

Exhibition Review: TarraWarra Biennial 2021: Slow Moving Waters

Australian artists explore ideas of slowness and the connection to Country.

Vicki Renner
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Slow Moving Waters is TarraWarra Museum's seventh biennial, showcasing 25 artists from around Australia. Guest Curator Nina Miall says the exhibition takes shape around two related cues: the idea of slowness, and the winding course of the Birrarung (Yarra River), which flows south of the Museum grounds. The artists have created works that evoke the elasticity of time, make us look up to the cosmos, connect us to Country and the earth, and remind us of ancient knowledge and memory.

Many of the artworks play with shape and form, solidifying impermanent lifeforms. 'Making the Birrarung' by Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin and Jonathan Jones appears to be a river of mussels and stone axe heads. In fact, the mussel shells are cast bronze. This hardening of the humble mussel, which used to purify the river, is a reminder of the destructive impacts of Western agriculture and commerce on the river and First Nations people.

Yasmin Smith's 'Terroir' is a gnarled collection of grapevine prunings, cast in clay and crawling up the wall, distant cousins to the sinuous forms outside the window in the vineyard below. Louisa Bufardecì's 'Looking into the land attached 1-7 2020' are enlarged and embroidered flecks of river mud that stuck between her toes.

Many pieces play with time through slow moving video or living installations that change. In Lucy Bleach's 'attenuated ground (the slow seismogenic zone)', toffee draped over a double bass is slowly dripping into a vat, creating stalactites that glow like amber, while its strings groan every time there is seismic activity below. The red ochre thread of Robert Andrew's 'Continuing Depths of Connection' is slowly layering the word 'Inala' on the floor. Michaela Gleave's 'The World Arrives at Night (Star Printer)' prints out the names and locations of stars as they become perceptible.

Some artworks invite us into their orbit, to see what the artists see. Brian Martin invites us to walk on Wurundjeri Country in his 'Methexical Countryscape Wurundjeri'. His fragmented charcoal images create a feeling of being slightly off kilter; this disjointed connection is deliberate. Mary Quadrio invites us to walk among strands of steel wool in the visceral, sinewy 'Whose time are we on?' The steel wool has been twisted and pulled into organic shapes, but at its core the installation shines a light on the scouring and erasure of the palawa people of Tasmania.

With only one week left to see this exhibition, you'd better be quick as *Slow Moving Waters* ends on Sunday 11 July. This is a delicious exhibition, delicious in the colours and textures, the ideas being explored, and the feeling of luxury that comes from going slow. As Miall reminds us, it's a privilege to be able to slow down, to slip away from the chaos for an hour or a day.

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