

Soiled | 2024

Soiled | 2024 showcases the creative works of **Cassandra TYTLER**

Soiled is a series of installation and video works that research the interrelationships between humans, soil, and dirt. It examines how a politics of purity reinforces hierarchies of race, gender, and society.

Officially opened by Dr **Renée NEWMAN**

Gallery25

Opening: Thursday 14 March 2024 5pm–7pm
Exhibition dates: 15 March to 17 April
Floor talk: Wednesday 20 March 12:30pm–1:30pm
Gallery opening hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am–4pm
Building 10, 2 Bradford St, Mount Lawley

ECU Galleries acknowledges the traditional custodians, the Whadjuk Noongar people, and elders past and present. We pay our respects for the great privilege of living, making and researching on these unceded lands.

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Exhibition Statement

Soiled is a series of artworks that incorporate video art with performance, speculative documentary practice, and sculptural assemblages. The artworks function as a series of 'soil acts' that foster understanding of the complex interrelationships between humans, soil, and dirt. It examines how social narratives of what is soiled and what is pure reinforce hierarchies of race, gender, and society. In this tapestry of soil relations, an evolving narrative is created, where time, place, politics, and bodies intertwine with the substance of the ground.

Soiled takes a critical approach to an essentialist idea of 'nature' that is disconnected and divided from humans. It looks to digital art as a resistant and speculative tool that challenges externalising classification practices alongside the human/non-human binary. Instead of viewing the environment as a resource for extracting life and capital from, the artworks in *Soiled* seek to expand the idea of soil and dirt as part of an ecology of being.

To quote Mary Douglas, dirt is "matter out of place" (1966) that is socially and culturally constructed. Those who do not live within normative socially sanctioned confines are dirty and therefore out of place and a threat to the status quo. Within our social structures of ordering and discarding, some groups are dirtier than others due to hierarchies of classification. Following this thinking, Max Liboiron tells us that "where there is a system of power, there are necessarily rejected elements (or dirt), and one way to investigate systems is by studying what they reject, abject, and oppress" (2019). The artworks within *Soiled* wrestle with the problematics of this politics of purity and by extension, our separation from the environment, which helps contribute to the climate emergency that we now face.

Through a speculative imaginary, the aim of *Soiled* is to present hope, critique, and warning. These works aim to pull the viewer otherwise, on a different trajectory.

References

Douglas, M. (1966/2000). *Purity and danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*. Routledge. (p. 36).

Liboiron, M. (2019, September 9). Waste is not "matter out of place". *Discard Studies*. <https://discardstudies.com/2019/09/09/waste-is-not-matter-out-of-place/>

Biography

Cassandra Tytler is a video artist and researcher with a particular focus on performance practices. She works across single channel video, performance, site, and installation. Her research interests lie in the performance of video and its encounter within place, to create a relational and aware politics of resistance to normalising narratives of exclusion.

In making site-based creative research, Tytler aims to pull people, other beings, and places together to foster an intertwining of relations so that participants experience the work beyond their individual selves. She hopes that through these speculative art actions that people feel a part of larger ecosystems and therefore realise their responsibility to them.

Tytler's work combines an unsettling, wry humour with a playful sensibility. It is an ongoing examination of the mechanics of audio-visual performance, both onscreen and by the hand of the artist. She works from a feminist, queer, and anti-colonialist position.

She completed her practice-led PhD within the Faculty of Art (Theatre Performance) at Monash University, Naarm/Melbourne in 2021. Originally from Naarm/Melbourne, she moved to Boorloo/Perth in April 2023 as a Forrest Creative & Performance Fellow. During her fellowship she is situated with the Centre for People, Place, and Planet and working across the School of Education and the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts at Edith Cowan University.

Tytler has exhibited, screened and performed work nationally and internationally. She has received support and fellowships from numerous organizations such as the Forrest Research Foundation, City of Stirling, Monash Academy of Performing Arts, The Camargo Foundation, Cassis, France, The Cité des Internationales, Paris, The Australia Council, The Ian Potter Cultural Trust and the Dame Joan Sutherland Fund, American Australian Association, NYC. Tytler has exhibited in galleries such as The Torrance Art Museum, L.A.; F.A.C.T. Liverpool; Gallery Titanik, Turku, Finland; Harold Golen Gallery, Miami; MARS Gallery; The Counihan Gallery; Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne; Metro Arts, Brisbane.

Contact Information

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Artist's Statement

Two major works as part of this exhibition, could not have been made alone. *It Will Not Be Pure* features nine screen performers, all of whom added nuance and meaning to their characters, and in turn the overall artwork. Similarly, crew members added so much more to this work than what was originally envisioned.

Voiceless Mask is a collaborative project between me and Trevor Ryan. What started as a singular idea turned into a rich conversation around the recent Australian Indigenous Voice referendum outcome. Trevor's generosity of spirit in communicating his ideas and sharing his feelings were incredibly valuable to me and I loved working with him.

I would also like to acknowledge the Centre for People, Place and Planet at ECU. I became a member of the CPPP on arrival at ECU in 2023 and have since been supported and encouraged to grapple with making creative practice research that is transdisciplinary and feminist and follows an anticolonial viewpoint. With the CPPP I have had the opportunity to connect and form working relationships with researchers from other disciplines, which has been invaluable to my scholarly and creative work.

Acknowledgements

The development of this work was supported by the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts Studio Program.

Dr Cassandra Tytler is a Creative and Performance fellow at the Forrest Research Foundation

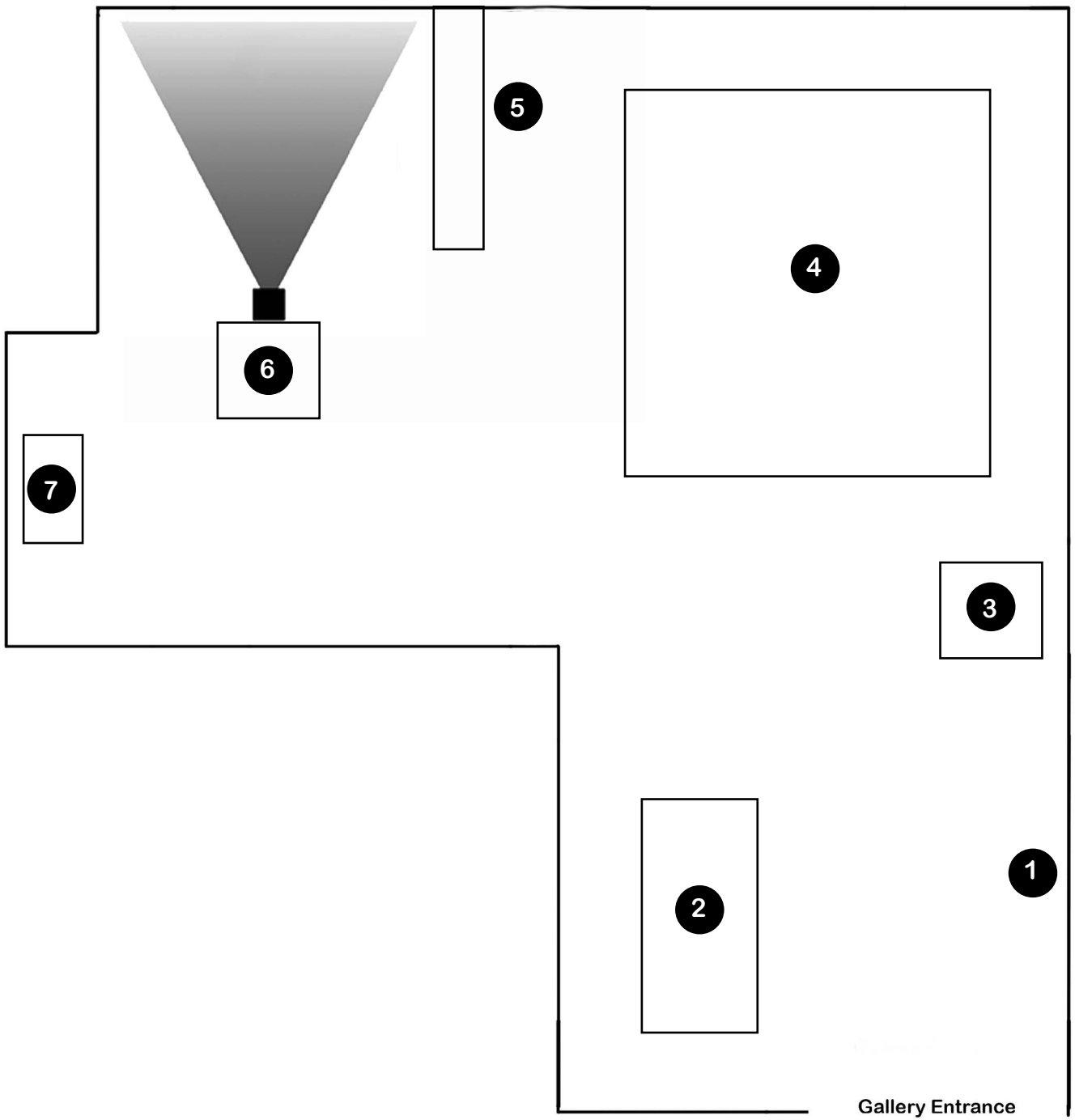
Dr Tytler is a member of The Centre for People, Place & Planet, whose scholars have contributed to this transdisciplinary creative practice research. Dr Tytler is based at ECU School of Education and WAAPA.

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List of Works

- 1 Cassandra TYTLER **The Earthen Collective**, 2023–2024, 100% cotton buried in five disturbed locations of Noongar Country and sewn into a banner, Dimensions varied.
- 2 Cassandra TYTLER **A Journey Forward**, 2024, Interactive mixed media installation, Dimensions varied.
- 3 Cassandra TYTLER **In Solidarity We Eat Dirt!**, 2024, Dirt biscuits.
- 4 Cassandra TYTLER **It Will Not Be Pure**, 2024, Video installation , 15'58".
Actors | Donita Cruz (Jamie), Jacq Fairfax (Eve – Soil Revolutionary), Tina Fielding (Maria – Soil Revolutionary), Julia Hales (Stella - Dirt biscuit chef), Ella Hetherington (Sam), Jennifer Mackenzie (Donna – Soil Revolutionary), Kara Perrin (Holly – Youtuber), Sam Ren (Val – Soil Revolutionary), and Julie Tighe (Bruno – Soil Revolutionary)
Cinematographer | Fionn Mulholland
Sound Design | Tracy Redhead
2nd camera (locker scene) | Cameron Purdy
Intern Production Manager | Fiona Dent
Intern Art Director | Blanche Deards
- 5 Cassandra TYTLER **The Soil Inquiry**, 2024, Soil in jars, sculptural assemblage, Dimensions varied.
Scholar | Professor Mindy Blaise
Research Project | Creative soil inquiry of child-collected soil samples around Noongar Boodjar.
- 6 Cassandra TYTLER & Trevor RYAN **Voicless Mask**, 2024, Projection, 02'40".
Poem and performance | Trevor Ryan
Music | Cassandra Edwards
- 7 Cassandra TYTLER **A Skin, a Sea, an Island, a Prison**, 2024, Video, 04'15".
Actors | Steven Christo, Heidi Lupprian, Joanne Nguyen, Kathy Starvaggi, Francesco Di Tacchio and Harlene Hercules
Lighting Assistant | Jie Wang
Sound Recording Assistant | Joseph Zhao
Additional Sound Effects | Gregor Quendel, SoundsForYou and Pixabay