe*, each panel 50.8 x 76.2 cm

Panels left to right: *After the Village Women*, *The Mahfel* and *The Forty-First Day*

The women of the mountain village sit single file and weep for the deceased. *Ahwe*, Lebanese coffee, is passed around among the mourners. They shroud themselves with sorrow for forty days or forty years. In the bottom of the coffee cup lies every future – life, death, love – and the dregs that offer foresight. *In Your Wake* explores Lebanese superstitious tradition and Maronite mourning rituals.

Chevron Hassett,

*Tū-ramarama*, two-channel A/V installation, duration: 8:25

*tū* – to establish, or to stand

*ramarama* – to gleam

*tūramarama* – to bring to light

*Tū-ramarama* is a series of portraits which nurtures the identities and generations of Māori occupation within Sydney, bringing together both migrant and Australian-born Māori. The portraits are interwoven with historic sites for Māori. *Waiata* (songs) from Te Korowai o Te Reo in Mount Druitt and *himene* (hymns) from Te Wairua Tapu in Redfern sing in support of the documented individuals. Powerful feelings of home and faith are conveyed, while also reinforcing valuable cultural connections and traditions that transcend the physical world.

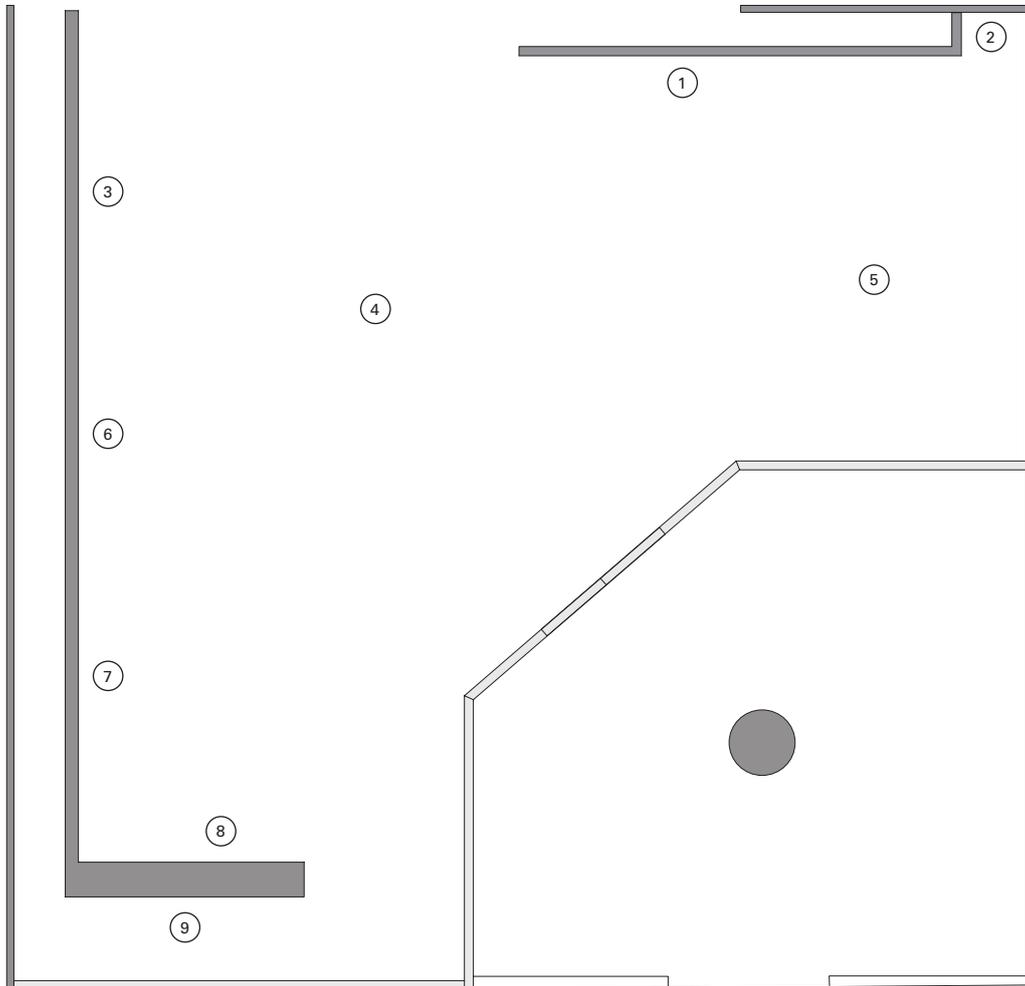
*Te Manawa Ora*, CNC routed plywood, wood stain, steel hinges, soil and harakeke,  
240 × 240 × 240 cm

*te manawa* – the heart

*ora* – to be alive

*te manawa ora* – the hope, or the breath of life

Past and present histories are woven into the concept and physicality of *Te Manawa Ora*. It is based on a triangular weaving pattern called *Niho Taniwha* which symbolises *whānau* (family) and *whenua* (land). The installation supports the life of the sacred harakeke plant, which is a further symbol of family, representing the process of planting new life and nurturing family within a new land.



- 1 Kath Fries
- 2 Audrey Newton
- 3 Reanne Chidiac
- 4 Dianne Turner
- 5 Chevron Hassett
- 6 Kath Fries
- 7 Miška Mandić
- 8 Audrey Newton
- 9 Window by Srii//ParraFlora