

Jennie Feyen
Beneath The Surface

CULTUREatWORK

THE  STAR



ARTIST STATEMENT

I was raised in a family that values and engages with world cinema, so picking up a camera and exploring visual storytelling was very natural territory. I have steadily created a diverse body of work consisting of short films, documentaries, interviews, video installations and projection artwork, all of which explore different themes unified by the moving image. As an artist I feel passionate about the way in which people share a connection with nature and the role that individuals take to either study and protect the environment or mistreat and destroy it.

Beneath The Surface

is an art-science documentary that focuses on the ocean, which I've always had a romantic relationship with. I've spent most of my life living close to large bodies of water: the river Thames in Essex, England; Kujiyama Beach, Hitachi, Japan; and beaches in Perth and Sydney, Australia. I moved to Sydney in 2014 and decided to actively engage with a community group called Responsible Runners to pick up rubbish at Balmoral Beach. It was a rewarding experience, however the type of rubbish we found made me question the type of relationship the general public has with the ocean. This led to the realisation that I knew very little about the existing marine life here or existing projects that are being run to protect our marine environment.

I used my 2016 CULTURE AT WORK art-science residency to explore Sydney's identity as a coastal city and show my respect to scientists and researchers devoted to understanding and helping our marine life. Over six weeks I contacted various researchers, which led to unique filming opportunities. At University of New South Wales (UNSW), I followed Dr Katherine Dafforn, Dr Ana Bugnot and PhD student Shinjiro Ushima in partnership with the NSW Office of Environment and

Heritage as they deployed 3D-printed sea tiles across various foreshores to accelerate urban marine renewal in Sydney Harbour. I also documented UNSW PhD student Janine Ledet as she experimented with macroalgae and epifaunal invertebrate communities under climate change impacts, ocean acidification and heat stress, at the Sydney Institute of Marine Science.

I invited researchers to contribute their research images and I am very grateful for their valuable contributions. From the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) I received diverse media from the Plant Functional Biology and Climate Change Cluster group:

Dr Penelope Ajani provided stunning images of diatoms; Associate Professor Martina Doblin provided videos of lobster phyllosoma (larvae) and a gorgeous shot of ocean ripples; and PhD student Samantha Goyen and collaborator Post-Doctoral Research Fellow Matthew Nitschke provided stunning underwater footage of Sydney Harbour corals. From Macquarie University (Department of Environmental Science) I received fascinating images of an experiment involving mangrove crabs in Botany Bay from Dr Jeff Kelleway and his students Alex Cook, Katrina Jones, Jarrod McDonald and Emma Petrolo.

I am also thankful to marine ecologist Rebecca Morris at the University of Sydney for introducing her eco-engineering project involving concrete flowerpots along Sydney Harbour seawalls, which I filmed by getting in the water myself (my most intrepid filmmaking experience to date). This residency enabled me to build a deeper relationship with Sydney and appreciate the work of scientists and researchers that might go unnoticed. I hope it may do the same for you.

—Jennie Feyen, 2016



CURATOR'S STATEMENT

Engaging with emerging artist Jennie Feyen on her art-science residency, where she investigated Sydney's marine environment, struck a deep personal resonance. My first degree in marine geology at the University of New South Wales opened a portal into the vast world of the sea – its organic (living) and inorganic (non-living) elements and their complex and delicate inter-relationships. This territory has become more public than ever as climate science reveals the accelerated distortion of natural cycles, and associated human links and impacts. It would surprise many people to hear that oceans cover 71% of the Earth's surface and contain 97% of the Earth's water. They also contain 99 percent of the living space on the planet.

Feyen's eye for image and storytelling have been thoughtfully merged into a mini-documentary that gives reverence to the local marine environment and the scientists who explore it. Joining them on field trips on Sydney's harbour – Balmain, Clarke's Point and Rozelle – she was exposed to their academic culture of inquiry, but also to the expanse of Sydney's prized, massive water body. She captured her own film footage, distilling it into a visual journey with material provided by several of her scientific collaborators.

Beneath The Surface offers a gentle entrée into Sydney's marine world from both the inside and the outside. As a relative newcomer to Sydney, Feyen's residency provided her with a deeper connection to the city and its communities – scientific and artistic. There is certainly much that goes on beneath the surface on all these fronts, and we see it through Feyen's eyes. She takes us into a metaphoric 'greenroom', where the

players are off-stage, leaving us free to reflect on what's been or to come – in silence. It's a gentle proposition, but it's also a call to look a little deeper with her.

Treasures can be found everywhere, but if you look – and think – a little deeper you will connect more, and hopefully, care more. Perhaps this is the quiet ideal of both art and science. I was driven to find my favourite textbook, the iconic 'Australian Seashores' by Emeritus Professor William J. Dakin (University of Sydney, first published in 1951), which made marine science accessible to all. Another book published the same year, 'The Sea Around Us' by US marine biologist Rachel Carson, was prescient in its concerns: "It is a curious situation that the sea, from which life first arose should now be threatened by the activities of one form of that life." The sea is vast and has absorbed human exploitation since then, and its chemical, physical and biological balance has been seriously challenged.

I was always heartened that Professor Dakin's book featured T S Eliot's poem *Four Quartets*, with the lines: "The sea has many voices, many gods and many voices" expressing the special bond with the sea that both shared. More than 30 years of study made Dakin an expert interpreter of all matters marine. Artists like Feyen, and the scientists she encountered through this residency, will continue to reconnect us with nature's honest language, and help us notice and respect its myriad and timeless uttering.

— Ivana Jirasek



JENNIE FEYEN

EDUCATION

2013 – Bachelor of Creative Industries (Film & Video, Visual Arts), Edith Cowan University, WA

Research project: Body of Water, iVEC Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, WA

2012 – Student Exchange (Japanese Studies), Tokyo Metropolitan University, Japan

COMMISSIONS

2017 – *Tokkotai*: Contemporary Japanese and Australian Artists on war and the Battle of Sydney Harbour, Mosman Art Gallery, NSW

2014 – *Emperor of Atlantis* Video Art, Lost & Found Opera Inc., Perth, WA

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2016 – *Beneath The Surface*, curated by Ivana Jirasek, Accelerator Gallery, CULTURE AT WORK, Sydney

2014 – *Mieru*, curated by Jumpclimb, Fringe World Festival, Noodle Palace, WA

2013 – *My Core*, curated by Free Range Gallery, Perth Winter Arts Festival, WA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2016 – BEAMS Arts Festival, curated by Nicky Ginsberg, Sydney

Globelight Biennale of Light, Curated by James Tapscott, Victoria

April Group Show, curated by Annabelle Sealy, Emerging Art Australia, Melbourne

Visions Beyond, curated by Jobe Williams, Kudos Gallery, Sydney.

2015 – BEAMS Arts Festival, curated by Nicky Ginsberg, Sydney

Island Salon, curated for Underbelly Arts Festival, Sydney

Contemporary Art Mini Series, curated by The Japan Foundation, Sydney

Taking Up Space, curated by Articulate Team, Articulate Project Space, Sydney.

2014 – *Body Sex*, curated by Miriam Arbus, Brunswick Street Gallery, Melbourne

2013 – ECU Graduation Show, Edith Cowan University, Perth, WA

Illuminate, curated by Yvonne Doherty, Spectrum Project Space, Perth, WA

SELECTED SCREENINGS

2016 – *The Making of 'Body of Water'*, Electrofringe, NSW

2014 – Artist Screening, Fringe World Festival, Perth Cultural Centre, WA

2014 – *Heart and Human*, Perth International Revelation Film Festival, WA

2013 – *Heart and Human*, Women Media and Arts Festival, Sydney, NSW

2011 – *Marigold*, Revel8 Super 8 Film Competition, Perth, WA

GRANTS

2015 – Australia Council for the Arts; ArtStart.

RESIDENCIES

2016 – CULTURE AT WORK Art-Science Residency

Front and back images: Jennie Feyen

exhibition dates	public talk	launch event	gallery hours
11, 16–18 Dec	Thu 15 Dec 6–8pm	Sat 10 Dec 2–5pm	11am – 4pm

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