



## TRACES

Hideo Hagiwara, Gladys Kemarre, Kate O'Boyle, Stanislava Pinchuk,  
Nina Sanadze, Udo Sellbach, Ana Vaz and Wanapati Yunupingu  
with additional contributions from Vanessa Berry

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curated by Chantelle Mitchell and Jaxon Waterhouse

Tim Ingold, *Fig01.1. Lines and Blobs*, 2015

**Traces** reckons with what remains and what is carried forward, in an exhibition uniting new and existing work with a selection of prints from the Monash Collection. Conceptually, the trace invites considerations of formations of time, memory, place and understanding but also additionally, recognises the importance of marking, impact, effect and consequence as fundamental in the creation of relationships, narratives and structures which construct individual and social realities.

Drawing from the work of anthropologist Tim Ingold, a self-identified 'linealogist', *Traces* is the first exhibition in *The line is life itself*—a series of three exhibitions for MADA Gallery throughout 2023 interrogating taxonomies of the line. Central undercurrents within this exhibition are considerations of memory or the memorial, with the trace recognised manifesting as the persistence of an action past its initial register. The works included in *Traces* explore the persistence of contact and encounter through physical, material, speculative and hauntological frames.

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The six lithographs of Anmatyerre artist **Gladys Kemarre's** 2012 *Awelye Series* are identified as a unity of Country, culture and performance. In this suite of works, Kemarre translates formal elements of *awelye* (women's ceremony in the two languages Eastern Anmatyerr and Alyawarr) for print upon the page. Inclusive of both circular and linear gestures, these works inscribe markings traditionally painted onto the upper torso during *awelye*; a capture of time and movement and a transfer of intent into the bounded space of the surface. When these markings are made during *awelye*, there is a reassertion of connection to Country, to family and to culture, a recognition of reciprocity within this relationality.

Whilst significant within the frames of cultural practice and knowledge, the importance of this series extends to their practical formation, through their identification as the first example of printmaking by a Utopia artist. At the time of their creation in 2012, the artists of the Utopia region—working on Country approximately 250 kilometres northeast of Alice Springs in Central Australia—were already critically acclaimed across Australia and internationally for their decades of artmaking. This recognition has emerged across an extensive and lauded history of batik painting that began in the late 1970s, before the widespread shift to acrylic mediums in the late 1980s saw the recognition of Utopia artists such as Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Angeline Ngale and Kemarre within Western art spaces.

The introduction of printmaking to Utopia artists signals an expansiveness of practice, alongside a willingness to experiment with form as a further expression of culture. Traditionally, there is a reciprocity identifiable within *awelye*; the relation between mark making on the body using earthly

material, before the marking of the earth through ceremony. While Kemarre's transfer of *awelye* into the register of the page represented a departure from the established practices of the Utopia artists, this transfer aligns with Ingold's recognition, in the context of the trace, of the different registers of inscriptions and impressions in the surfaces they mark. As he writes, "they have in common that they are the traces of a moving body as it goes along."<sup>1</sup> As Kemarre's hand moves across the surface, it continues a gesture performed across thousands of years—a reassertion of presence, carrying with it an intimate knowledge and care.

Transposing Ingold's recognition of the relatedness between the body and inscription into the work of German-Australian artist **Udo Sellbach**, *To Dump* illuminates both practice-oriented and conceptual tethers to the theorisation of the trace. The etching and aquatint work on paper from 1965 is one part of a wider series, *The target is man* — originally displayed in the Monash University Department of Psychology. Each work within this series of twelve speaks in some way not only to the horrors experienced by the artist during World War II, but in a broader sense to the indelible marks that history, trauma and witnessing place upon a body. This series recognises the potential for bodies to be deployed as "a target to use, persecute, humble, chain, exhibit, scorn, sacrifice, execute, dump, ignore and forget," as woven into their titles and captured through the imprint of the plate upon the page.<sup>2</sup>

Archiving across the surface of *To Dump* is a line which performs the boundedness of the mound or the dumpsite. Cradled, or alternatively, crammed underneath are an assemblage of forms; perhaps limbs or torsos, detritus and tailings, parts or registers of a whole emerge, abstract but retaining some memory of form. Sellbach presents a monochromatic stratigraphy, with atrocity held within the earth as much as it may be held within memory and the body. As Katharina Schramm, an ethnologist engaging with memory and violence, asserts: "Violence leaves traces."<sup>3</sup> In spheres of trauma studies, psychology, or sociology, these traces are often prioritised as purely psychological and bodily—but the mark of the trace is indiscriminate, seeding into bodies and landscapes alike. In Sellbach's

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Ingold, *The Life of Lines* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 62.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Smith, 'Anti-conscription Angle of German Artist', *The Age*, 30 March 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Katharina, Schramm, "Introduction: Landscapes of Violence: Memory and Sacred Space," *History & Memory* 23, no. 1 (2011): 5.

etching, the trace registers across form, subject, self, landscape and being in the context of conflict and horror.

Against the containing curve of the earth in Sellbach's print, the sculptural installation of Georgian-Australian artist **Nina Sanadze** emerges. The materially diverse components of the installation *Call to Peace, Anatomy of the Dream* are reminiscent of a sculptors studio or a storage wing, with the repeated forms of the sculptural components protruding skywards in a gesture toward the monumental impulse. The assemblage of sculptural forms which comprise this work are studies, armatures and replicas of a historic, Neo-classical post-World War II monument, *Call to Peace*, by the Soviet sculptor Valentin Topuridze. These markers of process and practice brought together in the gallery space signify Sanadze's ongoing engagement with Topuridze's work—and particularly the artist's archive—throughout her practice; a relationship complicated by personal and political histories.

Immediately Sanadze's installation calls forth the generative potential of the trace as extending across material practice. The armatures, casts, moulds, maquettes and disassembled sculptures entangle together—simultaneously practice and trace of practice. Alluding to the processes which birthed not only this installation, but Sanadze's previous large-scale sculptural installation *Call to Peace*, the active and archival nature of *Call to Peace, Anatomy of the Dream* animates the static form through material relations. The installation retains a form of delirious memory, with the artist identifying the propaganda-like aesthetic of the repeated form. The serialised becomes surreal-ised, however, through the whimsical distortions of size and scale and the destabilising seeds of the uncanny and grotesque sewn into the assemblage. Discarded limbs, shrunken or inflated forms, skeleton-like armatures and exposed innards carry with them the notion of destruction, and the affective register of conflict, violence and atrocity, particularly when read alongside Sellbach's *To Dump*. However, presented in this way, *Call to Peace, Anatomy of the Dream* suggests also the capacity for construction and repair; the multiple forms evidence of attempts of faithful yet fallible recreation.

Durational practice presents itself in the suite of works by Ukrainian-Australian artist **Stanislava Pinchuk**, commissioned specifically for

this exhibition. The four pinhole impressions into paper evidence the artist's sustained investigations into data mapping, information and topographies of war and conflict. *(Husband)*, *(Rest)*, *(Athena)* and *(Ithaca)* draw from the same body of research that informed Pinchuk's *The Wine Dark Sea*, a large-scale sculptural installation commissioned for the 2022 AGSA Biennale: FREE / STATE, which is comprised of a series of modular marble blocks, into which have been engraved near-identical phrases taken from the leaked Nauru and Manus Island cables and multiple translations of Homer's *Odyssey*. In switching the protagonists, however, so that Odysseus becomes [REDACTED] and vice-versa, Pinchuk offers a complex meditation on hospitality, passage and migration.

*(Husband)*, *(Rest)*, *(Athena)* and *(Ithaca)* are subtle inscriptions that become visible as a result of the play of light across a surface, both traces of and from the artist's practice, entwined with histories and narratives of passage, people and place. In the work of Ingold, questions of passage and wayfaring emerge as central concerns amidst scholarship which ties lines across history and place (in both human and more-than-human terms). Identifying shared histories of what he terms "lineal movement along paths of travel," Ingold draws from notions of transit and correspondence in conceptualising an art of translation.<sup>4</sup> Pinchuk's formal and conceptual attentions manifest similar concerns, positioning these as essential to understandings of both national and individual formations and encounters. The question of boundary and exile enters into these works, the pinhole as trace of inscription read against the arbitrary and enforced boundedness of the nation state.

Combining temporally indistinct scenes with durational shots of the landscape, Brazilian artist **Ana Vaz's** 2013 film *A Idade da Pedra (The Stone Age)* offers a speculative reimagining of the contemporary city of Brasilia. Embedding colonial and extractive critiques within loose narrative frames, this mythopoetic undertaking considers the circularity of construction and geological formation and the slipperiness of boundaries amidst the contemporary, in collision with the formal and conceptual engagements of Pinchuk's work on paper.

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<sup>4</sup> Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 149.

Vaz has been described as making “film-poems”—ecologies of signs in the formation of complex speculative and deliriously real landscapes and worlds.<sup>5</sup> Employing and subsequently challenging the ethnographic view, the rich textures of landscape and film stock merge in *A Idade da Pedra (The Stone Age)* with an almost impossibly bright sun, in the encounter of shimmering visions of a quarry hidden amidst lush fronds and beyond expansive fields. Opening with an extended shot of the sun rising over the landscape, the camera then lingers, zooms and pans over a series of webbed insects, geological formations, curved trees and contemplative gazes. The film’s dialogue arrives towards its conclusion; a meditation on creation and formation in which the unidentified female protagonist follows the lineage of descent from God through egg to her, each subject engendering that which follows it in subtle acknowledgement of entanglement and relationality across human and more-than-human frames.

This meditation, however, is mobilised in *A Idade da Pedra* under the literal reflection of light across shimmering vistas. Labourers engender a monument, picking, digging and shifting the contents of a quartzite quarry formed across time by the heat and pressure of strata and mineral. The sharp-edged plates of glittering stone glow white, as the arms of the unidentified monument loom over them, stretching beyond the literal frame of view and any sensible temporal framing. For Sanadze, the monument emerges in complex relationship to material, time and relation, offering itself as an object to be created and recreated. *Unknown Monument (C)*, by Japanese artist **Hideo Hagiwara** engages with the subject in an obtuse or speculative manner. Recognised as a pioneer of woodblock printing in the second half of the 20th century, Hagiwara’s work is identified as a significant contribution to a strong, national artistic tradition.

Despite this, scant information can be found regarding the artist’s print *Unknown Monument (C)*, which exemplifies the artist’s formal experimentation and rejects traditional construction for something less prescriptive and identifiable. Like phosphenes, the forms in this work seem to ripple across the page—imprecise in capture, perhaps part blueprint,

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<sup>5</sup> Olivier Marboeuf, “Ana Vaz ‘Occidente’”, *Vdrome*, interview with the artist, 2014. <https://www.vdrome.org/ana-vaz-occidente/>

recollection, dream or map. Yet, in both the material trace of the print upon the page, and the extended trace of the monumental and memorial impulse, Hagiwara's work contains the possibility of contact with persistence in a specific form.

For Ingold, perdurance is a specific form of persistence, a "carrying on through time" that is not static, but adaptable akin to the drawing of a line, as opposed to withdrawal. In the context of the *Unknown Monument (C)* it might be the ubiquity of the monumental form, the desire for markers and their counters, that presents the possibility for encounter with perdurance as a line, desire and trace, as both histories and futures are reckoned with in the tumult of the present.

**Kate O'Boyle's** 2022 film *The Seers* is a composition of found footage investigating miraculous appearances of the Virgin Mary across time and space, presented by the artist as an unfolding chorus of testimony and faith, or as a testimony to faith. Repeated descriptors of the Virgin Mary combine with personal inflection and patterns of speech to create a tapestry or mosaic of the Marian apparition. This archive, presented in *The Seers*, produces a shimmering rendition of Mary. Chameleon-like, her appearance changes wildly; stature, hair colour, skin tone, expression, clothing. What unites these images, however, beyond their tessellation by O'Boyle, is the conviction of those who share their experience and the affective dimension of the encounter.

The 'seers' brought together by shared testimony illuminate the double meaning of witnessing. As experience and action, witnessing contains both observation and the act of bearing testimony, holding and producing this. The choral intimacy of the work reinforces the complexities and affective power of witnessing, whilst underscoring the recognition that not only do "[w]ords and ideas have material and experiential histories, as do emplaced bodies over time," but that witnessing brings with it the possibilities of encounter-exchange.<sup>6</sup> This can be seen in the shimmering, obtuse, contradictory and complex 'whole' of the Marian apparition which is created in the duration of the work but additionally in the making-concrete of 'official' theology and errant encounter.

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<sup>6</sup> Louise Boscacci, "Wit(h)nessing," *Environmental Humanities* 1 May 2018; 10 (1): 345.

A shimmering material quality emerges in *Gurtha*, the 2022 etched aluminium work of **Wanapati Yunupingu**, Yolŋu artist living in the Gumatj homeland of Biranybirany. With a rotary tool, Yunupingu transforms found materials (typically road signs) through etching, inscribing diamond designs—*gurtha*—in complex repeating patterns. Whilst distinct from the blazing hot stone of Vaz’s quartzite, or the illuminatory figure of the witnessed Mary, Yunupingu’s aluminium etching retains qualities of the trace through material practice. In the exhibition space under the warm light of the spot, the aluminium appears to retain a trace of the tip of the rotary drill, growing hot as it labours upon the surface.

This heat is transposed into the inscriptions themselves, representative as they are of *gurtha*, or the ‘first fire’. *Gurtha* is understood as a fire of supernatural intensity, one which irrevocably alters the land that it touches. As Will Stubbs writes, “The flaming tongues are a language of creativity and truth and the sparks are offspring and generative”.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, stories and songs of *gurtha* correlate directly to ancestral knowledge relating to birth and rebirth. In Yolŋu law, as elder and artist Ms D Yunupingu conveyed, “songs always come with country...the songs have dances and show the relationships between everything...everything in the kinship system.”<sup>8</sup>

A broad apprehension of fire recognises its capacity as a connective medium, representing as it does light, heat, and transformative potential; the tangible and intangible properties of fire that act to shape human and more-than-human experiences of the world. *Gurtha*, however, is culturally specific, the medium by which knowledge was inscribed in place—as Yunupingu has inscribed them into the aluminium.

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*The line is life itself* takes the taxonomy of the line as presented by anthropologist Tim Ingold as a generative framework for inquiry. The taxonomy, presented as a triumvirate, refuses to be read in any particular way. The trace becomes thread, then resolves itself back to trace as it comes into contact with the surface. There is a similar obstinance in the works presented

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<sup>7</sup> Will Stubbs, cited in Bob Gosford, “Making Fire in Indigenous Arts,” *The Daily Review*, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Ms D Yunupingu and S Muller, “Cross-cultural challenges for Indigenous sea country management in Australia,” *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management* 16: 160.



in *Traces*. They correspond and correlate to each other, reinforcing narratives, untethering suppositions, referencing or countering each other, filtering into, around or against.