



Rachael Lee

Envisage – unseen rhythms

Acknowledgements

January 2016 marked the start of this project and saw Rachael undergo a two week residency at Megalo Print Studio & Gallery in Canberra, which was supported by Logan City Council Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF). This residency was accompanied by a mentorship by esteemed artist and printmaker G.W. Bot. An Arts Queensland grant permitted the artist additional time to devote to her practice and access to facilities at Impress Printmakers Studio & Gallery, Brisbane.

The artist would like to thank all those who made this exhibition *Envisage – unseen rhythms* possible:

My magic friends Ross, Billee, Feebee and Sprocket, thank you for all of your love, support, belief in me and love of Nature.

Thank you to Chrys Zantis for encouraging me to 'think big', for your insights into my work and for accompanying me to Canberra. Thank you for introducing me to Springwood Conservation Park and for standing up to protect it all those years ago.

To all the Logan Art Gallery staff and volunteers for their support in presenting this exhibition, for their encouragement in taking on this project and always showing their support. To Creative Industries staff for their belief in my arts practice and guiding me through Logan's RADF and Arts Queensland – Arts Ignite grant processes.

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with me about my practice and their gallery of which G.W. Bot is a represented artist.

Thank you to the incredible crew at Megalo Print Studio for imparting their knowledge, expertise and for making me feel very welcome during my residency.

Big thank you to Logan City Council for providing such beautiful green spaces. All my friends, especially Cas Fletcher, Helena Lloyd, Jen Conde, Anita West and Chrys Zantis for exploring Springwood Conservation Park with me and all my art friends for their encouragement, friendship and advice. All the volunteers at Impress Printmakers Studio especially Karen Kaese and Jude Roberts.

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Cover image: *Lost* (detail), 2017, charcoal, acrylic, pigmented ink, pencil on Tiepolo paper, 1240 x 980mm

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Rachael Lee's *Envisage – unseen rhythms*

...
No walls about me,
The stars over me,
The tall surrounding trees that stir in the wind
Making their own music,
Soft cries of the night coming to us, there
Where we are one with all old Nature's lives
Known and unknown
...

The Past, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, from *My people*, a Kath Walker collection, 1970



Beyond the trees (detail)

Rachael Lee is an artist who has lived in Rochedale South in Logan for the past fourteen years. It is a notable event when a local artist chooses and is chosen to have an exhibition of their work in a regional gallery near their birthplace, in this case at the Logan Art Gallery.


Envisage – unseen rhythms is an exhibition of mixed media works, which were inspired specifically by the local Springwood Conservation Park and the Underwood Park. The importance of this 'local' inspiration in part lies in the fact that for the artist, her source of inspiration lies not in London, Paris, Beijing or New York, but at the centre of her physical existence – right under her feet in her immediate neighbourhood.

Rachael is drawn to Nature – it allows her to be herself and enables her to express herself in her art. She finds it remarkable that within suburbia, these two parks hold all of Nature's lives, the Known and Unknown, in her own words, when referring to the Springwood Conservation Park, "I was in awe and it felt like I had stepped back in time to a peaceful existence".

Rachael is an instinctive printmaker and in this installation she has sought to create an environment that contains the rhythms and moods of the parks with which she identifies. Employing a mixture of collagraphs, stencils, linocuts, pencil, wax pastel and paper mounted on aluminium composite panels, she has created a number of entry points for us, as viewers, to enter her parks. I have identified three, but other viewers may easily find others.



Earth no.7 (detail)



In the *Beyond the elements* series, wall pieces are presented in the shape of fragments that we may find in her park, like pieces of bark, leaves or stones. On closer inspection, there is evidence of Nature having already drawn on them. The classical elements of air, fire, water and earth were inherited from Antiquity as a way of defining the structure of the universe. In this series the colours employed denote these ancient elements.

In the *Chrysalis* series, we are presented, as if hanging from the branches of trees, curled and folded leaf and bark shapes that might enclose or encase the transformation of a larvae into a butterfly – a marvellous metaphor for the state of an artist caught in the process between making and finalising a work of art. The colours used are as rich and varied as the variety of butterflies that still exist in the world around us and the scoring of the paper gives further reference to insect activity.

The third aspect of the exhibition involves concepts and realities such as deep, estuary and passage – these images suggest stages of a journey or many journeys – through the parkland and beyond. This culminates in reflexions that can be found in a body of water such as a pond in the Underwood Park and expressed with a depth of feeling in the work *Lost* – the technique of charcoal, acrylic, pigmented ink and pencil on Tiepolo watercolour paper used to full effect. At the time, the artist tells us that the work reflected her state of mind, which was rambling, chaotic and unsettling, as she undertook radiation treatment. On another level, it could be interpreted as a meditation on the human condition.

Rachael Lee has created an exhibition of beautiful, contemplative work inspired by Nature, one that moves from the personal to the universal and celebrates Nature itself.

G.W. Bot, artist



Beyond the trees (detail)



The Biophilia connection:

Biophilia, the hypothesis that proposes that humans possess inherent tendencies to seek out connections with nature and other forms of life was first popularised by Edward O. Wilson (an entomologist) in his 1984 book of the same name¹. It is this kind of nature based connection which can be seen so strongly running as an evolutionary process through Rachael Lee's work. An embedded and enduring connection to nature and her place within it – her local environs of Logan, Queensland. The artist takes any opportunity she can to continually immerse herself in green spaces, such as Springwood Conservation Park and Underwood Park which form the visual inspiration behind this latest series of work.


All except five of the works shown in this exhibition are collagraphs, a fine art print made from collaged materials glued down to printing plates which have then been inked and run through a printing press in various ways, overlapped with stencils and linocuts. Collagraphs are therefore built up in layers, much like the leafy floor of a bushwalk – a soft layering up of organic matter. Like this organic matter, many of the pieces (collagraphs being experimental in nature), have been repositioned and repurposed into the ecosystem of Rachael's work to fit the shape of her latest solo exhibition, *Envisage – unseen rhythms*.

Beyond the elements series, responds to Springwood Conservation Park in a way that breaks free of the traditional presentation and representation of nature. Every level of nature itself is explored in progression like a walk on a stone path from the earth to the trees, then on to water, the air, and back to aether.



Water no.1 (detail)





Much of the work that underpins biophilia comes from environmental psychology and the Attention Restoration Theory² which is based on two main areas of study. The first area of study is Structural Developmental Theory of which Peter Kahn is the main scholar³. He closely observes cultural and biophilic relationships for health and well-being. The artist experienced this effect first hand when from the start of this project in 2016 a series of medical issues affected her physical well-being. The time spent in this serene natural environment and the act of making based on this contact with nature provided her with a much-needed calming and restorative effect.

The second main causative theory for the biophilia hypothesis is Stress Recovery Theory of which Roger Ulrich and Yannick Joye have been the main contributors⁴. This theory outlines the direct benefits of nature in stress reduction which the artist found in Underwood Park. The ducks and accompanying pond were the perfect restorative environment and provided Rachael with great joy whilst recovering from another two surgeries in 2017 and the following radiation treatments. *A pond reflection* was made after Rachael was able to get back into her treehouse studio on a regular basis. The calming effect of the ducks, dappled light of the trees and movement of the water integrating into this artwork reflects a much-needed peaceful inner state.

To understand Rachael's work is to understand the nature of biophilia itself. *Envisage – unseen rhythms* was a direct response to this feeling of a connection to, and absorption with the positive experience of nature-based environments and the unseen forces that create this attraction.

Only about five per cent of the universe is visible. Dark Energy is an unknown form of energy that repels gravity, accounting for approximately 70 per cent of space and occupying the entire universe causing its expansion to accelerate⁵. Does the 'negative space' in her work acts as a visual metaphor for what dark energy might be? And what it might look like? This is depicted most clearly by the representation of the *Critters*, the physical output of forces exerted by the artist on her medium of creation. Unseen and unknown forces like the first single celled amoeba that activated nature as we know it. Forces that still physically and subconsciously affect us through seen and unseen rhythms, bringing dark energy and matter to light through biophilic engagement.



Air no.1 (detail)



For Rachael Lee, this solo show marks her most ambitious project yet. It has truly connected her to her local natural environment within Logan and acted as a tool for regeneration at a time of great physical stress. Rachael acknowledges the importance of nature and how central this, in conjunction to her arts practice, is for her wellbeing. She has stated herself that she cannot produce anything that doesn't stem from beauty, because for her art is about erring on the side of hope and acknowledging our very physical nature – both known and unknown, seen and unseen.

Jay Dee Dearness

Artist and academic researching art, culture and biophilia for wellbeing

Notes:

1. Edward O. Wilson, *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1984.
2. Kaitlyn Gillis and Birgitta Gatersleben, 'A Review of Psychological Literature on the Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Biophilic Design', *Buildings* 5, 2015, p. 959.
3. Ibid.
4. Yannick Joye, 'Biophilic Design Aesthetics in Art and Design Education', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 45 (2), 2011, pp. 17-35.
5. Interview with Rachael Lee, 5 March 2018.



Aether (detail)



Deep

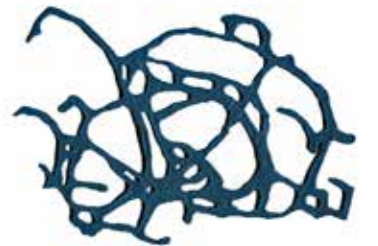


Passage



LIST OF WORKS

1. **Beyond the elements**, 2016-2018, multi-plate collagraphs, stencils, linocut, pencil, wax pastel, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 11850 x 2100mm
2. **Earth no.1**, 2016, multi-plate collagraphs, stencils, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 905 x 585mm
3. **Earth no.2**, 2016, multi-plate collagraphs, stencils, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 770 X 558mm
4. **Earth no.3**, 2016, multi-plate collagraphs, stencils, linocut, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 765 x 458mm
5. **Earth no.4**, 2016, multi-plate collagraphs, stencils, linocut, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 648 X 515mm
6. **Earth no.5**, 2017, collagraph, stencils, linocut, on Somerset mounted on paper aluminium, 870 x 995mm
7. **Earth no.6**, 2016, multi-plate collagraphs, linocut, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 517 x 380mm
8. **Beyond the trees**, 2017, multi-plate collagraphs, stencils, linocut, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 2880 x 2100mm
9. **Water no.1**, 2018, collagraph, embossing, stencils, wax pastel, pencil, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 720 x 1060mm
10. **Water no.2**, 2018, collagraph, stencils, linocut, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 490 x 670mm
11. **Water no.3**, 2018, collagraph, stencils, linocut, wax pastel, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 160 x 780mm
12. **Air no.1**, 2018, embossed collagraph, stencils, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 295 x 1410mm
13. **Air no.2**, 2018, embossed collagraph, stencils, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 395 x 1560mm
14. **Aether**, 2018, embossed collagraph, stencils, PVA, sand, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 660 x 1575mm
15. **Fire**, 2018, collagraph, stencils, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 380 x 390mm
16. **Earth no.7**, 2018, embossed collagraph, stencils, pencil, on Somerset paper mounted on aluminium, 1080 x 740mm
17. **Chrysalis no.1**, 2017, multi-plate collagraphs, linocut, on Somerset paper, piercings, cutouts, LED, fixings 310 x 250 x 1100mm
18. **Chrysalis no.2**, 2017, multi-plate collagraphs, stencils, spraypaint, on Somerset paper, piercings, LED, fixings 260 x 140 x 680mm
19. **Chrysalis no.3**, 2017, multi-plate collagraphs, stencils, on Somerset paper, piercings, cutouts, LED, fixings 180 x 240 x 800mm
20. **Chrysalis no.4**, 2017, multi-plate collagraphs, stencils, ink, on Somerset paper, piercings, LED, fixings 180 x 240 x 735mm
21. **Chrysalis no.5**, 2017, collagraph, stencil, spray paint, on Somerset paper, piercings, LED, fixings 220 x 150 x 485mm
22. **Chrysalis no.6**, 2017, collagraph, stencils, linocut, on Somerset paper, piercings, LED, fixings 300 x 220 x 870mm
23. **Chrysalis no.7**, 2017, multi-plate collagraph, embossing, stencils, collage, metallic thread, on Somerset paper, piercings, LED, fixings 170 x 155 x 1010mm
24. **Deep**, 2018, collagraph embossing, stencils, collage, mylar, metallic thread, piercings, on Somerset paper mounted on board, 305 x 229mm
25. **Estuary**, 2018, collagraph, stencils, linocut, collage, mylar, piercings, on Somerset paper mounted on board, 305 x 229mm
26. **Passage**, 2018, collagraph, stencils, linocut, collage, mylar, piercings, on Somerset paper mounted on board, 305 x 229mm
27. **Razzle**, 2018, multi-plate collagraphs, stencils, collage, wooden shapes, piercings on Somerset paper mounted on board, 229 x 305mm
28. **Dazzle**, 2018, multi-plate collagraphs, stencils, collage, wooden shapes, piercings on Somerset paper mounted on board, 229 x 305mm
29. **Ignite I**, 2017, collagraph, stencils on Somerset paper, 950 x 1320mm
30. **Ignite II**, 2017, collagraph, stencils on Somerset paper, 950 x 1320mm
31. **Secrets**, 2017, stencils on Somerset paper, 950 x 1320mm
32. **Journey**, 2017, collagraph, stencils, collage on Somerset paper, 950 x 1320mm
33. **Perception I**, 2017, charcoal, acrylic, pigmented ink, pencil on Tiepolo paper, 580 x 1250mm
34. **Perception II**, 2017, charcoal, acrylic, pigmented ink, pencil on Tiepolo paper, 580 x 1250mm
35. **A pond reflection**, 2017, charcoal, pigmented ink, pencil on Tiepolo paper, 1240 x 980mm
36. **Lost**, 2017, charcoal, acrylic, pigmented ink, pencil on Tiepolo paper, 1240 x 980mm
37. **Critters no.1-5**, 2018, collagraph plates: mat board, ink various sizes







Perception I



Perception II

Envisage – unseen rhythms
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