



## REQUIEM

Sydney Festival Program

Saturday 16 – Sunday 24 January 2021  
Paddington Reservoir  
251-255 Oxford St, Paddington, NSW

2021 **SYD  
FEST**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

Sydney  
Environment  
Institute

*In partnership with...*

Artology

Groundswell

Red Room Poetry

The Living Room Theatre

Mount Annan Botanical Gardens

The Sydney Environment Institute, University of Sydney

Veterinarians for Climate Action

## Requiem

Artistic Director: Janet Laurence

Programme Curation: Danielle Celermajer and Michelle St Anne

How do we mourn and remember the inestimable loss - of animals, of flora, of ecological worlds - wrought by the black summer fires of 2019-2020? Curated by artist Janet Laurence, *Requiem* weaves together visual art, music, poetry, performance, literature, science, philosophy and environmental advocacy to craft a time-space for us to lament and be present to the reality of the loss. What does this loss mean for Australia's unique and precious environment? Within the ethereal inner chamber of the Paddington Reservoir, the installations and program of events return us to the aesthetics and ethics of care and healing such that we might cultivate a renewed encounter with and commitment to our shared nature.

### DAY 1 | Saturday 16 January 2021

2.00 – 5.00pm

#### **Smoking Ceremony**

With Yarning Australia and Oliver Costello of the Firesticks Alliance

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### DAY 2 | Sunday 17 January 2021

12.00 – 3.00pm

#### **Rescript – Julie Vulcan**

*Presented by the Sydney Environment Institute*

A ritual for living and ongoing connection. A muslin handkerchief. A knot to remember. A name. A loved one returned. Ash as rescript. Temporarily transporting ash from the land of her post-fire home Julie creates a space to honour the loss of non-human life during the black summer fires while acknowledging new beginnings.

4.00 – 5.30pm

#### **What Caused the Fires?**

*Sydney Environment Institute Panel*

As the mega-fires of the black summer were devastating ecologies and the homes and habitats of animals (including humans) across south-east Australia, theories about what caused them and accusations of who was responsible for them raged across the social and media landscape. The fossil fuel industry and the political right promoted theories about arsonists and greens allegedly getting in the way of 'backburning'; scientists, ecologists and communities on the ground who had been living with the realities of the drought insisted that the fires were the acute and violent expression of climate change. This panel will try to make sense of what caused the fires, where responsibility for them lies, what exacerbated the vulnerability of those whose lives they destroyed, and most importantly, what

we can do to protect all lives in a world where climate change makes wildfires an ever present threat.

#### Speakers

- **Danielle Celermajer**, Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Policy, The University of Sydney
  - **David Ritter** (Chair), Chief Executive Officer, Greenpeace Australia Pacific
  - **Julie Vulcan**, independent artist, writer and researcher
  - **Rachel Walmsley**, Head of Law Reform, Environmental Defenders Office
  - **Glenda Wardle**, Professor, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, The University of Sydney
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### DAY 3 | Monday 18 January 2021

11.00 – 7.00pm

#### Botanical Talk

The Requiem will be hosting intermittent talks with botanical experts and gardeners amidst a nursery of plants that represent the species that were burnt and lost during the 2020 bushfire crisis. This centrepiece installation of living plants is sourced from the Mt Annan Botanic Gardens with the assistance of Director John Siemon. Composed of seedlings, tube stock and saplings of the many plants that have been threatened by the bushfires, the installation and accompanying talks will encourage not only a sense of memorial, but also of renewal.

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### Tuesday 19 January 2021

*No events this day*

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### DAY 4 | Wednesday 20 January 2021

4.00 – 5.30pm

#### The Poets

*Presented by the Sydney Environment Institute and Red Room Poetry*

During the great purges in early 20th century Russia, another woman waiting outside Leningrad prison in the hope of seeing a husband, a father, a son, asked the great Russian poet Anna Akhmatova if anyone could ever describe what they were experiencing. The poem, Requiem, was Akhmatova's answer: it was her "tortured mouth, through which a hundred million people shout". Part of what we face as we contemplate the black summer fires is the limit of our own capacity to be present to the magnitude of the losses, the thoughts and the feelings they provoke in us. It is to this impossibility of containing the worlds beyond of and beyond our experience, and to our own

complex, fragmented and often strange thoughts and feelings that poetry speaks. Australian poets Michelle Cahill, Brenda Saunders, David Brooks, Felicity Plunkett, Coco Huang and Viv Pham will offer their poetic witness of the black summer fires, to the beings who lived and died through them, and to our struggle to be present and receptive to the three billion whose shouts we did not hear. Luke Fischer is chairing the event.

Renowned cellist Christina Christensen will be performing compositions addressed to trees between poetry readings. Christensen is an internationally recognised musician who composes for both film and solo cello performances that are inspired by nature.

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## DAY 5 | Thursday 21 January 2021

4.00 – 5.30pm

### **Groundswell Event – Voices from the Frontline**

‘Voices from the Frontline’ shares first-hand experiences from affected communities about the impacts of the fires on wildlife and the natural world. The panel discussion draws together knowledge from Indigenous Elders, veterinarians, and firefighters, and is hosted by Groundswell, a new giving circle created in response to the climate crisis. Groundswell supports accelerated action and environmental solutions by funding high-impact climate advocacy in Australia.

6.00 – 7.00pm

### **Artology presents – William Barton and Véronique Serret**

William Barton and Véronique Serret’s collaborative performance involves the unique storytelling and soulful pairing of didgeridoo and violin. Specially commissioned for the ‘Bush Requiem’ by Artology, Barton and Serret co-write a deeply affective tribute to the Australian landscape and present an inimitable performance that traces important new songlines.

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## DAY 6 | Friday 22 January 2021

11.00 – 1.00pm

### **Groundswell Event – Tony Albert: Regeneration**

Artist Tony Albert’s giant black canvas offers an opportunity for families to come together and create illustrations of native flora and fauna. Albert explains that “the birds will continue to grow and come back to life, replicating and reflecting our native wildlife as it continues to fight, repair and replenish itself with its surrounding inhabitants following our most catastrophic summer.” Tony Albert’s family are Girramay, Yidinji and Kuku Yalandji, 3 distinct language groups from the rainforest and east cape of Far North Queensland.

4.00 – 5.30pm

**An Endangered Menagerie**  
*Sydney Environment Institute Panel*

Alongside the incredible loss of plant and animal lives in the 2019-2020 bushfire season, a range of endangered species were pushed closer to the edge of extinction. As the impacts of climate change intensify into the future, it is likely that fire will play an ever more significant role in the ongoing loss of species in Australia. This panel brings together philosophers, writers, and scientists to explore the intersection between extinction and bushfire in this country. In a series of six short reflections (five minutes), each speaker will focus on a single plant or animal species, drawing out the particularities of this threatened life form and what is precious and significant about it. The panel will conclude with a round table discussion and Q&A with the audience.

**Speakers**

- **Thom van Dooren** (Chair), Associate Professor, Department of Gender and Cultural Studies, The University of Sydney
- **Sophie Chao**, Postdoctoral Research Associate, School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry, The University of Sydney
- **Joshua Lobb**, Senior Lecturer, School of the Arts, English and Media, University of Wollongong
- **Peter Minter**, Australian poet, editor and scholar
- **Dalia Nassar**, Senior Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, The University of Sydney

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**DAY 7 | Saturday 23 January 2021**

4.00 – 5.30pm

**Groundswell Panel – Right Fire: Culture on Country**

“A yarn with Indigenous fire practitioners about the history of fire management in Australia; the impacts of colonisation, burning fossil fuels on the rise of deadly wildfires; and the potential for an Indigenous-led National Cultural Fire Strategy to heal country and communities.”

Groundswell is a new Giving Circle created in response to the Climate Crisis, accelerating action and supporting solutions by funding high-impact climate advocacy in Australia.

6.00 – 7.00pm

**Artology presents – Willian Barton and Véronique Serret**

William Barton and Véronique Serret’s collaborative performance involves the unique storytelling and soulful pairing of didgeridoo and violin. Specially commissioned for the ‘Bush Requiem’ by Artology, Barton and Serret co-write a deeply affective tribute to the Australian landscape and present an inimitable performance that traces important new songlines.

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## DAY 8 | Sunday 24 January 2021

4.30 – 5.00pm

### **'Myosotis' – her requiem**

*The Living Room Theatre feat. Danielle Celermajer*

Finding sense in the face of grief. Merging story with a double bass ensemble, 'Myosotis' - her requiem, asks us to sit within grief, to remember the non-human bodies lost in the 2019/20 fires. A plea to never forget that their lives are a legacy of our inaction.

#### **Artists**

- **Michelle St Anne**, Co-founder and Artistic Director, The Living Room Theatre
- **Imogen Cranna**, cross disciplinary artist
- **Jacques Emery**, double bassist, composer and performer
- **Maximillian Alduca**, double bassist
- **Will Hansen**, double bassist, improviser and composer

#### **Speaker**

- **Danielle Celermajer**, Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Policy, The University of Sydney

5.00 – 6.30pm

### **Entanglements**

*Sydney Environment Institute Panel*

The impacts of the fires of black summer fell unevenly on different human, animal and plant lives, but they also exposed the shared vulnerabilities of all living beings and ecosystems, and our many entanglements. Never has it been clearer that we humans are embedded in, and 'in this together' with all other earth beings. As loss proliferated, we all confronted the truth that the condition for human life, and beyond this, the possibility of meaning in our lives rests on the worlds in which we are embedded. That humans and the more-than human world do not exist in distinct and separate realms is inherent to the philosophies and lifeways of many peoples, including those of the First Peoples of this nation. The speakers on this panel will share their understandings and practices of what it means to live in and of an entangled world.

#### **Speakers**

- **David King**, a Gundungurra Aboriginal Man, Dingo Darbo Cultural Circle
- **Sophie Chao**, Postdoctoral Research Associate, School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry, The University of Sydney

- **Jakelin Troy**, Yuma from Ngunwal Country, Canberra and Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research, The University of Sydney
- **Dinesh Wadiwel** (Chair), Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Social Policy, The University of Sydney

From 7pm

### **Dirt Witches**

The Dirt Witches are collective who stand up against acts of systemic environmental destruction through creative expression, honouring our deep relationship to nature. As a member of this group, Janet has initiated an installation for Requiem will involve a pile of burnt wood branches and sticks salvaged from the bushfires and scripted with memorial white texts. On the final day of the program, there will be a ritual of voices speaking texts aloud as a form of contemporary, environmentalist incantation. The installation will be dismantled through a linear procession that will see the memory of the bushfires and the call to action along the streets of Sydney.

16 – 24 January  
11.00 – 7.00pm (daily)

### **Artwork Installations**

Across the duration of the Requiem program, artworks will be installed within the ethereal inner chamber of the Paddington Reservoir, foregrounding an aesthetics of care through water, living plants, ceramics, participatory drawing and footage from the bushfires. This includes Tony Albert's participatory artwork 'Regeneration', Juz Kitson's corporeal ceramic installation, Yasmin Smith's ceramic branches glazed with the ash from a burnt red gum, Janet Laurence's H2O: Water Bar of charcoal waters from bushfire-affected regions, Dirt Witches white inscripted burnt black branches and sticks that create a ritual gathering and incantation work and Charles Dove's new video projection in tribute to Australian wildlife. Requiem will also present a nursery of living plants sourced from the Mt Annan Botanic Gardens and manuscript artworks created by artists in collaboration with poets, writers and philosophers.