

DANCE THE WAR OF PROXIMITY



TINA STEFANOU

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UNSW GALLERIES



INCIPIENT CYCLES

ALICE HEYWARD

Rainbow aviary, dingoes' enclosure, manicured botanics, art gallery crowded with paintings, people and a dead horse, hands holding at the high, windy lookout: we gather in zones of continuous spectacle and voyeurism where movement cycles between bodies. Our parts join and split like cells, sensing with many limbs. We're sounding, staging stages. We move from ornate greenhouses with luscious neon lily pads, through the zoo's winding campus of entrapped species, to Mount Lofty, the southern range's highest peak, and to the gallery space surrounding Berlinde de Bruyckere's gruesome, disorientating sculpture *We are all flesh* 2011–12 at the Art Gallery of South Australia. Cameras come with us, implicated through spaces that blur observation and performance, moving when we move, unable to decide where to look.

Adelaide was the only freely settled British province on the continent in 1836: a Wakefield-planned colony marketed without penal stain, where civil and religious freedoms were extended to the German Lutherans who established the viticulture industry. It's my first visit to the city's preserved grid of streets surrounded by a ring of parklands. I hear the distinctively smooth local pronunciation: "Daaaaaaance" — its provincial English history carried eerily through the sweetly candid teenage voices of our temporary community.

Free is the foundational alibi. There was no treaty with the Kurna people, no negotiation; the land-fund clause to compensate the people whose country was being sold was never paid out. By the late 1850s, the Kurna population had fallen from thousands to a few survivors. We're dancing in a wound.

Granulation tissue forms a temporary scaffold that grows from the base. Slough builds in the bed, and eschar adheres its leathery necrotic tissue tightly to the sore. Epithelial tissue regenerates rapidly. It's common to feel itchy.

Singing into the ground. Weeds, rocks, giant tortoises, masses of hanging fruit bats; Mount Lofty's *luft* responds, and we become together. Vibrations collide into waves and words of earth, sequencing across densities in the sky, dancing through emerging refrains. These environments compose a nervous system. We're commoning collective sensation, coordinating groupness, digesting shared embodiments, restaging the city's edges so the wound can vocalise itself. Architectural angles cut to ferns; a melody that morphs through the city recasts this room. The camera remains unsettled; autonomic responses become truth. Periwounds macerate, indurate, excoriate.

Tina's grandmother saw Mother Mary in a tree and crashed, smashing her 2016 Ford Focus. It's been sitting in Wattle Glen for seven years, a rusting body, obsolete, at the end of the Hurstbridge line. Now *Panis Populi*: 207 aluminium pipes hang inside the car like stalactites; charcoaled bread baked to a Pompeii recipe sits on the floor, stamped with Orthodox iconography and the Ford emblem — a hybrid, collapsed relic. The air conditioner blows through the pipes, voicing the 'Grandmother Chord': somehow intergenerational, every interval in the octave sounding at once. Ready-made wreck. Sympathetic deactivation. Airways compressing, readiness marred, diverted off-road: generational drifting, post-Fordist undertow, the inverse of a horse painted in a cave.

Humming between clauses. Vocal stimming. Calming mechanism. Eternal vibrations trail off, pick up, and remap our way.

Unconsciously channelling Pina Bausch's raw, fragile *Le Sacre du Printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*) 1975 — danced on a stage floor of soil — Jade moves within the exquisite Victorian glasshouse imported from Bremen, alongside Madagascan botany.

150 million years ago, Australia and Madagascar were part of the supercontinent Gondwana. Its plants were the ancient ancestors of today's native species. Sahara leads our Sirtaki/Zorba dance in circles atop Mount Lofty. She runs to the obelisk and clambers up, arms open wide, pressing her body into thick winds.

Teenagers in transmission, in formation, connected through difference and commonality. They all joined *Dance the War of Proximity* of their own volition. Some attend local ballet, jazz, and tap classes; some are in bands; Victoria is a youth ambassador at the gallery. Through long improvisations, flows emerge and gaps open. The teens default to familiar forms, and solo diversions stitch through our amoebic clusters. Something ripples those patterns out of shape, and we recollect our capillaries in abstracting paths: shared, multiplicitous, abundant gestures in shifting rhythms. We coregulate.

Resistance lives in the proximity of difference, refusing the colonial choreography of disconnected distance and numb reproduction. Teen-space is high-frequency. Change races through us, stampeding passages, intensifying networked systems inside and out. Grief and joy are not yet learned apart.

You're messing up the water! yells Cooper ecstatically as Maree frolics through the fountain. It splashes, jumps, and falls back into its endless cycle, always against an ongoing return to Earth's curve.

Companionship is a discipline rehearsed in the intimacy of distance, through embodied alternatives to what we have been trained to perform. We meet the wound inside it, dancing through it without pretending it is not there. Seeing by doing demystifies real relations. We're here: beating, multidimensional, charged with sensitivity. *Adolescere*. Growing and healing, between destinations, never objectifying. Lizards, like sculptures becoming sand. Flicking, harmonising, drifting out of sync, spiralling, resting. It's still rising, surging, rebounding, grounding, from body to body, like water being sung back.





Penis Populi (detail) 2026
Courtesy of the artist

WHEN WE COLLIDE

SNACK SYNDICATE

ANDREW BROOKS & ASTRID LORANGE

You say to us, *teens live in a broken world and they find their way through it*. Teens are on your mind today, too. They are dancing in conspiratorial circles, memorising songs, speaking in codes. They are quick, moving like liquid. They are slow, flat on the floor. We write it down faithfully, *teens live in a broken world and they find their way through it*. Could there be a history of teens refusing the brokenness of the world? A history of killing the father, breaking the machine, feeding the baby, running away, wagging school? Could there be a theory of the teen as the enemy of adult supremacy and cruelty? An art, a poetry, of the teen — a vision against the logic of property? Could there be a song of teens, a song that is just a chorus? Would we know the words?

There can be no art of the teen without a theory of the ensemble. Some might suggest ensembles are assemblages of figures or objects that form a whole, possessing an internal coherence. But to begin from this position is to assume too much, to confuse the thing with its output: song, tableau, performance. What if the term ensemble described an orientation, a commitment to losing track of that thing so dear to adult supremacy: the self. The refusal of our own completion is one way to refuse the brokenness of the world. Bodies bend and suspend, hold and release. The ensemble is a knot, or a mass of internal differentiation pushing up against itself, refusing to be made discrete. Do we need to know the words, or is it enough to follow the curve, the drift?

You tell us that everyone in the gallery sat patiently and silently as the teens improvised, bodies bucking the ensemble into composite horses. Ponytails,

sneakers, earrings, deodorant, lip gloss, jeans. We think of the artwork as an invisible line that draws a circle. Not everyone steps into it, but everyone faces the moment of its invitation. We have said that the artwork instructs. We have said that it asks to be seen in the face of its own incompleteness. We wonder, what happened that day in the gallery? What hung in the air, thick as a question? How did the bodies stack, fold, crawl, wriggle, cuddle, gossip? How did the teens perform while remaining fugitive? Did you write down, in a notebook, *teens live in a broken world and they find their way through it*?

To say that the world is broken is to say that we live inside a crash: the slow-motion build up of the world system, unable to arrest half a century of economic stagnation, now accelerating headfirst towards the end of growth and climate collapse. The teen confronts a foreclosing future that plays out as a war on provision and reciprocity, sensuous autonomy and gendered experience, relating and differing. To remain open to change and being changed, one must improvise. We can only know what we're doing by doing it, but even then, *what* and *it* incessantly evade our grasp. You say it's about transfer without knowing what's to come. Not so much a leap of faith as a belief that our collective exhalation might change the weather.

While rounding a headland on a recent rock-hopping expedition, we came upon a crash. A car? Everything was twisted and burnt, rusted and crushed; everything except the seats, which remained wholly intact, upholstered, perversely untouched. We wondered if it was a ute or a tractor. Whatever it was, it was also a shipwreck, a relic of the ocean's terror.

We moved towards it, then backed away, feet already raw from the knife-like rocks. After a while, we moved back into a slice of sun on the sand, the wreck hidden in the folds of the hill once more. We thought of a car suspended in the air, of a boat gashed on the waves, of the angel facing the wreckage of history as it drags its ghosts into the present. We pictured emaciated animals prowling the edges of our worst thoughts. We considered the liquifying vehicles of a million films, the fantasy

of ruin from the safety of simulation. We are in the crash, and so we desire to see the image of the crash.

We peer into the wreckage, hoping we might locate the source of the damage. Instead, we find a scene of endurance: hermit crabs nestling in the frame, pipis attaching to the strange infrastructure. The metal frame disrupts the compression of time implied by the stratified layers of rock and quartz. We find that we cannot recover what has been lost, cannot return to the scene of trauma. But you ask us, what about repair? Can repair become an incline towards otherness? How can we repair what was never whole to begin with?

Repair, at once insistent and impossible.

Repair, the demand to attend to the other.

Repair, the refusal to be discrete.

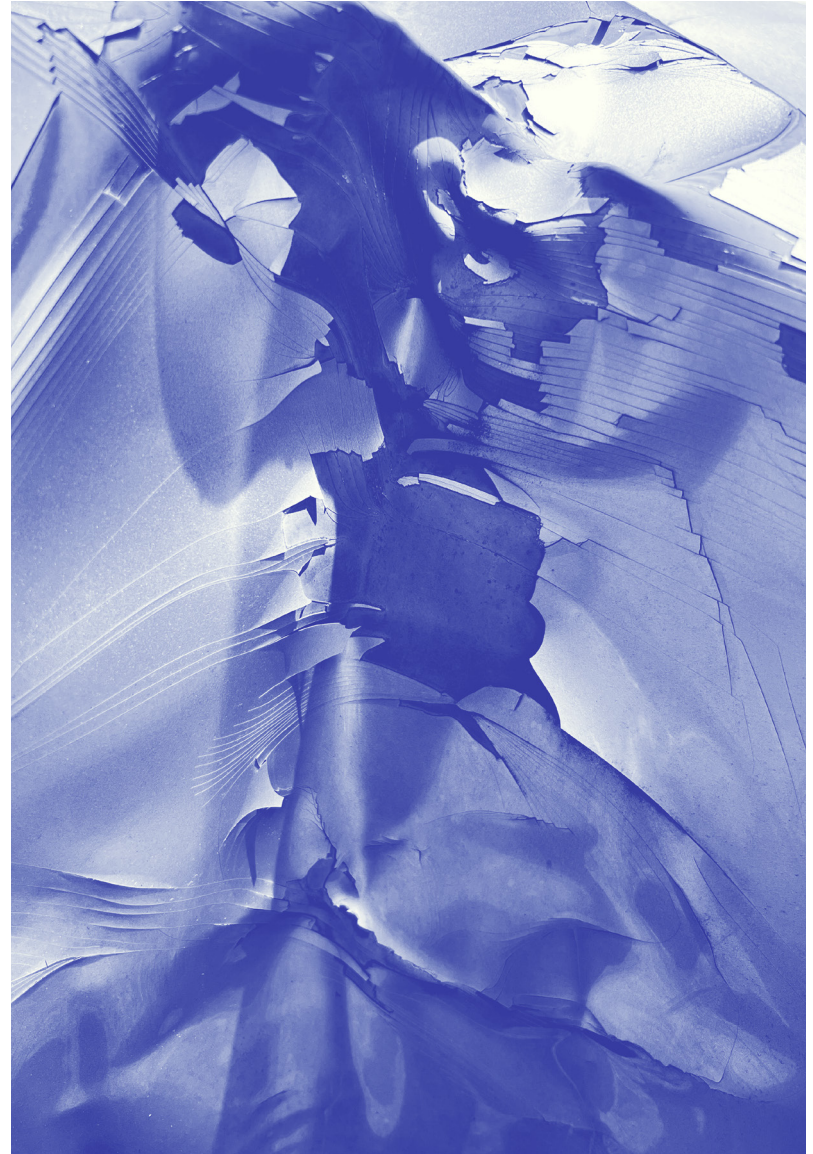
Repair, without forgiveness for what wants to kill us.

Repair, in the midst of what is irreparable.

We offer: the ensemble is our vehicle of improvised repair, careening off-road.

You say, *sometimes the thing we repair ends up discarded anyway*. You say to bring the crash to Sydney you will have to reckon with the oil crisis at a wartime chokepoint. We jot it down. Petrol, diesel, Hume, trailer. Blood, wheat, milk, pearl. Elders and teens, crashing into, crashing out. You think the space of installation holds the ensemble together just long enough to glimpse something we haven't yet seen. A view from here, of that, for a time.

We imagine the crash turning a car into paper into silk into foam. We imagine the teens writhing like a collective slug over its crumpled, fist-like form. We consider the artwork touching the unconscious like a joke or prophecy. You say we are in a sandpit (figuratively), and we are just trying the best we fucking can (literally).



Panis Papuli (detail) 2026
Courtesy of the artist

Dance the War of Proximity 2024–26

Three-channel video installation, sound
82 minutes

Courtesy of the artist, Naarm/Melbourne

Dance the War of Proximity is a multi-channel video installation documenting a live performance made with ten young performers and three movement artists. Together they articulate a metaphorical nervous system: singing, speaking, vocalising, and moving in responsive relation to one another and to their environments.

The work emerges from a series of live actions staged across Adelaide, including Mount Lofty Summit, Adelaide Botanic Garden, Adelaide Zoo, and the Art Gallery of South Australia. Filmed within sites of exhibition, collection, conservation, and surveillance, it navigates themes of enclosure, voyeurism, valuation, symbiosis, chorusing, and the politics of coming of age.

The first video uploaded to YouTube in 2005 is titled *Me at the zoo*, and depicts a young man standing before the elephant habitat at San Diego Zoo — an origin point for online video culture framed through zoological spectatorship. Drawing from this lineage, the work reflects on historical entanglements between cinema, zoological display, and systems of public observation. It asks how images condition the ways humans encounter animals, each other, and themselves.

We follow the performers as they move through these environments, forming shifting groupings, moments of call-and-response, and quiet acts of intimacy, such as braiding each other's hair. The camera tracks but also reveals its own limits: movement exceeds capture, slipping between documentation and presence, solo and assembly, live action and cinematic reconstruction.

An elderly tortoise joins the teens within the captive architecture; bandicoots, taxidermy horses, and siamangs watch while suspended in the trees.

The audience follows, forming a strange pilgrimage through the work — watching the watchers.

Using the body-voice as an instrument, the work gestures toward alternate modes of making and sensing that momentarily suspend boundaries between performer and environment, self and other, human and more-than-human, labour and leisure.

Through hums, whistles, movement, and collective vocalisation, the installation proposes interspecies and relational ways of perceiving that unsettle fixed systems of spectatorship and return the gaze onto itself.

Video Design and Editing:

Jack Coventry

Co-Choreography and Performers:

Lily Potger, Alice Heyward, and Celina Hage

Youth Ensemble and Co-Choreography:

Victoria Mackay, Kaz Rogers, Cooper Faull, Scarlett Jankowiak, Jade Porter, Maree Fong, Sahara Soliman, Jazmine Deng, and Indigo Fossey

Live Film Documentation:

Andrew Kainerderer and Wil Normyle

Live Sound Documentation:

Nick Steele

Live Performance Creative Producer:

Jennifer Greer Holmes

Live performances took place between 24–28 April 2024 in collaboration with Mount Lofty Summit, Adelaide Botanic Garden, Adelaide Zoo, and the Art Gallery of South Australia, 5.5 hours.

Commissioned for the '18th Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Inner Sanctum', with the support of UNSW Galleries and the Art Gallery of South Australia.

Panis Populi 2026

Ford Focus 2016, bread, aluminium chimes, sound, wax linen thread, fish-hooks

Courtesy of the artist, Naarm/Melbourne

Panis Populi (bread of the people) transforms the damaged remnants of an automobile into a sculptural sound installation shaped by familial storytelling, industrial history, and acts of material repair. The artist's grandmother crashed her Ford Focus after encountering a vision of the Panagia (Mother Mary) in a tree trunk. For seven years, the vehicle remained abandoned on the family farm, gradually accumulating an ecosystem of dragonflies, moss, rust, and spiderwebs — traces now preserved throughout the installation.

Loaves of bread baked with a Pompeii recipe are stamped with Greek lettering and Ford insignia, devotional objects of preserved labour that move between industrial imprint and economic symbol. The car's ventilation system activates a network of suspended chimes that voice the 'Grandmother Chord' — a dense harmonic system of overlapping intervals, the echo of the crash, reversed.

Throughout the installation, the damaged vehicle shifts between wreck, instrument, relic, and sculptural form. Suspended between ruin and repair, blinking, it becomes a site where memory presses against broader questions of mobility, automation, and technological transition. The car is held in transit: a temporary pit stop on its way to the wreckers, paused in a moment of revaluation before final obsolescence. The interior of the automobile becomes an enclosed space of projection and sonic inscription, where visions pass through moments of accident, adrenaline, fatigue, endurance, braking, and acceleration amid sudden ruptures and larger forces. The tree imprints the automobile, its surfaces accumulating like a tapestry of contact.

The work situates the Ford automobile within longer histories of industrial modernity and labour reform. Fordism once reorganised time itself, contributing

to the transition from a six-day working week to the five-day model. Now, a century later, contemporary societies debate the shift from five days to four amid accelerating automation, economic instability, and changing conditions of work. Positioned at the convergence of the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Sixth Mass Extinction, the installation reflects on how automobiles continue to reshape geopolitical alignments through manufacturing, resource extraction, logistics, and energy transition.

Bread appears as both sacred offering and economic index: historically tied to prosperity, austerity, survival, and social unrest. It remains one of the few items in Australia subject to price control — though seldom enforced — underscoring the enduring status of bread as both staple and regulated commodity.

Against this backdrop, *Panis Populi* asks what forms of labour might sustain better lives within increasingly immaterial economies shaped by corporate and military data extraction, algorithmic systems, and technological abstraction. While skilled manual labour persists as essential, the work also turns toward contemporary conditions of invisible and extractive labour. It questions who owns the means of production when human activity and life are mined, quantified, discarded, and monetised as data.

The crash holds these contradictions in unstable relation: devotion and machinery, collapse and maintenance, inheritance and obsolescence, collective ritual and riot, and industrial decay.

Coach Builder & Collaborator: Aldo Bilotta

Technologist & Collaborator: Joli Boardman

Bread Designer & Collaborator: Bethany J Fellows

Bakery Support: Oji House

Design Support: Romanie Harper

Cultural Consultant: Irene Poutakidis

Studio Support: Emmy Mavroidis, Nyora Studio Gallery

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them as the first artists to inhabit this Land.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and
present, and extend this respect to Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander people from all nations of
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