

Creating in the Collective

Bri Horne is an artist living on Bunurong and Boon Wurrung country on the Mornington Peninsula. This series of work was seeded by the artist's experience of anxiety, which led to a spiritual art practice in which Horne visited the same location in Shoreham once a week for a year. Here she embodied the widely known philosophical and spiritual principle, 'being with what is'. Her visits were made in alignment with phases of the moon, and in situ she documented presence and her perceptions of both internal and external cycles with moving images, words and photography. In time, this practice led to the conception of her collective project, *Being With What Is*, which took place across two locations in Shoreham, and later culminated in a photographic and moving-image exhibition at the Deep See Survey space in Shoreham.



Artist Bri Horne with her exhibition, *Being With What Is*

The idea of being with what is resonates with philosopher Donna Haraway's concept of 'staying with the trouble'[1]. That is, staying present with what can be uncomfortable, challenging and difficult within this moment of planetary precarity in which all human and more-than-human entities and systems are entwined. In this exhibition, 87 photographs span three walls of the rectangular space. Installed close to one another at eye level, they form a single line—one of many through lines in this work. A monitor on the fourth wall plays a looped moving image, and on a pillar is a miniature collage. Together these elements evoke dimensions of being and becoming that were generated when 43 participants came into presence across a single wintry day in June 2024, to collaborate on and with a specific location on Bunurong and Boon Wurrung land.

Following an online appeal for participants, Horne met each person who registered on location and invited them to respond to a series of provocations that sought to bring participants as co-creators into embodied presence. They were provided with a guided mindfulness recording to listen to before taking a single photograph with a 're~di' (recycled, disposable) camera. Horne then documented each person looking directly into the lens of her cameras (still and film). The photos taken by the participants appear alongside their portraits, forming a link to the ecologies, systems and phenomenology imbricated in each moment—an index of time, perception and space.

The positionality of the humans in the portraits is not disclosed. This flattening of difference (race, class, gender) denies distinctions that speak to identity, significance and complexity. Perhaps by omitting this information Horne seeks to amplify the commonalities of the collective, rather than the specificity of the individual. The portraits invite the viewer to reflect on potential aspects of each person's affect and sensorial experience in that

moment. Each person is positioned front and centre, and place is transformed into a soft-focus background moving towards the abstract—an atmosphere of light, shadow and form.

These works are a reminder that stories of being belong not just to humans, but to the more-than-human presences of place. Astrid Neimanis, drawing on the work of Haraway and Karen Barad, talks about the intrinsic relations between, ‘biology and mood and culture and context’, and the constant process of ‘co-worlding’ that takes place between what we call our bodies and the world around us[2]. In the simple act of breathing, for example, air is altered as our bodies inhale and exhale in a beautiful expression of mutual exchange, porosity and transformation.

The photos taken by the participants became increasingly compelling to me. Together they form a portrait, an impression, a map of place seen through the eye of the person and the eye of the camera. Similar images recur and are linked in their different perspectives and times of day. In several photos a particular tree may be distinguished from different angles, or a similar view of the shoreline appear with different tidelines. Several people photographed the canopies of Radiata pines: darkened branches in silhouette against white clouds—lacework in the sky. Lines like the trail of grubs in squiggly gums describe the space between individual tree canopies, close but not touching. These multi-perspectives speak of space and time and continue to reverberate in this moment of translation as co-existing life and temporalities, challenging western conventions of singular linear time.



In the moving images, the grainy texture of super 8 film adds to the sense of time passing, preserved, repeated and continuous with a nod to archival family footage. The face of each participant appears for a handful of seconds, in most cases long enough to observe several expressions flow across their features. There are some exquisite moments of vulnerability, when the mask of self-consciousness drops away and we are invited to see what lies behind.



Images: (left) portrait diptych installation photo by Bri Horne, (right) woven collage

On my first visit I missed the collage pinned to the return side of a pillar. I appreciate a work that doesn't announce itself. At first view, this black and white miniature appeared to be a bird's eye view of a refugee camp, Palestine I thought. Upon closer inspection it became clear that the image was comprised of fine strips of small black and white photos from the project interlaced in plain weave. I could make out a scatter of tiny faces. This delicate deconstruction and reconstruction of the image(s) forms another mode of interconnection, consideration of co-existing realities and flows of being.

Being With What Is, emerged through a creative process of cooperative participation. At this moment of late capitalism, the redistribution of labour through collectively engaged art making can be considered a form of resistance. A project such as this, which places embodied presence at its centre, is a welcome counter to the anxiety and dis-ease evoked by fast flows of information, extraction, consumerism and disconnection.

There is palpable consideration, care and tenderness in Horne's conception of this project. Creating their own logic, the works become a community, a generative ecology and a presence with which to be.

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^[1] Haraway, D. (2016) *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.

^[2] Neimanis, A. (2017) *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*, 34, London, Bloomsbury Academic.