

MEDIA
RELEASE

TARRAWARRA
MUSEUM
OF ART

Monday 4 July 2022

Sonia Leber and David Chesworth: Where Lakes Once Had Water

30 July – 13 November 2022



Photo caption: Sonia Leber and David Chesworth, *Where Lakes Once Had Water* (video still), 2020. 2-channel 4K UHD video, stereo audio, 28:24 minutes. University of Wollongong Art Collection. CABAHA Art Series Commission in partnership with Bundanon. Filmed on the lands and waters of the Mudburra, Marlinja, Jingili, Elliot, Jawoyn and Larrakia communities in Northern Territory, Australia, with additional filming and editing on Barkandji, Dharawal, Djabugay, Yidinji and Wurundjeri Country.

Where Lakes Once Had Water, at TarraWarra Museum of Art, will feature a major video work of the same name and three related sound, video and sculptural works from conceptual artists Sonia Leber and David Chesworth.

The exhibition coincides and resonates with ***Rhythms of the Earth***, featuring selected works from the TarraWarra collection. These combined exhibitions focus on the dynamic restlessness of the Earth.

Melbourne/Naarm-based artists Sonia Leber and David Chesworth are renowned for their highly detailed, conceptual video works, soundscapes and installations. In 2018 and 2019 the artists travelled with a team of Earth and environmental scientists who were investigating changes in the climate, landscape and ecology over many millennia in the Northern Territory

of Australia. Their journey took them to the remote, expansive landscapes of the ephemeral Lake Woods, to Nitmiluk/Katherine Gorge and to Girraween Lagoon—to the lands and waters of the Mudburra, Marlinja, Jingili, Elliot, Jawoyn and Larrakia communities—traversing locations marked by long-term aridity through to lush, green waterways.

Where Lakes Once Had Water features a large-scale, dual-screen 28-minute video work which reflects this journey. The video introduces Mudburra man Ray Dimakarri Dixon, who calls to ancestral spirits to watch over Country as the scientists meticulously excavate the red earth of the once-submerged bed of Lake Woods. Working across the ancient shorelines, everyone is receptive to the signs, signals and rhythms of the land. Meanwhile, non-human cohabitants continue their struggles for survival. Back in the laboratory, scientists use the sediment samples to analyse cycles of wetting and drying in Australia over at least 130,000 years.

Where Lakes Once Had Water contemplates how the Earth is experienced and understood through different ontologies—ways of being, seeing, sensing, listening and thinking—that reverberate across art, First Nations thought, science, ancient and modern cultures, the non-human, and the spaces in between.

It will be presented in the Main Gallery, adjacent to six works recently gifted to the Museum by Waanyi artist Judy Watson which depict significant mountains and topographical features of Wurundjeri Country surrounding TarraWarra.

The artwork *Where Lakes Once Had Water* (2020) is the inaugural art commission of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage (CABAH) and was commissioned in association with Bundanon.

The exhibition will also feature three new sound, video and sculptural works by Sonia Leber and David Chesworth from their *Sound Before Sound* series, two of which are specially commissioned by TarraWarra. *Sound Before Sound I: One and Three Scores*, 2022; *Sound Before Sound II: Auditioning the Archive*, 2022; and *Sound Before Sound III: Lyrebirdity*, 2022, explore sound, landscape and the archive.

Exhibition curator, TarraWarra director Victoria Lynn, says the sounds and rhythms that permeate Leber and Chesworth's works are not the sounds of the earth—or the environment—but the sounds of its measurement by science and museology.

'This self-reflexive approach to landscape and collections causes the audience to think in new ways about how we approach the landscape, bringing a self-awareness to how we not only see the landscape, but also how we sense, listen and think about terrain and its cultural and ecological history', Ms Lynn said.

ENDS

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Opening Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am to 5pm and open all public holidays.

Admission: \$10 Adults; \$8 Seniors; \$5 Concession and Students; Museum Members and children under 12 free.

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Sonia Leber and David Chesworth, *Where Lakes Once Had Water* is the first commission in a series initiated in 2018 by the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage (CABAH). Commissioned in association with Bundanon. University of Wollongong Art Collection.

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