

EVOCATIONS of MULTISPECIES JUSTICE

Artwork by Ravi Agarwal and Janet Lawrence

Poetry by David G. Brooks

Taralga Road

Early spring, gold
wattle lining the lanes, dams
brimming, fields
emerald-green
and clotted with long-eared lambs, road
deeply pot-holed from the winter rains,
a cyclist
come a cropper
being loaded into an ambulance
seven kilometers north of Kenmore.

“Wombat”

she announces just after Tarlo, and stops, gets out.
I see her in the rearview mirror
turn the body over
before walking quickly back
for gloves and a cloth from the first-aid kit. “She’s
dead,” she says, “but there’s
a tiny paw
reaching from the pouch. I’ve
got to check.” Across the road, two
young black steers, ears
blue-tagged for slaughter,
amble to the fence to watch, then others
and still more, a dozen, twenty, eyes



Figure 1 Janet Laurence, *Birdsong* (2006). Assembly of taxidermy bird specimens, suspended acrylic ring. Installation view, Object Gallery, Sydney. Photograph by Keith Saunders.

wide in concern; if they weren't
animals you'd almost think they knew her. Her
baby dead also, she tells me when she returns;
pale
and furless, barely
filling the palm of her hand.

Three kilometers later there's another.
"Their pouches
are so *wet*," she says, then speaks
in awe of the size of their teeth.
By Oberon
there have been two more



Figure 2 Janet Laurence, *Memory of Nature* (2010), detail. Taxidermied owl, acrylic, scientific glass, tulle, wood, oil paint. Art Gallery of New South Wales collection.

and almost a dozen roos. Some we stop at, others you can just tell it's far too late; or there's a truck on your tail, or the road's so narrow there's no space to pull over, let alone any place to run.

Near the turnoff to Jenolan, dusk coming on, we stop at a young swamp wallaby, head crushed by a curb-side wheel, the road a single lane, then, our

examination done, step back to allow a four-wheel drive to pass, watch as it grinds her—eyes, ears, brain—even deeper into the gravel. Her joey who'd been still breathing dies in our hands.



Figures 3 and 4 Janet Laurence, *Fabled*, from the After Eden series (2011). Altered camera trap images, ink on archival paper. From the Flora and Fauna International Residency, Aceh, Sumatra, Indonesia.



Figure 5 Janet Laurence, *Fugitive in Light* (2002). Taxidermy specimens borrowed from the South Australia Museum. Installation view, Eden and the Apple of Sodom exhibition, University of South Australia Museum, Adelaide.



Figure 6 Janet Laurence, detail from *After Eden* exhibition (2011). Altered image from John Gollings original mine photograph.



Figure 7 Ravi Agarwal, *Ambient Seas Diary*, Else All Will Be Still series (2015). Photo collage.



Figure 8 Ravi Agarwal, *Landfill I*, Trace City series (2017). Photographic inkjet print.



Figure 9 Ravi Agarwal, *Na'dar Landscapes Series—1, Na'dar/Prakriti series (2018)*. Lithograph.



Figure 10 Ravi Agarwal, *Na'dar Landscapes Series—7, Na'dar/Prakriti series (2018)*. Lithograph.



Figure 11 Ravi Agarwal, *Salt Pan*, Else All Will Be Still series (2015). Photographic inkjet print.



Figure 12 Ravi Agarwal, *Power Nature I*, Na'dar/Prakriti series (2018). Photographic inkjet print.

Ravi Agarwal is an interdisciplinary artist, environmental campaigner, writer, and curator. His works use photography, video, text, and installation and have been shown widely, including at the biennials of Havana (2019), Yinchuan (2018), Kochi (2016), and Sharjah (2013), along with dOCUMENTA XI (2002). He has curated large public art projects, such as the *Yamuna-Elbe* twin city project (2011) and *Embrace Our Rivers* (2018), an Indo-European project, and was the photography curator for the Serendipity Arts Festival in 2018 and 2019. He recently curated *New Natures: A Terrible Beauty Is Born* (2022) at the Goethe Institute and CSMVS Museum, Mumbai, and *Imagined Documents* (2022) at Les Recontres d'Arles, France. He has edited the collections *The Crisis of Climate Change* (2021) and *Embrace Our Rivers* (2017) and special issues of journals, including "Art and Ecology" (*Marg*, April 2020) and *IIC journal* (Spring 2020) and has been published in *The Routledge Companion to Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Climate Change* (2021). Agarwal is the founder-director of the environmental research-advocacy group Toxics Link (<https://www.toxicslink.org>) and recipient of the UN-IFCS Award for Chemical Safety and the Ashoka Fellowship.

Exploring notions of art, science, imagination, memory, and loss, **Janet Laurence's** practice examines our relationship to the natural world through site-specific, gallery, and museum works. Working in varying mediums, Laurence creates immersive environments that navigate the interconnections between diverse life-worlds. Her work explores what it might mean to heal the natural environment, albeit metaphorically, while fusing a sense of communal loss within this search. Laurence has been a recipient of Rockefeller, Churchill, and Australia Council fellowships and the Alumni Award for Arts, University of New South Wales. She was the Australian representative for the COP21/FIAC, Artists 4 Paris Climate 2015 Exhibition, during which she exhibited a major work—*Deep Breathing: Resuscitation for the Reef*—at the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle in Paris. In 2019 she had a major solo survey exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, *After Nature*.

David G. Brooks, an Australian poet, short fiction writer, essayist, novelist, and advocate for nonhuman animals, taught for many years at the University of Sydney, where he is now an honorary associate professor. His recent works include *Open House* (poetry, 2016), *The Grass Library* (memoir/animal rights, 2020), *Animal Dreams* (selected essays, 2021) and *Turin: Approaching Animals* (meditations, 2022). He lives with rescued sheep in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales. His website is found at <https://davidbrooks.net.au>.