

ISO TOPICS

Title: Iso Topics

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## ISO TOPICS

Hannah Arendt identified three effects of solitude – conscience, thought and creativity. But isolation, a product of social distancing, does not equate to solitude. The undesirable effects of isolation, a political experience of separation from others, and loneliness, a personal experience, can, in Arendt's thinking, be ameliorated by solitude. In this time of social distancing, are we able to experience solitude, to enhance creativity, deepen conscience and thought? Or has the hyperfocus on productivity of the modern organisation been outsourced to our domestic spaces?

*Iso Topics* is an exhibition of works by staff, students and affiliates of the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research in the Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Canberra. This is the 26th year that UC researchers have presented a group exhibition of their creative work.

Curated by Jordan Williams and Katie Hayne, 2020



## ARTISTS

Monica Andrew and Dan Andrew

Tracey Benson

Louise Curham and Lynn Loo

Anthony Eaton

Dianne Firth

UK Frederick and Caren Florance, with Saskia Haalebos and Nicci Haynes

Ross Gibson

Katie Hayne

Annie McCarthy and Susie Russell

Bethaney Turner

Olga Walker

Jen Webb, Sam Byrmand, Hannah Byrmand and Paul Hetherington

Jessica Western

Claire Rosslyn Wilson

Yushan Zou and Fanke Peng

# Sourdough: 24 hours in lockdown

**Monica Andrew and Dan Andrew**

Digital video (1:34mins)

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to people spending more time than usual at home, because they worked from home, lost their jobs, or because many social activities were unavailable. As a result, they turned to more domestic pursuits – home improvements, gardening, handcrafts and sourdough baking. *Sourdough: 24 Hours in Lockdown* is a time-lapse video depicting the slow process of making a sourdough starter. It encapsulates the changing world of Covid-19, the feeling of imprisonment resulting from the Covid-19 restrictions and an opportunity to meditate on change and growth.

## Artist bios:

Monica Andrew is a PhD candidate researching the potential contribution of needlecraft skills to clothing and textile sustainability. She runs a weekly repair café at the University of Canberra to assist others with their mending projects to help keep items out of landfill and to reduce the environmental impact of clothing and textiles.

Dan Andrew lectures in Media and Communication at the University of Canberra. He is undertaking a PhD in advertising, following a career in the advertising industry.



# Ginninderry Walks

## Tracey Benson

Digital video (11:40 mins)

This project was presented as a live presentation as part of the recent Urban Tree Festival. The work is a documentation of a local walk which I have taken on an almost daily basis since the outbreak of COVID 19. My focus is on the details of local trees, many of which are native species to the region, sharing close observations of some of the trees along the walk. To gather material for the project, I used a combination of two apps – one for recording the route (View Ranger) and capturing sound and image, and the other to document the three-word geolocations with Wat3Words. Each day, I followed the same path, focusing on different details encountered each day during the project. For example, different parts of the tree, different species, the creatures that inhabit the trees and the weather. For the Urban Tree Festival event, I brought the sounds and images together by taking the audience through a treewalking guided meditation.

### Artist bio:

Tracey M Benson is an artist and researcher based in Canberra, Australia. With an interest in ubiquitous technologies, user research and active audience participation, her work is focused on ecological balance, awareness and wellbeing. Tracey is currently an adjunct researcher at the Institute of Applied Ecology and Centre for Creative and Cultural Research at University of Canberra and visiting researcher at the More than Human Lab at Victoria University, Wellington, NZ. Her most recent work has been featured as part of the UK based Urban Tree Festival [www.traceybenson.com](http://www.traceybenson.com)





# Autumn Fog [Stand-in Lab]

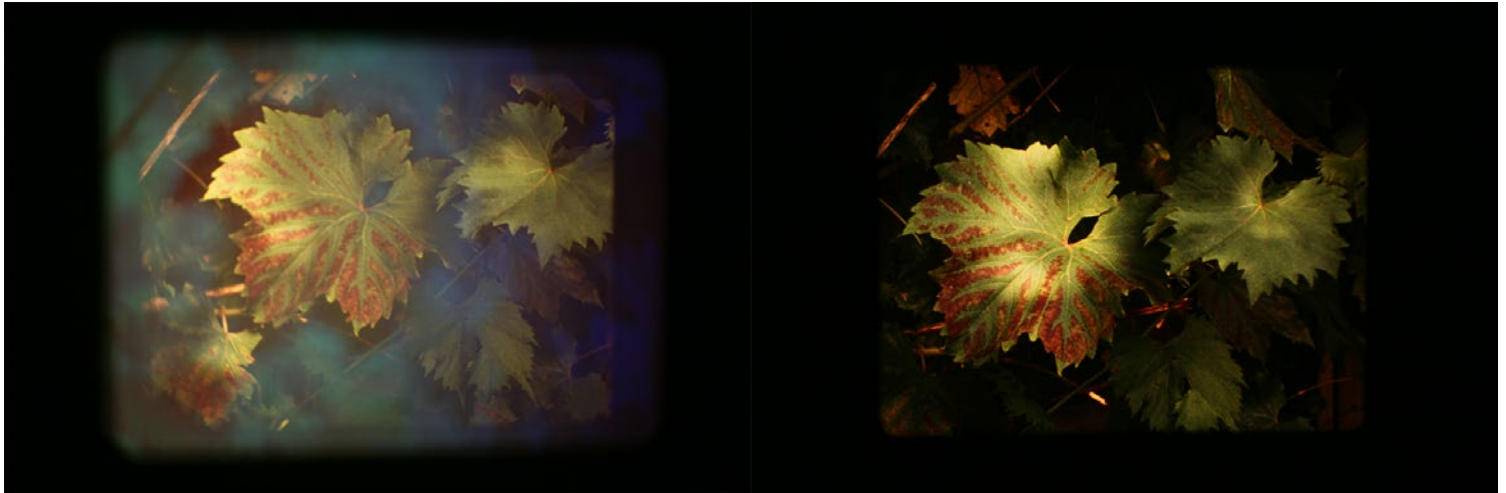
**Louise Curham (Canberra) and Lynn Loo (London)**

Digital images and live performance

Is it isolation or solitude we offer our artworks to when we're done with them? For many artists, today doesn't reward our efforts very well. Tomorrow's audiences may be more attentive but only if we leave them something to attend to.

To address this problem of leaving something useable behind, British Singaporean artist Lynn Loo and I tried an experiment in 'standing in' for each other to see what the future might hold for our film performance artworks. We experimented with making instructions that could stand in for Lynn, teaching the user how to perform her work *Autumn Fog*. This work comes to life through a performance involving two 16mm film projectors. We enlisted other artists to try out the instructions. They made changes to them as they worked – the fifth performance involved a set of haiku presented as a slideshow.

For *Iso Topics*, Canberra poet, artist and scholar Jordan Williams, will test the changes that emerged from last year's haiku slideshow, taking the instructions to their next iteration. The performance will take place over the internet and if we can, before a COVID-responsible audience in the gallery.



Autumn Fog is made by projecting two images (one negative, one positive) on top of each other, which the audience experiences as one image. On the left is both the negative and the positive image together, along with a filter placed over the negative by the performer. You can see a slight shadow made by the grape leaf. In the film, this looks 3D, enhanced by the slight delay between the images, the leaf twitch in the positive happens slightly before the negative.

### Artists' bio:

Media artists and archivists, Lynn Loo and Louise Curham make performances with old media. Lynn specialises in 16mm. Lynn's works are shown in the numerous and vibrant expanded cinema and experimental film forums throughout Europe. Louise works often with musicians, using the drama of failing technology of the 1970s and before. Also, part of Louise's work is re-enactment of art from previous generations – developed in this project to Louise (and other artists) 'standing in'.

Lynn LOO  
Born Singapore 1976, United Kingdom from 2002  
Louise CURHAM  
Born New Zealand 1971, Australia from 1990

### The Stand-in Lab

16mm film, live performance of the film 'Autumn Fog' by Lynn Loo, instructions and instruction tester Jordan Williams

### What's happening here?

This artwork is a performance that preserves the work at the same time as we perform it. Last year 5 artists tested instructions for Lynn's film performance that ended up as 20 haiku. Jordan will test the haiku instructions.

*Turning an artwork into instructions + testing them*

*DATE FOR JORDAN'S PERFORMANCE TBC*

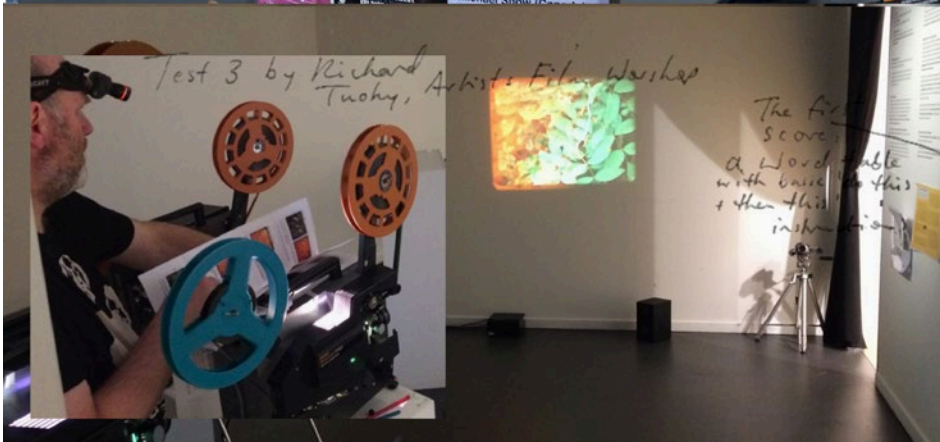
### BRITISH FILM MAKER AND WRITER NICKY HAMLYN ON IDEA OF PASSING ON FILM PERFORMANCE WORK:

Nicky responds to the questions: do you have film performance works that circulate without you and how? Would you like film performance work to be distributed or archived?

*Nicky is an artist-writer friend of Lynn's who writes books + this stuff.*  
Although some film performances are more difficult to reproduce, this difficulty is mostly technical in nature, not aesthetic although of course a work's aesthetics will be affected by the way it's performed when it's performed by someone else. I see this as a positive thing, just as it is always for anyone who's interested in the work.



This is a compilation of documents and images from previous work on Autumn Fog in 2019. My handwritten annotations describe what each image is about. On the centre image featuring the poster in Civic (Canberra CBD) the annotation says 'Poster for Test 1 last year, pre-COVID-19'. It seems poignant as a picture of the social space we had before March 2020. The bottom right image of the gallery wall says 'The first score - a Word table with basic "do this & then this" instructions.



# When the Walls Close In

**Anthony Eaton**

PDF, Prose

*When the Walls Close In* was written during the first weeks of the Australian Covid-19 lockdown. During this period, my wife and I were told to work from home, where we were also responsible for schooling our 5- and 11-year-old children. It quickly became apparent that juggling two full-time jobs, plus managing two children at opposite ends of the primary school continuum was going to require significant time and energy from all of us. *When the Walls Close In...* was originally just a mock abstract, standing alone with nothing following it, written for the amusement of my colleagues. After a particularly fraught morning, though, I set out to capture the particularly singular experience of living through a global event at a domestic level. I adopted an entirely dialogue-driven narrative as a means of positioning readers within the moment. Upon completion it seemed an obvious fit alongside the mock-abstract.

## Artist bio:

Anthony Eaton has been writing for children, young adults, and adults since the late -1990s. He is Associate Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Canberra where he researches the changing nature of young adult fiction in Australia and the lived experience of creative practitioners at the nexus of creative and academic work. He is editor of the journal *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature*.

**Abstract:** This paper outlines the results of a research project using autoethnographic and performance-based methodologies, conducted in the field of creative practice-led-research, during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. It considers the role of compulsory home-schooling as a catalyst for the immediate cessation of all creativity, and locates the resultant loss of hair, sleep, humour and liver function within an inversely proportional relationship framework that takes into account the age and gender of the children involved, their access to high-fructose consumables, online streaming services, and gaming consoles.

**Keywords:** Homeschool, Pandemic, Pedagogy, Practice, Infanticide

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*Mum?*

*Mum?*

*MUUUUUUUUUUUM?*

What are you shouting about?

*I'm shouting for mum.*

Yes. I can hear that. Why?

*Because I want mum.*

Mum's on a Zoom meeting upstairs. What's the problem?

*Don't worry about it.*

No, tell me what the problem is.

**Dad?**

Hang on a moment, honey. Let me deal with your brother first. Well, mate? Why do you need mum?

**Dad?**

I said hang *on*, honey.

*It's nothing.*

Then why were you shouting for her?

*I wasn't shouting.*

Mate, you were shouting so loudly that the neighbours all know you're looking for her.

*[long sigh, with eyeroll]*

So, you don't need anything?

*Nah.*

# Slow Time

## Dianne Firth

Stitched textile, 40cm x 40cm

A slow moving river sweeping all before it is a metaphor for our times.

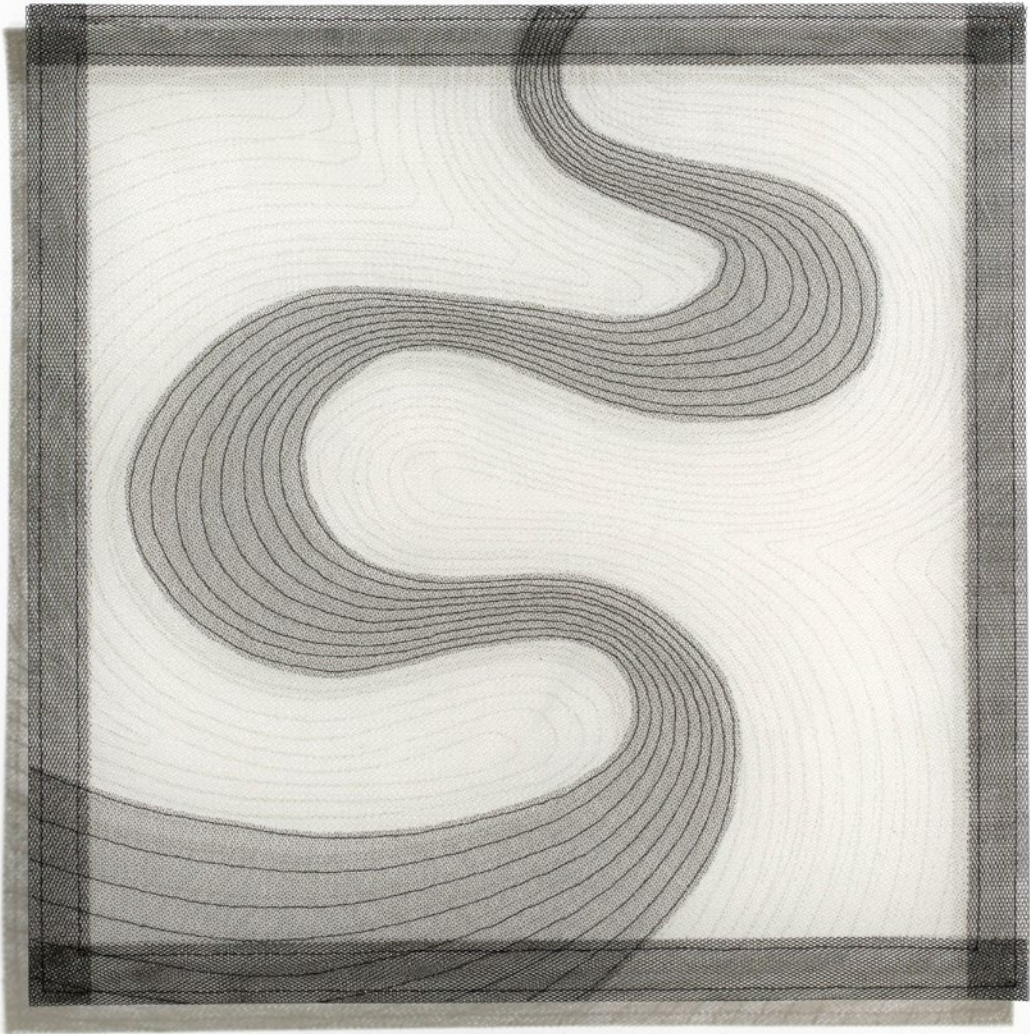
My concerns are with the spatial and temporal dimensions of isolation and social distancing that are requirements to control the COVID-19 pandemic. Some may consider isolation as equivalent to solitude. Hannah Arendt sees solitude as a positive by suggesting, conscience, thought and creativity are side effects of solitude.

However, I suggest that before these benefits can occur, the spatial and temporal dimensions of one's environment must be attuned to the individual. For example, if social isolation occurs in a noisy, constrained and distracting place with an unknown end point, rather than a quiet, orderly, peaceful environment for an anticipated time, then the effects of being alone are quite different. Isolation may have benefits for the individual, or it may encourage loneliness and anxiety.

### Artist bio:

Dianne Firth OAM is a Registered Landscape Architect and Adjunct Associate Professor with the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research at the University of Canberra. The focus of her research is the designed landscape of Canberra and she provides advice to ACT and Commonwealth Governments. Her textile art is inspired by her landscape work and can be found in major collections around the world.





# GERMBUTTER

**Fred & Flo (UK Frederick and Caren Florance)  
with Saskia Haalebos and Nicci Haynes**

PDF or laser print booklet in a sick bag, 16 pages

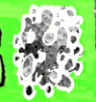
*Fred & Flo present GERMBUTTER with special guests Sass and Nicci.*

Zines are cheap, lo-fi creative publications that pride themselves on being innately material objects which can be held in the hand and passed between friends. But! Objects are now suspect, to be left alone for a proper period of time before being handled. Isolation, whether in solitude or not, breeds weird thoughts, and we, as a collaborative unit, thrive on weird thoughts. *Germbutter* is a quick turn-around response to COVID times, using collage, drawing and writing. In classic zine tradition we are including contributions by guest artists. No one has touched each other, and distanced collaboration and humour is keeping us all alive.

You can see the digital zine in the online exhibition, but you can also buy a copy of the actual zine if you want an iso souvenir. No bleach will be ingested.



GERMBUTTER



FIRST WAVE

### Artist bios:

Fred (UK Frederick) is a visual artist who likes to explore and remake things that already exist in the world, primarily through photomedia, printmaking and video. Currently Fred is an ARC DECRA Fellow, and as an archaeologist who has worked at Sydney's Quarantine Station, she has spent many hours thinking about disease, mortality, mark making and the commemoration of life interrupted. Instagram: @uk\_frederick <https://ukfrederick.com>

Flo (Caren Florance) plays with text in many different ways: through visual art, writing and creative publishing. She's particularly interested in abstraction and text as drawing, believing that not everything has to make sense to make sense. She's loved being socially distanced. Caren works at UC Faculty of Arts and Design and ANU Printmedia and Drawing. Instagram: @ampersandduck <https://carenflorance.com>

Saskia is a visual artist working across printmaking, performance and digital, who also writes experimental music scores and makes zines. Most of her work is about alternative forms of communication and spruiking empathy. She understands her environment in non-verbal ways, such as via colour, sensation, noise and tactility. Words are definitely not her first language. Instagram: @sasss\_bos <https://www.shagsyshags.com.au/>

Nicci Haynes's art practice leans towards performance (of sorts), which, along with print, drawing and mad-scientist installations, often coalesces in the form of short videos: a format usefully suitable for propagation in the instance of a global pandemic. Nicci works in the Printmedia and Drawing Workshop at the ANU. Instagram: @niccihaynes <https://www.niccihaynes.com.au/>



# JITTER-LIT

## Ross Gibson

Digital video (1:30min)

In the months of suspended animation, power grids hang and stutter. An energetic filigree casts over the isolated wanderer, adrift in moontime. Light jitters while it fails to sustain but also persists. In the wanderer's head, language is sympathetic, sense-seeking, scintillant.

### Artist bio:

Ross Gibson is Centenary Professor in Creative & Cultural Research at the University of Canberra. Recent works include the books *26 Views of the Starburst World* (UWAP, 2012) and *Stone Grown Cold* (Cordite Books, 2015), and the co-production of the ABC Radio National Feature 'Energy Grids'.

Instagram: @rossgibson\_starburst

quive

/n

jitter-lit



network



water

S

# Garden Archaeology

**Katie Hayne**

Digital photographs of found objects

A coke can, a broom and a bone. These are some of the items I found in our garden when I started digging a drainage trench during #stayathome. Following in the footsteps of backyard archaeologists<sup>1</sup>, my amateur finds led me to reflect on home, my attachment to place, and the history of my suburb. Part of Belconnen, Scullin was developed as residential housing in the late 1960s. The area was colonised by European farmers in the 1820s, displacing the original inhabitants of the Ngunnawal people. These objects speak of a history of domesticity, but also a shared ownership of place. The embodied act of digging in the dirt led me to reflect on past inhabitants and imagine stories connected to these material objects. What traces will we leave behind, and how will they be interpreted in the future?

## Artist bio:

Katie Hayne is a research development officer and an emerging artist. Her art practice explores issues of gentrification, consumerism and the overlooked. She has won awards for her painting, photography and short films, and was short-listed in the Josephine Ulrick and Win Schubert Photography Award in 2017.

1. See: Steve Brown, "Buggering Around in the Backyard: Creating Attachment to Place through Archaeology and Material Culture," *Australian Archaeology* 71, no. 1 (December 1, 2010): 74–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03122417.2010.11689387>.



During COVID-19 we started  
drinking whiskey... just a nip  
before we went to bed.



# The Anatomy of Woody Plants: Everything all of the Time

**Annie McCarthy and Susie Russell**

Mixed media and digital video (5 mins)

We began making the work in February, in the aftermath of the bushfires. A trip to Braidwood to boost the economy resulted in many purchases. Annie announced: "this book (*The Anatomy of Woody Plants* by Edward Charles Jeffrey, 1917) will be great to cut up!" And so those intricate, woody anatomies became tubes and other connectors between the images we instinctively added to the work – a French boy, a pumpkin, and a polar bear on skateboard. Are artworks of this time, like dreams, more vivid?

This giant collage/assemblage has travelled between Burra (NSW) and Downer, (ACT) by car, as we do. It came and went with us, and things came into it. After a making session, we added a date and invented a title: the piece is freeform and expansive, but anchored in time too. We don't know where it's going, and we don't know where we're going. Feels like everything all of the time.



Artist bios:

Annie McCarthy is an Assistant Professor in Global Studies at UC. She is interested in India, development and childhood, in particular children's storytelling. The latter is on display in *The Woody Anatomy of Plants: Everything All of the Time*, which engages in a zany extravaganza of world building. Twitter: @anni\_mc

Susie Russell works with maps at the National Library of Australia, where she frequently explores an array of wondrous worlds. She is interested in gender, poetry, embodiment, inter-corporeality, and the history of medicine. Twitter: @suse\_russell





# Deformed Objects

**Bethaney Turner**

Digital photographs and mixed media

This artwork explores the vitality of human and more-than-human knotted existence by working with some of our most prolific iso-companions: waste, mould and bacteria. These messmates blur the boundaries of our respective bodies and the limits of human control, forming and deforming our matter and function.

Drawing on the three crossings of the trefoil knot, this artwork highlights the microbial existence of three key iso-crossings between home and the outside: computer video-conferencing; the front door; and food that crosses physical and bodily thresholds to nourish us.

Swabs from computer keyboards, external door handles and the doorbell were taken and cultured in petri dishes. Torn strips of cloth nappies were coloured with dyes made from three waste products: inedible fridge crisper remnants; food waste from one iso-day; and fallen leaves and flower petals from the garden. These dyes were left exposed to room temperature, growing their own moulds. Photographs and Cyanotypes were produced. The use of cyanotype references cyanobacteria, the prokaryotes that made oxygen reliant life possible.

## Artist bio:

Bethaney Turner's work explores ways of supporting and amplifying ecologically attuned practices of human and more-than-human togetherness in the Anthropocene. She identifies encounters with the limits of human control as sites where ethical ecological thinking can form, laying the foundations for more sustainable behaviours. Bethaney works as an Associate Professor in Global Studies.



# The Sock Tree

**Olga Walker**

Mixed media, graphic and watercolour pencil. 42cm (h) x 32cm (w).

Covid-19 resulted in cessation of many organisational RFS volunteer activities that bleed into my domestic space. As a volunteer firefighter I give myself freely, but that does not mean I do not think about the creative projects lining my desk, outlines of which, fill my notebook.

Personally, my creativity in this time of isolation has benefitted. My work, *The tree of socks: Colour in Isolation*, is a mixed media artwork which speaks to the idea of achieving small goals. It was my small goal to learn how to knit socks. It was an immense challenge to achieve a first pair of socks with no mistakes. I did not achieve such an outcome.

However, I learned and have made succeeding socks with fewer mistakes. Time passed quickly. I did not feel alone. But the best outcome relates to how one creative achievement, can lead to another, can lead to another, and can lead to another.

## Artist bio:

Following a career in financial management in the private sector, and as a financial analyst with the Public Service in Canberra, Olga Walker undertook her Creative Writing PhD with the University of Canberra, and graduated in 2019. She has also been an RFS volunteer fire-fighter for several years. While RFS duties are curtailed, Olga's focus on creative writing and auto-ethnography continues apace.



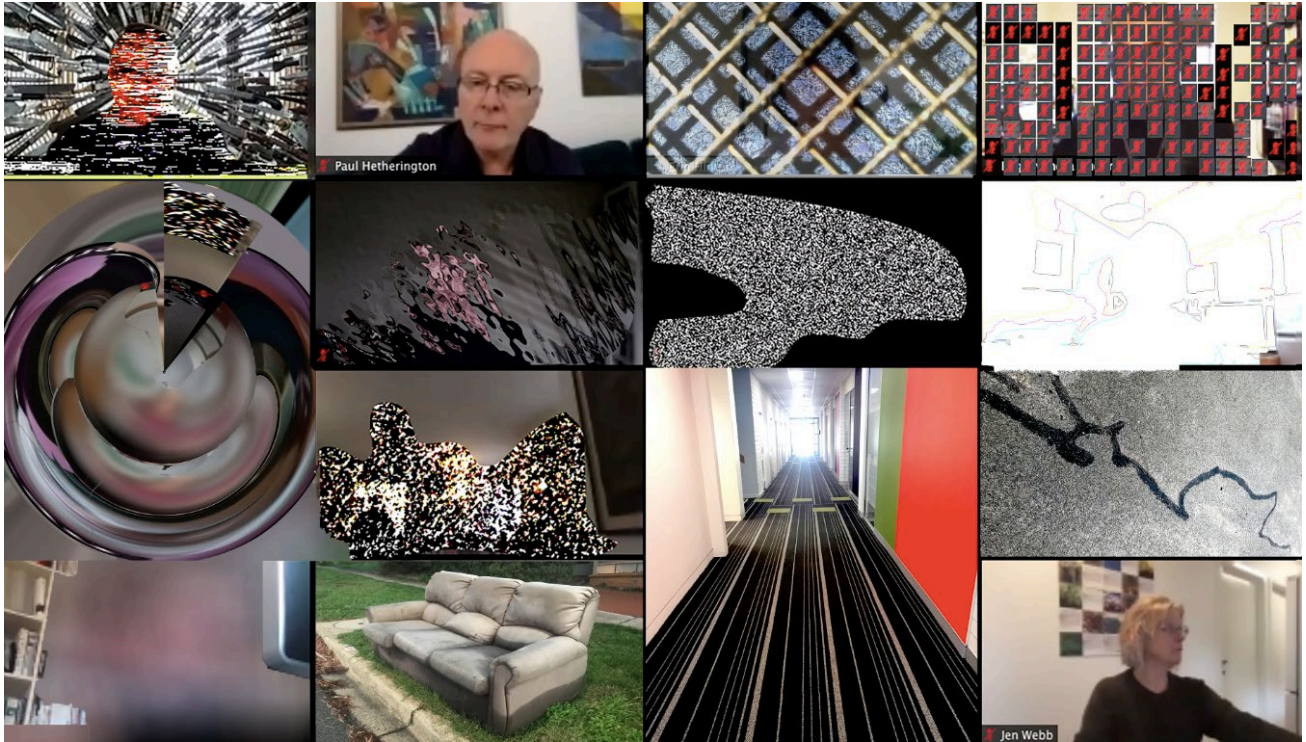


# The Rest is Silence

**Jen Webb, Sam Byrnand, Hannah Byrnand and Paul Hetherington**

Digital video (1 min)

For many people this period of isolation has involved an attempt to continue with business as usual, which usually involves frequent meetings on digital platforms. For most of us, it has also involved the absence of friends and family, an absence we attempt to mitigate by meeting each other on Zoom. Social media posts are replete with screenshots of such gatherings, showing the now-so-familiar blocks of faces or avatars stacked like bricks across a screen. In this work we review the lived experience of isolation via zoom, with its glitches, flickering visuals, the diffusion of social connection, drifting of thought, interruption of the (digital) empire by the (analogue) quotidian. We adopt Hamlet's last words for the title of the work, because it encapsulates the denotations of *rest* (what remains; a cessation), and the noisy *silence* of isolation.



Paul Hetherington

Jen Webb

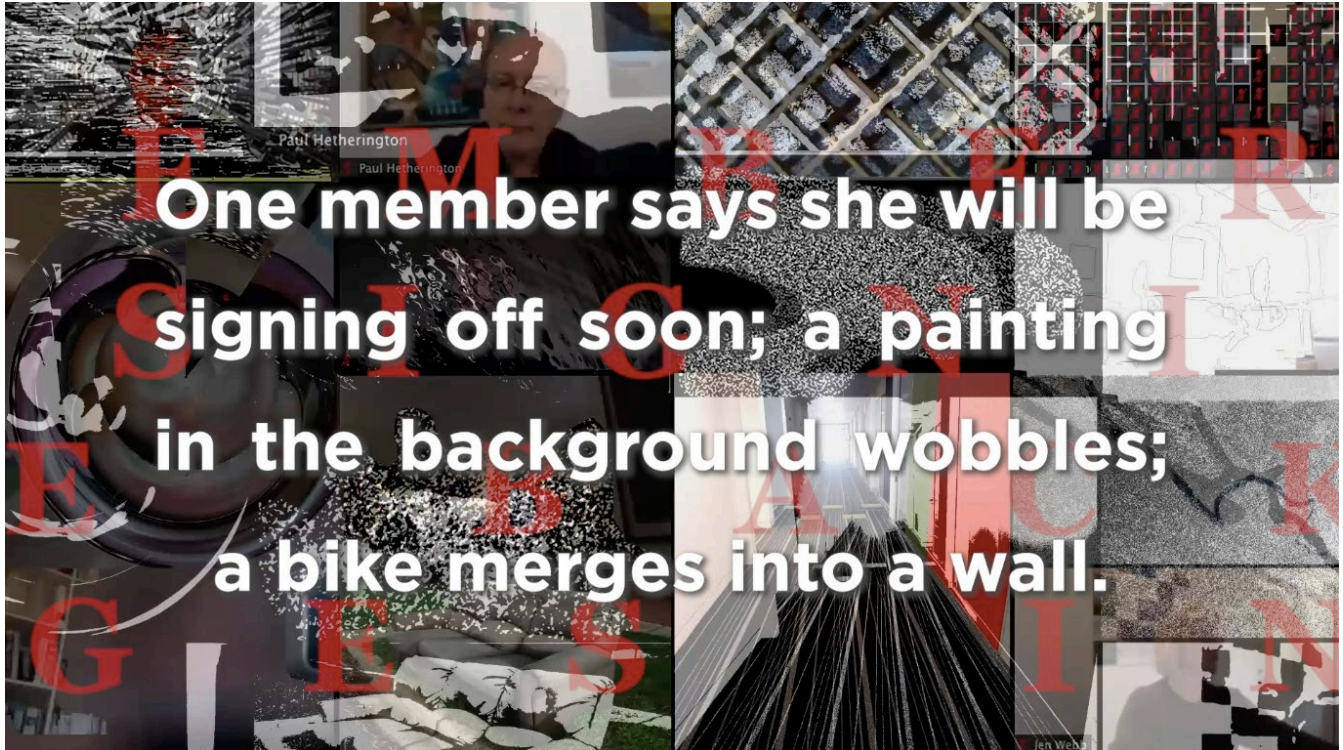
### Artist bios:

Jen Webb (photography) is Distinguished Professor of Creative Practice at the University of Canberra, and co-editor of *Axon: Creative Explorations* and the literary journal *Meniscus*. Her experience of COVID-19 has been primarily of staring into a screen. In between her work obligations, she took a lot of photos.

Sam Byrmand (creative design) is a digital creative who spends too much time hanging out at UC coffee shops chatting and dreaming. When he's not creating logos or developing video games, he's probably watching horror movies and cuddling with his cats. danknfrshTV ([deviantart.com](https://www.deviantart.com/danknfrshTV))

Hannah Byrmand (creative production) is a producer with over 20 years' experience working in the theatre, broadcast media & advertising industries. With a production background in TV, advertising and feature films, and degrees in Creative Arts and Community Arts, Hannah is happiest managing collaborative projects with designers, artists and directors.

Paul Hetherington (poetry) has published numerous poetry and prose poetry collections and has won or been nominated for more than thirty national and international awards. He is Professor of Writing at the University of Canberra, head of International Poetry Studies (IPSI), and joint founding editor of the journal *Axon: Creative Explorations*.



**One member says she will be signing off soon; a painting in the background wobbles; a bike merges into a wall.**

# Here and Now

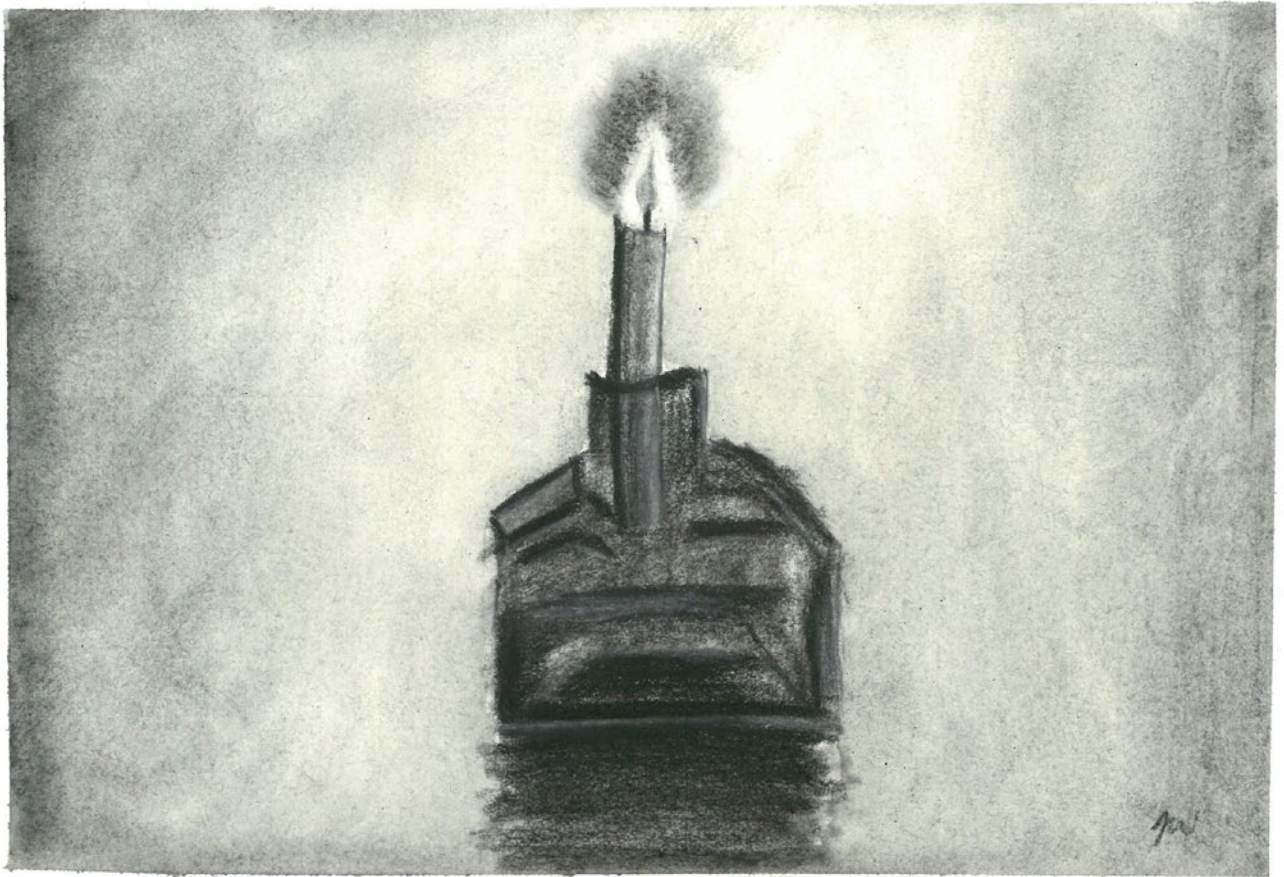
**Jessica Western**

Charcoal on paper

A collection of images reflecting on the passage of time in isolation. A common experience of the quarantine has been the sense of time blurring, in both collective and individual spheres, as many social timekeeping structures we rely on evaporate and days become less distinguishable from one another. Keeping time in isolation can be a disturbing effort, bringing home the absence of others - but it can also facilitate new ways to experience the present. *Here and Now* reflects on individual moments of a day in isolation, at once giving them shape and highlighting their indistinct nature. The subjects dwell on the 'here' as well as the 'now', focusing on commonplace domestic or local sights within reach under the shelter in place guidelines and considering how these things become part of a new experience of the ongoing present.

## Artist bio:

Jess is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Arts and Design attached to the *Heritage of the Air* project, and research assistant for the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research. Art is a new and growing interest that she will continue to explore through and beyond the COVID-19 crisis.



# Waiting, Listening For and Inside/out

**Claire Rosslyn Wilson**

Three video poems, Digital video (3 mins)

The challenges of social and physical isolation has disrupted our daily lives, drawing attention to our inside spaces as we're cut off from the outside. The three videopoems, made during isolation in Barcelona, explore topics of waiting for the disturbance to settle, the change in environmental sounds due to the retreat of people, and the sense of claustrophobia in the domestic space. Each videopoem explores the interplay between inside and outside, grappling with the sudden barrier between them.

The videopoems are part of a project called *Disturbance Zones*, which explores ways in which our natural and social environments are becoming increasingly unstable. Although disturbance and change are part of the natural cycle, this is now happening on an unprecedented scale, forever changing the places in which we live. The project explores the realities and the metaphor of disturbance.

## Artist bio:

Claire Rosslyn Wilson, poet and researcher, is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Canberra where she is investigating poetry and cultural adjustment. In 2018 she developed a poetry-illustration collaboration with a Singapore based illustrator Debasmita Dugupta and she's been a visiting researcher at the University of Barcelona. [clairerosslynwilson.com](http://clairerosslynwilson.com)





Spring makes roots unannounced, / we don't feel the warming dirt / from the

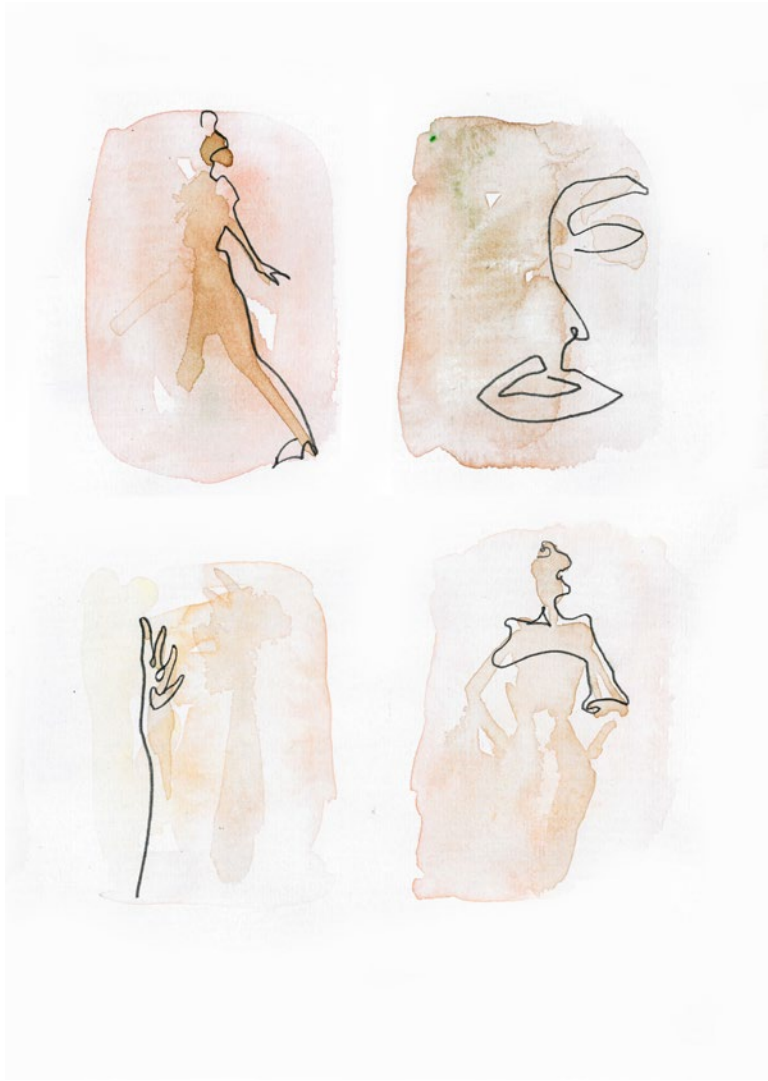
# Self

**Yushan Zou and Fanke Peng**

Pen and watercolour, 21cm x 28.5cm

The Self is a series of watercolour illustrations that made the authors' empathy and reflection of 'isolation' visible. This artwork presents the contemporary visual arts research, which is motivated by the context of pandemic disease, personal and subjective concerns. Since the beginning of 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 has affected humans all around the world. It caused many people in isolation mode. Watercolour painting was chosen as a medium to conceptually express the "human body" under isolation. 'Human body' and 'transparent film' are the two key elements in the illustrations. The "affective" quality of art contributes to a new understanding of the experience of trauma and loss (Bennett, J. 2005). The authors hope to raise the public awareness of isolation, as well as the pandemic, by increasing audience empathy.

Reference: Bennett, J. (2005). *Empathic Vision: Affect, trauma, and contemporary art*. Stanford University Press.



#### Artist bios:

Yushan Zou is a doctoral candidate at the University of Canberra who is interested in smart textile design. She is currently undertaking a three-year interdisciplinary research examining the relationships between healthcare, smart textile and design.

Fanke Peng is a discipline lead and senior lecturer at the University of Canberra. She has worked on a range of interdisciplinary projects, supported by funding from Australian Council for the Arts, UK research councils, the Museum of Australian Democracy. Recent publications include Cross Cultural Design for Healthy Ageing (co-edited), and Service Design Thinking for Social Good (co-authored).





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