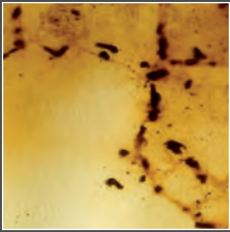


meta_narratives



Rusaila Bazlamit
(Australia)

My Homelands (أوطاني),
2013, HD Video, single channel video installation
www.lab-tajribi.com/



John Gwadbu
(Australia, deceased)

Marrwakara Story,
Animation (2013) and sound scape (1962-4) based on his
original Marrwakara bark painting (1964)
www.uwa.edu.au/berndt



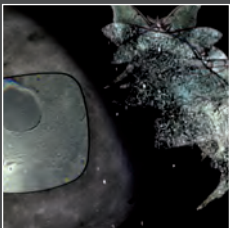
Nigel Helyer
(Australia)

Law of the Tongue ~ Symbiosis and Betrayal,
2010, sound sculpture installation
www.sonicobjects.com



Bronia IWANCZAK
(Australia)

Timebinder,
Interactive installation (2010) and book (2004)



Clea T. Waite and Lauren Fenton
(United States of America)

MetaBook: The Book of Luna, ©
2014, Interactive installation
www.clea-t.de

Storytelling is an important cultural act that captures and preserves historical elements, beliefs, morals and more, catapulting the listener to imagine. The exhibition meta-narrative, curated by Cecelia Cmielewski, brings together five artworks that incorporate the tool of storytelling while capturing important narratives through the use of sound, video and sculpture to further communicate their message. The stories illuminate our imagination between time and location. The United Arab Emirates has a strong oral tradition, where its history has been captured and preserved through generations through this important act. This exhibition in the 20th International Symposium on Electronic Art ignites cultural exchange through exploration of the word, and is a comparison point to other exhibits that explore the narrative tradition.

Janet Bellotto, Artistic Director, ISEA2014

meta_narratives

Every morning brings us the news of the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event comes to us any longer without being shot through with explanation. ... Actually, it is half the art of story telling to keep the story free from explanation as one reproduces it.

Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller".

The exhibition entitled *meta_narratives* brings together artists who re-interpret the manner in which stories are told and whose work engages our imagination. Whilst the narratives chosen by each artist are suitably complex for our times, each are presented with a creative clarity that invites us to use our own imaginations to open up to the scale and meaning of the stories and events they are recounting.

Using technologies that led to petroglyphs (rock art) in the open air and rock paintings protected in caves, storytelling with images are the first records of our spoken tales. *meta_narratives* includes works based on early bark paintings by an Australian Indigenous artist through to the transmedia and interactive narratives being produced today. All the artists included in *meta_narratives* are exemplary in the finely crafted and appropriate use of electronic and digital technologies, giving the stories and histories centre stage because of the artists' techniques in visualization and audio portraiture.

The artists present large tales and small, intently reflecting on and responding to the specifics of the sites from which the stories are sourced: the moon, a small town off the coast of South Eastern Australia, a small island off the coast of Arnhem Land, Eastern European sites and the Arab states. These sites provoke a sense of excavation, an archeological inquisitiveness on the part of the artists. *meta-narratives* presents contemporary versions of frequently interrupted transmissions of myths and histories.

The works present contemporary perspectives on some very old stories whose temporal resonance draw us in to find out more. These recent works in *meta_narratives* are simultaneously some of our oldest tales.

One such work is an animation made in 2013 of a bark painting and sound recording depicting a mythical journey to an island (South Goulburn Island) in the far north of Australia. The animation is drawn from a sketch on bark painted 50 years ago by John Gwadbun, depicting the *Marrwakara Story*. The animation is accompanied by the sound recording made by Ronald Berndt between 1962-1964 of Gwadbun singing the related cycle of songs. The songs tell of events narrated to him in a dream by his two 'spirit familiars' marrwakara (goannas). In the digital animation of Gwadbun's sketch, we see 'a telescoped sequence of events' depicting a celebration and a tragedy.

Spirit goannas who live on the mainland of Arnhem Land are invited to visit the South Goulburn Island by the island's goanna and his wife, the goose spirit. However, an important mainland goanna falls in love with the goose wife, an amorous liaison forms and she has a child by him. The liaison is discovered and the goanna from the mainland must die. After he is killed, he is given a ceremonial burial and we see his funeral barge offshore.

The structure of the bark *Marrwakara Story* lends itself to contemporary digital animation because it is so much like a story-board showing the events unfolding simultaneously. Given the level of care required for bark paintings, these cultural artefacts are not often circulated in community contexts, hence the use of the accessible format of digital animation and audio. John Gwadbu's son, Jonah, is now the traditional custodian of this story and song cycle and has kindly given permission for this work to travel from his remote community. I would like to thank the Berndt Museum staff at University of Western Australia and Brenda Westley from the Mardbalk Art Centre who assisted in community discussions to include this work in *meta_narratives*.

The evocative and endlessly engaging *The Book of Luna*, by artists Clea T. Waite and Lauren Fenton is a transmedia illuminated manuscript that merges sculpture, film and literature. The work is presented as an interactive 'cabinet of curiosities' that has collected different perspectives and responses to our view and perceptions of the moon. Humans share a fascination for the moon through our imagination, awe, scientific investigation and romantic projection. It is

our most intimate cousin in the sky that places us visually in the universe and continually affects us all on planet earth. Waite and Fenton have explored all manner of things luna to encapsulate and return our imagined and researched histories to us.

In the *Law of the Tongue* Dr Nigel Helyer weaves a narrative around the only historically documented hunting collaboration between humans and another species. This eight channel sound installation builds an audio-portrait of an interspecies relationship initiated by a pod of Orcas (Killer Whales) with the Davidson family, who ran a small shore based whaling operation in Eden in South Eastern Australia, to chase and hunt migrating Humpback whales together.

Law of the Tongue voices non-human communication and immerses the listener in the songs of the oceanic realm, a world about which we understand so little.

For millennia the traditional Yuni peoples of the South East coast of Australia have revered the Leviathans, singing them from the shoreline and occasionally feasting upon the bounty of a stranded Humpback. The Yuni's were the mainstay of the Davidson's whaling crews, rowing the small whale boats and wielding the harpoons and lances that served the coup de grace to the quarry that the Orcas had led them to. At the end of the chase the carcass was lanced with a marker and the boats returned home to the shore, leaving the Orcas to their reward, the massive tongue and sometimes the lips of the Humpback - that was the unwritten and unspoken agreement: the *Law of the Tongue*.

In *Timebinder*, Bronia Iwanczak tackles the seemingly impossible task of presenting the events of the Holocaust. Iwanczak has carefully excavated objects from several Eastern European sites, to investigate whether the objects contain any resonance of trauma that could be detected by self-described psychics. By bringing such minute residues into our focus - through the intimate objects presented in a cabinet, an artist's book and the subsequent interactive, we are offered a space to reflect on the Holocaust. This is a radical invitation but one extended with care. The self-control exerted by the artist reduces the sense of being overwhelmed which is an emotion so frequently experienced when looking at images and hearing stories from those camps.

My Homelands by Rusaila Bazlamit uses the tension between an image of the Arab countries map deconstructing whilst a famous Arab nationalistic song is being hummed. Using henna as a basis to produce her "map" Bazlamit upsets the order and boundaries of place during the filming of the work. The result suggests a tumultuous yet poetic erasure, leaving us to ask how, who and what next? Presenting the flux of borders and nations we are given an insight into the contested zones and recall social, political, colonial and global disruptions of older and recent times. The use of henna brings women into the frame in a way that traditional broadcast media tends to ignore.

The artworks included in *meta_narratives* each present gateways into historical and imagined narratives. The works do not offer explanations, they tell a version of the story and offer a space to enlarge our capacity to accommodate others.

Cecelia Cmielewski, Sydney, September 2014.

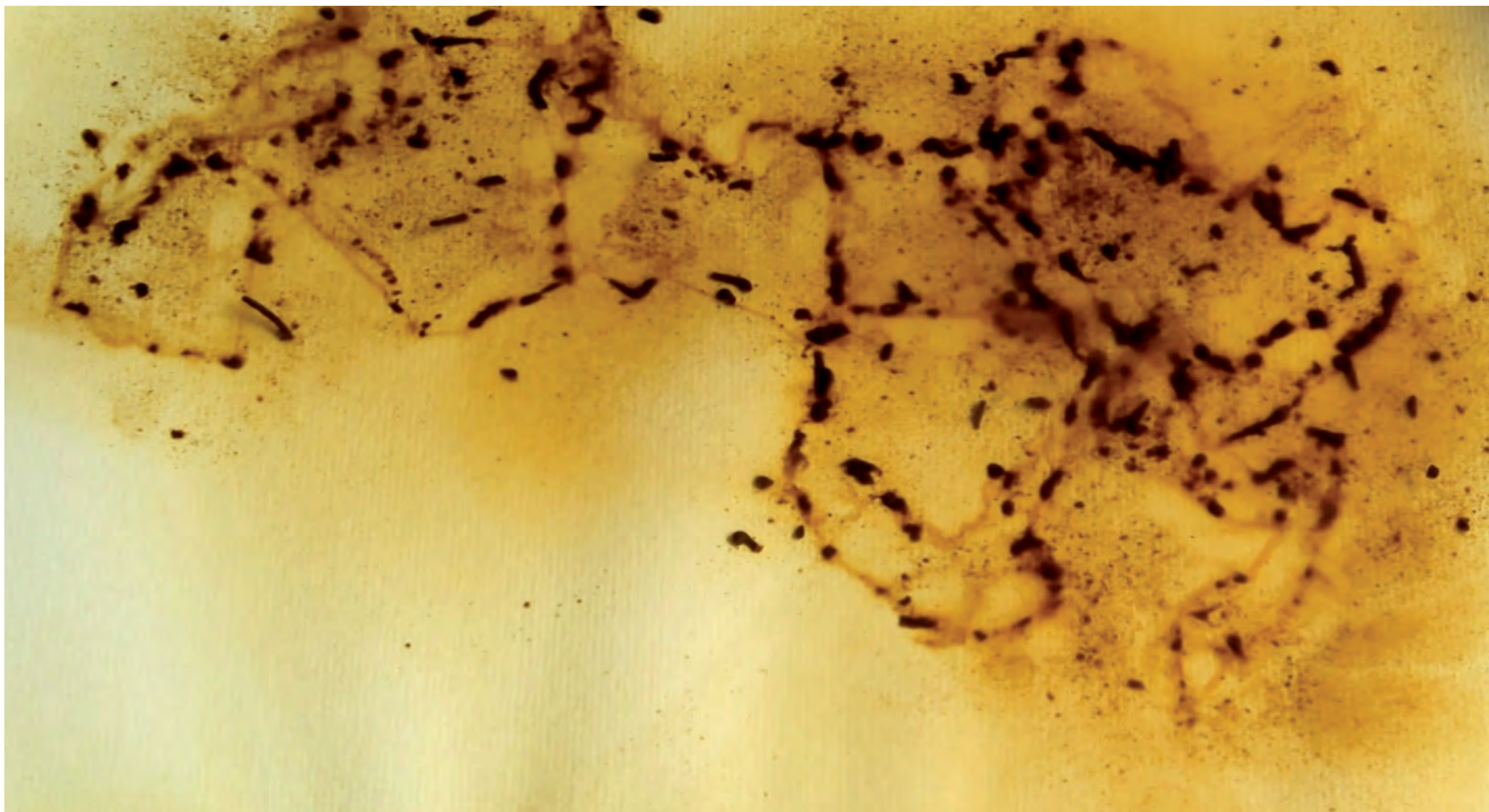
CURATOR

Cecelia Cmielewski (Australia)

Cecelia Cmielewski has over twenty-five years experience in the cultural sector. Cecelia produces artworks where social, technological and cultural engagements intersect to encourage new understanding across knowledge systems and realises these projects as an artist, curator and manager. She is undertaking her PhD at the Institute of Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney.

Recently, Cecelia produced *semipermeable(+)* at the Powerhouse Museum Sydney for ISEA2013 and curated *Adaptation*, an arts and ecology exhibition currently on tour in Western Australia. Her expertise includes research, analysis, project and policy development with the Australian creative sector. At the Australia Council for the Arts she managed the Arts in a Multicultural Australia policies 2000-2006 and 2006-2011. She is an Investigator as curator on the ARC Large Urban Screens and the Transnational Sphere with University of Melbourne, Fed Square and Nabi Art Centre, Seoul and is the project manager of CultureWorks, a public arts consultancy.

www.cecelia.asia



Rusaila Bazlamit, *My Homelands*, (أوطاني) 2013. Photo: Rusaila Bazlamit.

RUSAILA BAZLAMIT

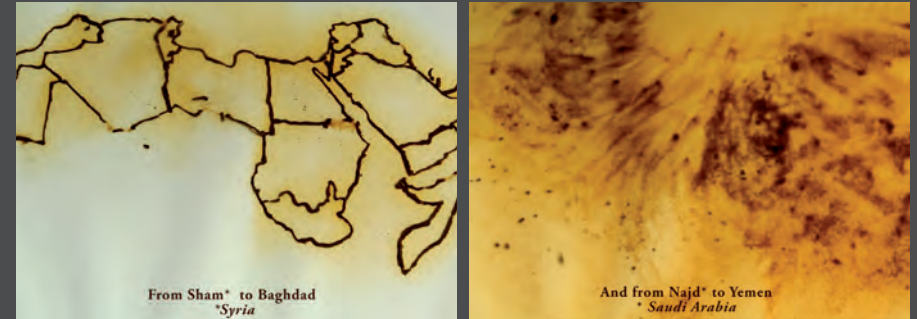
My Homelands, (أوطاني)

2013, HD Video, single channel video. 3.34mins, 16:9

This video artwork uses the tension between an image of the Arab countries map deconstructing while a famous Arab nationalist song is being hummed. This tension provokes the viewer to look critically at and think about Arabism, Pan-Arabism, Arab Spring, Nationalism and Identity.

Rusaila Bazlamit is a digital designer, visual communicator, lecturer of Design, art curator and an experimental artist. Rusaila is also the founder of Lab Tajribi | Experimental Expressions [www.lab-tajribi.com] which is a non-physical art atelier for experimental art and forms of expression. Rusaila was a lecturer at Jordan University and then the German-Jordanian University in areas of Architecture, Design, Digital and Interactive Media. Currently she is a casual academic of Digital Design at Curtin University in Western Australia while undertaking her PhD in Design.

Rusaila has exhibited several digital and video art projects, interactive installations and photography works in Jordan,



Scotland, Lebanon, Greece and Egypt. In her work she explores the intersectional potentials of using the built environment, digital media and community cultural development to create meaningful urban and interactive experiences. She had also curated two national exhibitions in Australia; “No Added Sugar; Engagement and Self-Determination: Australian Muslim Women Artists” and “Symbiosis: Living Through Art”.



John Gwadbau, (Gwadbau No. 2.) *Marrwakara Story*, 1964. Mwang Language, Goulburn Island, Western Arnhem Land NT. Ochre on Stringybark. RM and CH Berndt Collection (WU1236).

JOHN GWADBU

Marrwakara Story.

Animation (2013) based on his original Marrwakara Story bark painting (1964) and sound recording (1962-4).

The digital animation and song cycle, depicts the journey between South Goulburn Island and the mainland in the north of Australia. The animation is based on a bark painted 50 years ago by John Gwadbu, sketching the *Marrwakara Story*. The animation is accompanied by a sound recording of Gwadbu made between 1962-1964 singing songs related to the story. The songs tell of events narrated to him in a dream by his two 'spirit familiars' marrwakara (goannas).

Animation based on the original Marrwakara bark painting (1964) and related 12 song set sung by John Gwadbu, recorded in two stages 1962-1964 by RM Berndt.

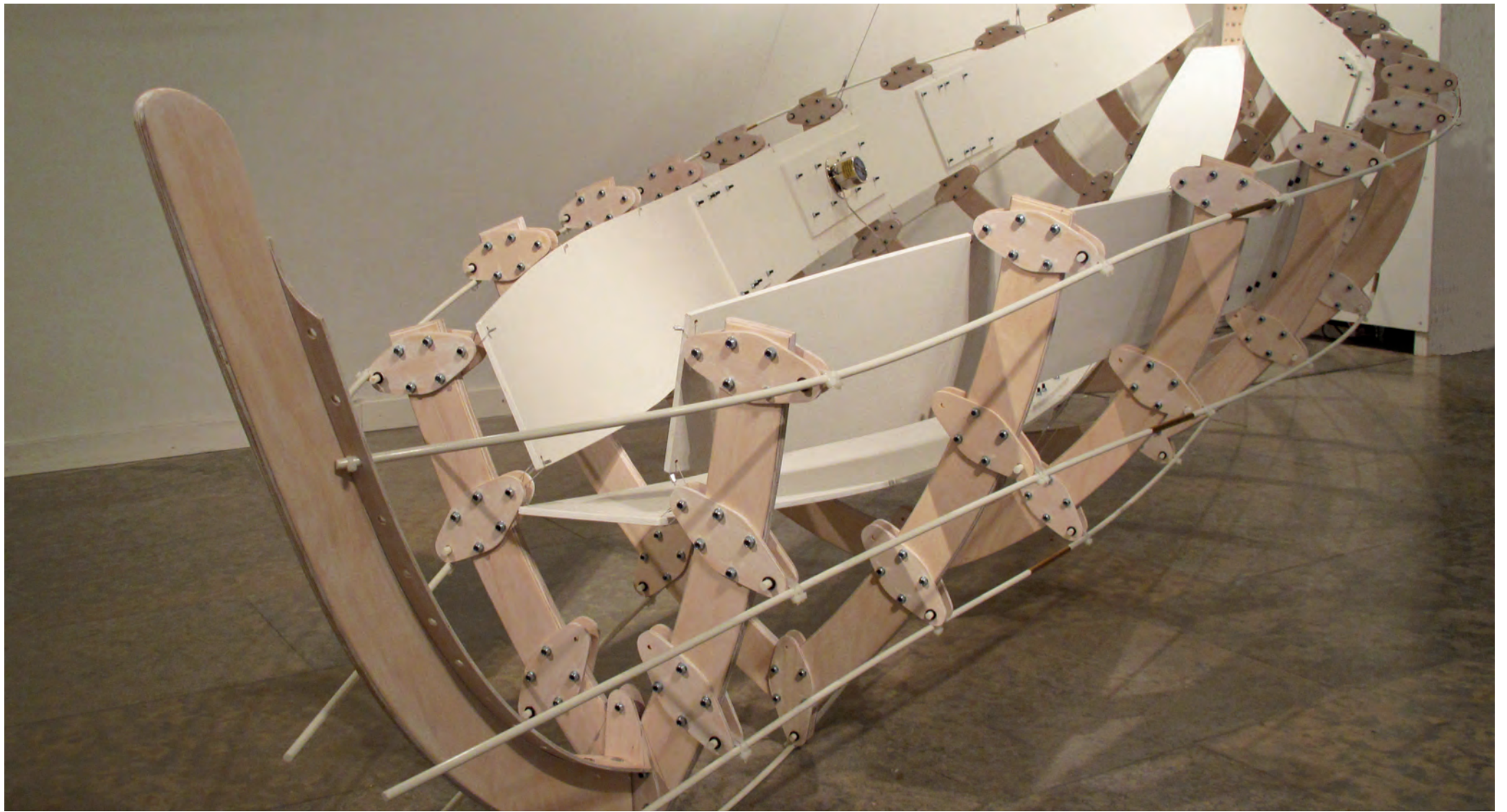
Artist and songman: John Gwadbu (deceased) Mawng language group, Warruwi, Western Arnhem Land.

Recording by Professor Ronald M Berndt 1961 - 1964

Animation created with the permission of the artist's family for the Berndt Museum's Exhibition Little Paintings, Big Stories: Gossip Songs of Western Arnhem Land, 2013 curated by Eve Chaloupka and Kelly Rowe, Berndt Museum, University of Western Australia. Animation prepared by Toby Tan Smith. Thanks to Mardbalk Arts Centre.

Exhibition warning: contains the voice & musical performance of people who are deceased.

John Gwadbu, (now deceased) was an elder from Warruwi, South Goulburn Island, Arnhem Land, Australia. He was a renowned singer and songwriter. He was a member of the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee and active in the Goulburn Island Council. Thankyou to the artist's family who hold the rights to his creative works for allowing them to be presented.



Nigel Helyer, *The Law of the Tongue ~ Symbiosis and Betrayal*, 2010. Photo: Nigel Helyer.

NIGEL HELYER

The Law of the Tongue ~ Symbiosis and Betrayal,
2010, sound sculpture installation 6mx2m

For Millennia, Killer Whales (Orcinus Orca) have hunted Baleen Whales along the coasts of Australia, driving them into shallow bays from which they cannot escape. Likewise for Millennia the Yuni people of Twofold Bay near Eden (New South Wales) have formed a spiritual bond with the Orcas (Beowas to the Yuni) whom they considered to be reincarnations of their tribal ancestors and to whom they sang; believing that the Orcas responded by intentionally driving Whales to strand in the Bay as a food offering to their tribal members.

The Law of the Tongue ~ Symbiosis and Betrayal suggests stories from those not able to speak or read to us - ocean water and one of its largest mammals.

The Law of the Tongue installation operates with eight parallel audio tracks, six driving Solid Drive audio actuators that activate the skeletal vessel, and three ship's oars, the remaining two tracks drive two large sub-woofers buried in the three metre long neoprene 'Whale's Tongue'. The sonic content is drawn principally from sonified water quality data, whale recordings and hydrophone recordings.
http://www.sonicobjects.com/index.php/projects/more/law_of_the_tongue/

Nigel Helyer (a.k.a. DrSonique) is a sound artist who's interdisciplinary practice combines art and science to embrace our social, cultural and physical environments. He brings these concerns together in poetic art projects that prompt the community to engage with their cultural histories, identity and sense of place; inviting us to examine the abstract conditions of our world and our complex relationships to it.



He is the director of Sonic Objects; Sonic Architecture whose international reputation includes large scale sound-sculpture installations, environmental public artworks, museum inter-actives and new media projects. His interdisciplinary methods link a broad platform of creative practice with scientific research and development. He is an Adjunct Professor in Media, Music, Communications and Cultural Studies Macquarie University and Research Fellow at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania, and is also collaborating with Prof J Albertyn at the Department of Microbial, Biochemical and Food Biotechnology, University Free State. Nigel has held visiting Professor positions at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and Stanford University.



Bronia Iwanczak, *Timebinder*, Interactive, 2010, and artists book, 2004. Photo: Hamish Tame.

BRONIA IWANCZAK

Timebinder,

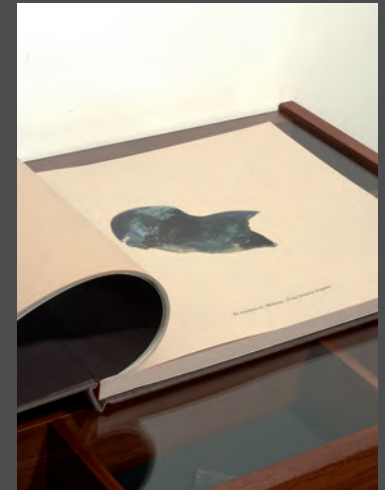
Interactive, 2010, and artists book, 2004, 38.5 x 31cm

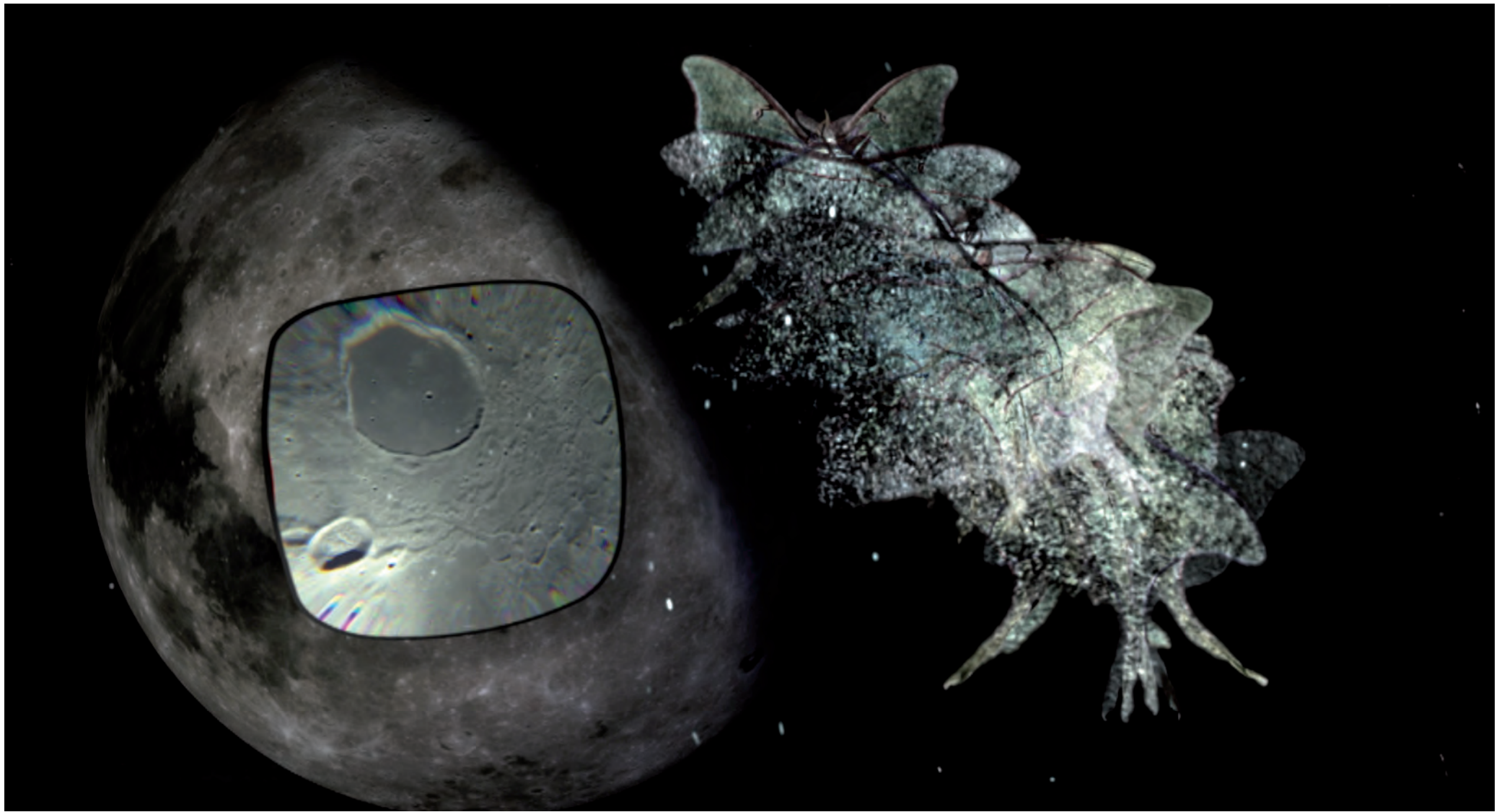
Timebinder documents the psychometric responses of six clairvoyants to fragments collected from a variety of Polish wartime sites including Hitler's Lair, Lambsdorf (the labour camp that the artist's father was interned in) and Auschwitz- Birkenau. This work sits at the intersection between subjectivity and history; how we come to embody, if at all understand the nature of historical events that exceed rational understanding.

"The primary element of *Timebinder* comprised of several objects that the artist retrieved from the site of Auschwitz- Birkenau, including a piece of barbed wire, a rail peg, and a shard of glass. To Iwanczak, these material remnants carry with them the memories of the horrors that transpired here. Yet rather than exhibit only the fragments themselves, she sought to elicit from them their 'testimony'. Iwanczak took the objects to a number of psychometrists – the reverend of a Sydney Spiritualist church, a forensic clairvoyant, and a Maori who works with indigenous communities – who 'read' them, measuring their emanations, and thereby forged a palpable if tenuous link or 'binding' over time and space, between Sydney in 2004 and Birkenau in 1944. The artist recorded these interpretations in book form, displaying them alongside the objects in a cabinet." Jacqueline Milner in *Artlink* vol 26#3, 2006.

Bronia Iwanczak is a visual artist whose mixed media practice encompasses film, photography and sculptural installation. With a diverse background that straddles the disciplines of Design, Visual Arts and Exhibition Curation, her interests lie at the intersection of narrative explorations of contested histories in relation to the built and natural environment.

Sub themes include, social revolution, the politics of religion, ritual performance, the consciousness of objects and technology. For the past 25 years she has exhibited nationally and internationally, and has been the recipient of grants including both the Australia Council's residency programs for Los Angeles and New York. More recently she was based in Paris at the AGNSW Moya Dyring Studio at the Cité International des Arts, researching the influence of French aesthetics on Vodun ritual objects and practise. Since 2006 she has been the director of the project, Openletter, an ongoing curatorial program for the presentation of artist books and text multiples. Her work is held in a number of national and international collections which include Artbank, the Samstag collection, the Tate Gallery Library and the Penelope Seidler collection.





CLEA T. WAITE and LAUREN FENTON

MetaBook: The Book of Luna ©

2014, interactive installation 1mx1m

MetaBook: The Book of Luna is an expanded cinema installation, an electronic cabinet of curiosities that formally examines how structural and dynamic montage can be employed in counterpoint to create experimental narratives and immersive experiences. A participatory artwork combining the experiential qualities of text, sculpture, interactive media, and cinema within the enclosed architecture of a tabletop object, *The Book of Luna* narrates a poetic essay about the Moon's place in the historical imagination. The nature of love, madness, the unknown, and our capacity for the sublime are amongst the intellectual passions that have crystallized around our only satellite. Unfolding across a series of projections and nested spaces, this artwork treats the Moon both as a poetic concept and as a concrete, navigable place. The reader is invited to fly in orbit between texts written and inspired by some of the Moon's great philosophers and scientists and the lunar craters that have been named after them.

As a hybrid artefact that brings together illusion and science, aesthetics and apparatus, the *MetaBook* re-invents expanded cinema according to a neo-baroque logic of serial miniaturization that unlocks proportionally vast sensorial and imaginary realms. http://www.clea-t.de/Book_of_Luna/Book_of_Luna.html

Clea T. Waite is an intermedia artist, scholar, and experimental filmmaker whose somatic, cinematic works explore proprioception through immersion, somatic montage, and sensual interfaces, including one inter-species collaboration with several hundred spiders. Her research investigates correlations between art and science with projects focusing on particle physics, astronomy, climate change, and the history of science. Waite's fellowships include the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, CERN, and the Academy of Media Arts Cologne. She has held positions at the HFF Babelsberg, Pratt Institute, and the UdK Berlin. A graduate of the MIT Media Lab, she is an Annenberg PhD fellow at USC in Media Arts and Practice.



Lauren Fenton is a media artist and PhD candidate in Media Arts and Practice at USC's School of Cinematic Arts. Her work explores the speculative aesthetics of sensate networks and cinematic attractions, in particular the passage between materiality and the virtual in emerging entertainment technologies. Recent work include *Polyangylene*, a kinetic sculpture of found objects animated by projection mapping, and *The Kinetic Theatre for the Historical Imagination*, a stereoscopic database narrative that uses Los Angeles' early photographic archive to explore an imaginary city. Other works include *Cinema Detour*, an experimental game that critically engages montage, and the tactile/textile video installation *Almost Everything Can and Shall Be Cut*.



meta_narratives