

*Wounded landscapes: Human intervention into natural ecosystems.  
Cultural approaches and artistic responses*

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*The Earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the Earth.*

Chief Si'ahl

Maybe we are close to our last breath. The Earth, despite its abundant resources and enormous capacity for regeneration, is subjected to a constant process of plunder and exploitation. Growth, accumulation, and desire for possession have become the imperative of many individuals in our consumerist society. A handful minority of humans who consume most of the Earth's resources have inflicted a suicidal lifestyle onto our planet, focusing on the acceleration of the present, without vision for continuity into the future.

Under the constant beating of the hammer of progress, the land reveals itself to be wounded, and these wounds are predominantly due to the impact of human activity. What are the limits of capital growth? How can we stop the processes of colonization and exploitation of natural ecosystems? What will be the consequences of our current environmental emergency for the future of life?

This edition of *Coolabah* seeks to explore creative responses to the diverse challenges that natural ecosystems are suffering due to the invasive and unsustainable cycle of human production and consumption.

In his text, Herman Bashiron Mendolicchio traces an itinerary that goes from harmony to conflict between humans and the natural environment, questioning the role that art can play in this growing ecological crisis.

Honi Ryan reviews Jacqueline Spedding's ecologically focused exhibition *Biome | Home*. Ryan also contributes a visual essay exploring climate migration through her series of performative installations *Persistence at the End of Civilisation*.

Meanwhile, Sean Lowry shares a thought projection assuming the imagined vehicular form of an ephemeral floating ice sheet in the middle of the Bering Strait.

With her project *Blood Real Estate*, Farnaz Dadfar depicts a wounded colonized territory in Australia, questioning the commercialization of the natural environment and the self-given authority that some people have about owning the land.

In the video installation *All that is Solid Melts into Air (Salton Sea)*, artist Sadia Sadia documents the ecological devastation of the Salton Sea area in California, due to intense industrialized agricultural activity. Beyond the work of documentation, the artist engages in a complex and difficult reflection aimed at exploring how the experience of devastation can reveal redemptive power and induce profound change.

Helle Wu Xuanzhan brings the concept of music to the urban environment. With *Symphony of Fluid Punctum*, the artist combines images and words, addressing the constant cycle of construction-destruction-reconstruction that configures the life of cities.

Soazic Guezennec enters, through her personal artistic itinerary, the multiple dimensions that connect humans to nature and landscape; empathy, awareness, fragility, vulnerability, fear, trust, and revelation are some of the layers in a complex, necessary relationship.

In the text *The Rurapolis Platforms*, architect and researcher Salomé Wackernagel, shares the experience of a project in the cross-border territory of the Pyrenees, where a landscape of abandoned villages and ruins can become the set of a possible rural renaissance. New territorial policies, aware of ecological and climatic challenges, can respond to the phenomenon of rural depopulation and reverse the urban-rural dialectic.

Ivana Pinna's contribution addresses the fragility of a specific territory in Sardinia. Her research, artistic work, and local actions in the territory draw attention to an important issue effecting rural areas of Sardinia that have been deemed suitable for the construction of a radioactive waste repository.

In the penultimate essay *Work in Progress*, the photographer Mark Adams explores a "small area of the gulf coastline in the USA by looking at transitional sites where natural topographies are transformed into luxury housing developments." The images illustrate the paradox of contemporary lifestyle choices: polluted areas due to the surrounding industrial activity, and vulnerable territories due to real flooding threats as a result of climate change, are just covered by palm trees and colorful houses.

Honi Ryan reflects on the theme of the journal, Wounded Landscapes, in a visual essay that traces her series of ecologically centred performative installations *Persistence at the End of Civilisation*, a body of work about climate migration, produced between 2020–21.

It comprises sculpture, painting, photography, video, food, participation, embodiment and movement, research and text; as well as sound, text, and performance pieces made in collaboration with artist *Abi Tariq*. This body of work grew in response to the megafires that burned in Australia in 2019–20 and brings an urban audience into proximity with the tactile reality of the aftermath of wildfires.

The different reflections, approaches, and artistic initiatives provided in this issue can reframe the paradigm through which we observe, understand, and relate to the landscape and natural ecosystems. Human interventions into the natural environment are as toxic as they have ever been. Our relationship with the territory, be it urban, rural, peripheral, mountainous, coastal, etc., needs new rules and new mechanisms; otherwise the wounds we have inflicted on the Earth will never heal, but will open up further, and eventually engulf everyone and everything. What will it take for us to make the necessary changes to this apocalyptic course of action?

**Herman Bashiron Mendolicchio** is a researcher, writer and curator, working across different disciplines, territories and cultures. He holds an international PhD in “Art History, Theory and Criticism” from the University of Barcelona and he is currently teaching in different Universities. He is Lecturer for the Cultural Management Programme of the University of Barcelona, and Coordinator of the Postgraduate Course on International Cultural Cooperation. His current lines of research involve the subjects of intercultural processes, participation, collaboration, travelling, globalisation and mobility in contemporary arts and cultural policies. His practice and research explore the topics of art in public space and broader interactions between contemporary creation and transnational relations. He has participated in international conferences and developed projects and research residencies in different countries and regions. Herman combines academic research, cultural management, curatorial practices and artistic methodologies, collaborating internationally with a wide range of networks, projects and organisations.

**Honi Ryan** is an artist, writer, and educator with a nomadic social practice. Born in Melbourne and based between Berlin and Paris, Ryan holds an MFA from the Transart Institute and is adjunct faculty at Paris College of Art. Ryan’s work is socially motivated and engages participatory action to develop political and ecological issues. Ryan is the founding artist of the international performance art project the *Silent Dinners* which she has performed in 20 cities across 12 countries. Her work and critical writing was recently included in *Creative Paths* at Gaiás Museum Galicia, Spain alongside artists including Francis Alÿs, Mona Hatoum, and Marina Abramović. Ryan represented Germany at the Lahore Biennale 2016 and Karachi Biennale 2017. She has exhibited, performed, taught, and participated in residency programs internationally, with recent focus in Australia, Pakistan, Germany, and France. (<https://www.honiryan.net/bio>)

**Sean Lowry** is a visual artist, writer, curator and musician. He holds a PhD in Visual Arts from the University of Sydney and is currently Head of Critical and Theoretical Studies and Associate Director (Research), Victorian College of the Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne. Lowry has exhibited, performed and published extensively both nationally and internationally. He is also one half (with Dr Ilmar Taimre) of *The Ghosts of Nothing* ([ghostsofnothing.com](http://ghostsofnothing.com)), one half (with Dr Kim Donaldson) of *Cūrā8* ([project8.gallery](http://project8.gallery)) and Founder and Executive Director of *Project Anywhere* ([www.projectanywhere.net](http://www.projectanywhere.net)). For more information, please visit [seanlowry.com](http://seanlowry.com)