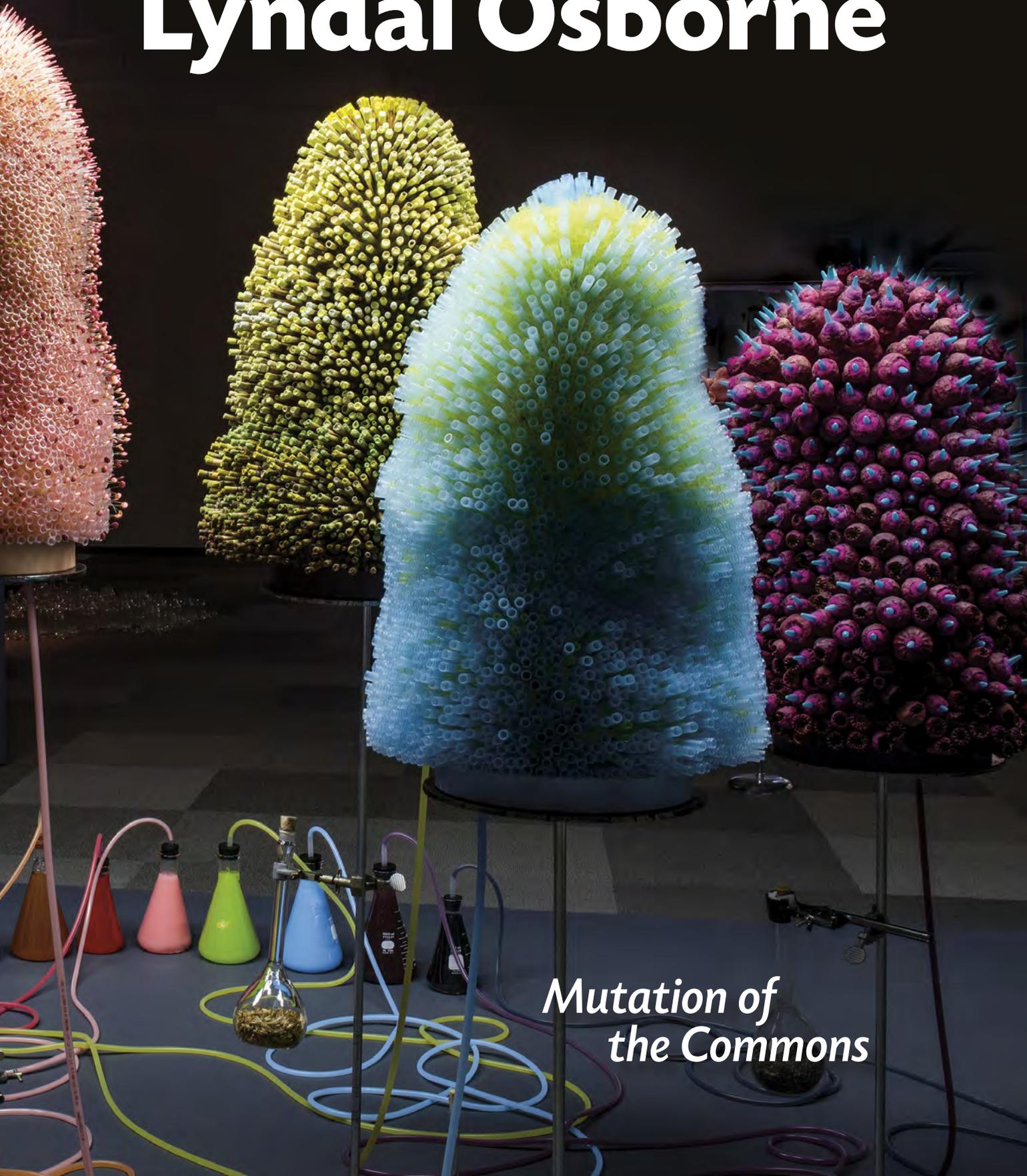


# Lyndal Osborne



*Mutation of  
the Commons*





# Lyndal Osborne

## *Mutation of the Commons*

With forward essay by  
Robert R. Janes

With catalogue essay by  
Natalie S. Loveless

For the artwork of  
Lyndal Osborne

On the occasion of  
the exhibition  
Mutation of the Commons

Curated by  
Michele Hardy

Nickle Galleries

27 September – 15 December 2018



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
Nickle Galleries

◆ *Coral Project, 2018*  
1.5 X 13 X 15 FEET



## Lyndal Osborne: Mutation Of The Commons

BY ROBERT R. JANES

I first encountered Lyndal Osborne's art in 2003 at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff, Canada. The piece was *Shoalwan: River Through Fire, River of Ice*. I write "encountered" so as not to diminish the impression this massive installation made on me. For those who have not seen it, it is part of this exhibition. For those who have, I am confident that you will share my appreciation for this work—a river landscape of obsessive brilliance whose impact occurs not only on the gallery floor through close inspection of the details, but also as seen from any perspective in the gallery—a vast panorama that defies precise description. *Shoalwan* is born of Lyndal's relentless collecting of the mundane and the profound, and I wondered who is this person, this artist, who has gone to such an enormous effort to create something at once both beautiful and ambiguous? Beautiful because of the stunning array of colour, textures and patterns; ambiguous because of the natural and man-made objects that constitute the river. There is no water here; what can the message be?

I met Lyndal not long after her Whyte Museum exhibition and our friendship has grown in tandem with the ever-increasing challenges we face as an endangered species on an endangered planet. These challenges are apparent in all of Lyndal's installation work and reflect her acute mindfulness as a socially responsible artist. As a museum worker for more than four decades, I am also

concerned with museums as social organizations and their societal responsibilities. Similarly, Lyndal thinks about the ever-increasing destruction of our planet's ecological miracles and gives voice to these concerns in her meticulous re-creations of the more-than-human world. I must also note that all her creations demand pain-staking precision and imagination in their execution, as well as in their intricate presentation, and it is with respect to the latter that John Freeman, Lyndal's husband, artist and technical wizard, plays a major role.

In addition to our mutual interest in art, museums and activism, Lyndal and I have something else in common. I began my career as an archaeologist and Lyndal is a kind of archaeologist herself—forever collecting, cataloguing and curating objects for future use, while also playing with the meaning of time and entropy in her art. As a graduate student doing archaeological research in Canada's remote Northwest Territories, I spent six months living with a band of Dene hunters. This First Nations culture is thousands of years old and is based on intimate knowledge of one of the most unforgiving environments in the world. It is there that I learned firsthand the meaning of social ecology—that social and environmental issues are intertwined, and both must be considered simultaneously.

This inescapable truth—that our lives are inextricably linked with the natural world—is the link that draws me to Lyndal and her work.



◆ *Curtain of Life*, 2016  
20 X 10 X 3 FEET



Lyndal is also a defender of the natural world, something which I aspire to. Most importantly, Lyndal creates discomfort. You may not be aware of this as a viewer, given the beautiful forms, the bizarre shapes, the elegant juxtapositions, and the complexity of the presentations. But the discomfort is there—you need only pay attention to her artist's statements and her intentional contexts. I recall the observation of Canadian philosopher, John Ralston Saul, that the Western world's, citizen-based democracy is dependent upon participation, and to participate is to be

permanently uncomfortable—emotionally, intellectually and spiritually.<sup>1</sup> Lyndal is a participant and has assumed this discomfort by advocating for the protection of the planet in her art and in her life. I applaud her for this, as it seems that we will need a lot more collective discomfort if we are to address the consequences of climate change and the survival of the biosphere.

---

<sup>1</sup> Saul, John.Ralston. (1995) *The Unconscious Civilization*. Concord, Canada: House of Anansi Press. p.190.

# Introduction

BY MICHELE HARDY

Lyndal Osborne is a remarkable artist, teacher, and environmentalist whose career has spanned almost five decades, and whose art crosses borders and boundaries, mediums and disciplines. After many years as a printmaker, Osborne transitioned into an installation artist in the 1990s. Her work, her life, her ethics inform a practice that is, in spite of the diversity suggested above, powerfully singular and inspiring. Nickle Galleries is honored to present *Lyndal Osborne: Mutation of the Commons* (September 27 - December 15, 2018), the first major Calgary exhibition of her sculptural installations in over a dozen years.

Much has been written about Osborne—her childhood in Australia, her early collecting, her ingrained respect for nature and her deep-rooted environmentalism.<sup>1</sup> Much has also been written about the masses of materials she gathers—organic or otherwise, often during her daily walks—materials that are carefully prepared and sometimes stored for long periods before being transformed into multi-media installations. It is our hope with *Mutation of the Commons*, both the exhibition and this publication, that we widen the conversation into one that contextualizes Osborne’s work within contemporary discussions of art, ecology and the Anthropocene. The considerable skills of guest writer Natalie Loveless—artist, teacher, scholar and curator based in Edmonton—are brought to bear here with her sensitive essay, *Mutations and Care in the Anthropocene* describing the conceptual and ethical framework of Osborne’s work.

*Mutation of the Commons*, offers a survey of Lyndal Osborne’s sculptural art installations made between 1997 and 2018, works that are both layered and

affective. As with Loveless, I am intrigued by what discussions of the Anthropocene bring to the understanding of Osborne’s work. Loveless notes, although the term is contested it seems to offer some unique perspectives on humanity’s relationship with nature, perspectives at the heart of Osborne’s installations. Popularly, the Anthropocene is

the era of geological time during which human activity is considered to be the dominant influence on the environment, climate, and ecology of the earth.<sup>2</sup>

Vincent Normand notes further that “the Anthropocene makes explicit the systemic and material continuity between human gestures and the milieu in which they operate.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, the Anthropocene stresses connectedness, continuity, complicity and responsibility. Osborne’s work combining found human made and natural objects, drawn from sites across the globe (Newfoundland, Australia, Alberta etcetera)—would seem to be operating similarly. Her assemblages suggest connections between environments worlds away—and examines how actions in one area may have global impact.

The raw materials of Osborne’s work are intimately connected with her environmentalism and how she lives her life. Her materials and her processes are local, familiar (if often overlooked and undervalued), immediate and responsive. Her materials—garden waste, kitchen scraps, recycled bits, found objects and the like have been frequently described. No less important are the techniques she uses to transform them. In contrast to the mysterious industrial processes associated with the

<sup>1</sup> For a list of Osborne’s exhibition catalogues, see Curriculum Vitae.

<sup>2</sup> “Anthropocene” OED Online. June 2018. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/398463?redirectedFrom=anthropocene> (accessed August 18, 2018).

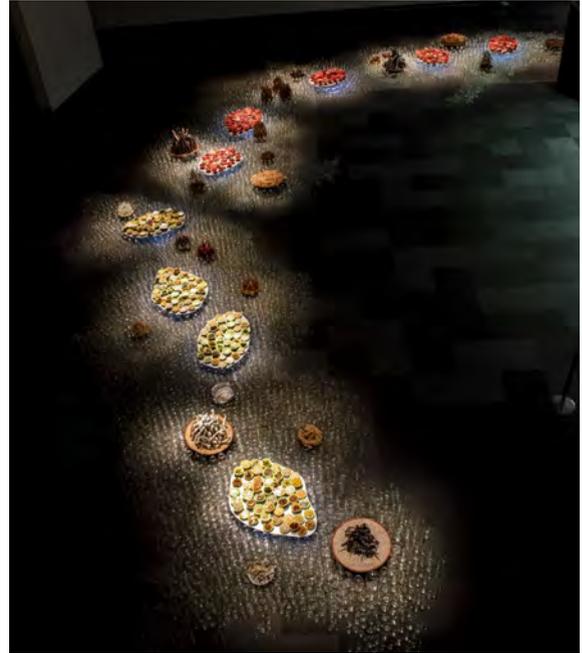
<sup>3</sup> Normand, Vincent (2015). In the Planetarium: The Modern Museum on the Anthropocentric Stage. In Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (Eds.) *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*. Open Humanities Press (pp. 65).

engineering of GMOs<sup>4</sup> (the subject of *Endless Forms Most Beautiful*), Osborne transforms carefully selected found objects with ‘slow’ processes (i.e. cutting, tying, gluing) and the application of layers of plaster and paint. The hand is not irrelevant here. Even as she shifted her practice from printmaking to sculptural installation (because it offered more immersive, affective experiences) her assemblages draw on still familiar haptic strategies (think: cooking, gardening, knitting etcetera). Her making is a way of making do, of figuring out, of thinking with and through materials in order to provoke deeper understandings and affective responses.

To me, discovering the energy that binds the global issues to local interpretation is found in making with my hands and collecting my own raw materials. Although I want to understand with my own eyes, to help me keep the idea clear, I am also looking for visual equivalents that keep me stimulated and that engage the viewer’s imagination.<sup>5</sup>

This ‘handedness’ helps the viewer/participant connect (visually, emotionally, haptically) with the pressing issues that drive Osborne’s work. They are manifest in her techniques as well as the scale of her work. Osborne’s installations consist of rows upon rows of repeated forms, arranged in space. Monumental in scope, they are nevertheless human in scale.

Davis and Turpin (2013) note that “art, as a vehicle of *aesthesis*, is central to thinking with and feeling through the Anthropocene.”<sup>6</sup> Osborne’s work in particular offers a way of sensing the



Anthropocene, of connecting us with loss, of encouraging us—Loveless suggests—to ‘stay with the trouble.’ It is work that makes us **look** and, more importantly, **feel**. And it is beautiful. In a recent interview, Donna Haraway distinguishes between *anthropos* and human; crisis and urgency. Of the former (the contested prefix to Anthropocene), she notes that human is preferable as it roots us in *humus*. We need to reconnect with humus, “not bliss out into an apocalyptic *anthropos*. Compost provides the figures for making multispecies public cultures, sciences, and politics now.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, she prefers the word **urgency** over **crisis** since, like humus, it is more fertile, and “cultivates responsibility.”<sup>8</sup> Osborne’s work is born of the compost pile but it impresses us less with debilitating decay, more with its elegant creativity and an ambivalent evolution.

<sup>4</sup> GMO (Genetically modified organism).

<sup>5</sup> Osborne, L. (2015). Creating Metaphors for Change. In L. Piper & L. Szabo-Jones (Eds.) *Sustaining the West: Cultural Responses to Canadian Environments*, Wilfred Laurier University Press, Waterloo. p. 109.

<sup>6</sup> Davis, H & E. Turpin (2015) *Art & Death: Lives Between the Fifth Assessment & the Sixth Extinction*. In Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin

(Eds.) *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*. Open Humanities Press (pp. 3).

<sup>7</sup> Haraway, D. (2015). Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene: Donna Haraway in Conversation with Martha Kenney. In Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (Eds.) *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*. Open Humanities Press, (p 260).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

Osborne produces works specifically for museum and gallery exhibitions rather than the art market. Her work exploits the space and public reach of the museum, using it to cast an affective spell that is consistent with an ecological perspective. Of her transition from print to sculpture, she notes

My prints were subjective and internal. Moving from print to installation has allowed me to become more of an art activist with greater opportunities for viewer participation with the work. Installation, for me, permits more possibility to engage pressing issues of environmental concern and to explore these ideas with more complexity and detail.<sup>9</sup>

Osborne uses museum space cunningly, imitating museum processes and modes of display even while undermining their authority and pointing to their culpability in the Anthropocene. Osborne notes her early beachcombing and the pleasure of organizing her collections in her girlhood home in Australia. She also describes her affection for county fairs where shelves were piled high with local produce. Her work draws on these early fascinations but also suggests a deeper relationship with scientific illustration and natural history museum display. A case in point is the work of Ernst Haeckel. Haeckel was a German biologist, naturalist, philosopher, physician, professor, marine biologist, and artist.<sup>10</sup> His book, *Art Forms in Nature (Kunstformen der Natur)*, originally published in 1904, is the loving product of a biologist as skillful at discerning form as he was at rendering them. Haeckel spent decades studying microorganisms, in particular, radiolarians

(protozoa with intricate skeletons that inhabit the oceans), identifying and drawing thousands of species. Enlarged and symmetrically arranged on the page, Haeckel's radiolarian illustrations were as decorative as they were didactic. Informed by ideas about typology and evolution, they are not unlike Victorian natural history museums.<sup>11</sup> Even a cursory look at his illustrations reveals a kinship with Osborne's work: they share a formal elegance and evident investment of time and deep observation.

Of the Victorian-era Museum of Natural History (*Jardin des Plantes*) in Paris, Brown notes

The spectator managed to 'see' the classification not simply by looking at the specimens themselves but by looking, as it were, through them to the higher idea that contained them. There was always, in other words, an element of conceptual depth to the page-like exhibition arrangements. The classification was the point: it lay on an invisible plane 'behind' or 'before' examples of its elements.<sup>12</sup>

Osborne's arrangements are often physically foreshortened, harkening back to her early works on paper as well as scientific illustrations and the early natural history display referenced above. Her forms resemble some of Haeckel's, lined up against a background or in rows of museum-like cases, inviting inspection and contemplation of their "conceptual depth."<sup>13</sup>

The forms that make up *Curtain of Life and Coral Project*, in particular, appear like mysterious, microscopic organisms enlarged and made visible. The irony here is that unlike natural history

<sup>9</sup> From Print to Installation: A History, Talk Synopsis, unpublished, Printopolis, Toronto, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst\\_Haeckel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Haeckel), accessed August 19, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Haeckel had close ties to museums in Berlin and Jena. See Richards, Robert J. *The Tragic Sense of Life: Ernst Haeckel and the Struggle over Evolutionary Thought*, University of Chicago Press, 2008. ProQuest Ebook Central,

<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ualgary.ca/lib/ualgary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=432283>.

<sup>12</sup> Brown, cited in Bennett, Tony. *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2004. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ualgary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=200037>, Page 173.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid





museum display and early scientific illustration, Osborne's forms do not illustrate evolution or progress, but change and ambivalence.

*Tracing Tides: A Topographical Investigation*, is a further example of Osborne's cunning use of museum display. *Tracing Tides* involves a series of display cases arranged in a grid across the gallery floor. Each case offers two levels. On the tops, are a series of topographical tableaux inspired by landscapes and incorporating materials gathered in New South Wales and Newfoundland. Underneath, a second level includes a series of round molded forms of roughly the size of the space between two palms. The balls represent human intervention, undermining not just landscapes but whole ecologies.<sup>14</sup> Osborne notes they "symbolize my own intervention and cultural references."<sup>15</sup> *Tracing Tides* serves also as a reminder of the arbitrariness and disconnection of museum collections. In Normand's words, museums are "global isolators" who remove natural and human-made specimens from their original milieu. Museums de-animate specimens then re-animate them "by overdetermining their signification and projecting them in a restricted field of attention."<sup>16</sup> Miming museum practice, *Tracing Tides* assembles bits of far flung landscapes and isolated specimens, removed from their original contexts. Recombined in the museum, these bits stand for impossible wholes, edited fictions and divisive paradigms.

The museum is a metaphor for our relationship with nature—it is a space where nature has traditionally been civilized, ordered, organized,

named and displayed. It is a place where nature is transformed for our consumption, education and enjoyment. It is therefore a place that is implicated in an unhealthy and unsustainable relationship with the environment. The Anthropocene would seem to beg for a new awareness of connection and a new paradigm that challenges prevailing divisions and hierarchies and fosters a new level of responsibility and care. As Haraway suggests, 'blissing out in anthropos' gets us nowhere. Instead, Osborne offers us an ethic of care, of responsibility and respect—one that encourages us to pause, to feel and to take responsibility for change, an ethic that Nickle Galleries is pleased to share and endorse.



<sup>14</sup> Osborne's balls are, perhaps, not unlike the thneeds responsible for destroying the valley of truffula trees featured in Dr. Seuss's book *The Lorax* (1971).

<sup>15</sup> Osborne *Tracing Tides* artist statement, 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Normand, Vincent (2015). In the Planetarium: The Modern Museum on the Anthropocentric Stage. In Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (Eds.)

*Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*. Open Humanities Press (pp. 67).

<sup>17</sup> A color plate illustrating *Ascidiacea* from Ernst Haeckel's "Kunstformen der Natur" (1899). [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Haeckel\\_Ascidiae.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Haeckel_Ascidiae.jpg)

# Mutation and Care in the Anthropocene

BY NATALIE S. LOVELESS

***Where are the feminist utopian, collaborative, risky imaginings and actions for earthlings in a mortal, damaged, human-heavy world?***

- Adele E. Clarke and Donna Haraway, *Making Kin not Populations*, 5.

***If art cannot change the world, it can offer another way of thinking that is necessary in order to be able to change the world, and it can do so through the sensuous evidence of that thinking; its appearance in the world in sensible form.***

- Steven Harris "Time for a Witness," in *Witness: Sherri Chava and Lyndal Osborne*, exhibition catalogue, 5

In a time of unprecedented climate catastrophe and ecological genocide, we are in desperate need of political and economic reorganization to help us move beyond our toxic ways of doing life under capitalism as we know it, here, in the global West. This demands not only technological innovation but social and cultural shifts. Artistic practices and forms have a role to play in achieving these goals. Art seeds the critical and speculative imaginings needed to trouble our current ways of living and dying. At its best, art has the capacity to influence social change, not by offering more facts but by finding ways, through aesthetic encounters and events, to persuade us to care and to care *differently*.

What art contributes at this critical historical moment is skill in creating aesthetic and affective spaces within which we not only reflect on what is so, but work on imagining and modeling things otherwise—what Clark and Haraway, in the epigraph above, frame as “risky imaginings and actions for earthlings in a mortal, damaged, human-heavy world.” This is what Lyndal Osborne’s work of the last 40 years has done. By offering lush, dramatic, and seductively detailed visual-scapes made up of hundreds upon hundreds of collected, generally overlooked, and imaginatively re-assembled elements of the world that surrounds us, Osborne models things

otherwise; she models a world in which the smallest pieces of wood or shell—elements of the commons—deserve care, and inspire delight.

Weaving a cautionary tale regarding unbridled population growth on a finite planet, biologist and philosopher Garrett Hardin’s well-circulated 1968 essay, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” is a forceful plea to attend to the growing ravages of human overpopulation, in the wake of which, he argues, the ideas and values of “the commons” have to be rethought.<sup>1</sup> To refer to the commons is (generally) to refer to so-called “natural resources,” like air and water, that we understand to be held or shared in common, not owned privately. In this context, the *tragedy* of the commons, for Hardin (using the contested example of individually “owned” cattle grazing on a shared plot of land), is that “man [sic] is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit — in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons” (1224).

---

<sup>1</sup> Hardin’s essay was delivered as a presidential address before the meeting of the Pacific Division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science at Utah State University, Logan, 25 June 1968. For a contemporary, and differently oriented, engagement with overpopulation see Adele Clarke and Donna Haraway, *Making Kin, not Populations* (Prickly Paradigm Press, 2018).

◆ *Coral Project, 2018*  
DETAIL

In other words, it is the absence of regulation, in the context of a world-view and set of practices within which individual gain/accumulation/property is the law of the land, that is at the heart of the tragedy of the commons: the commons will be exploited if not enclosed because, Hardin's essay argues, humans cannot help but orient themselves towards personal, individual, gain.

Given this, as much as Hardin's essay has been popularised by the neoliberal right as proof of the necessity of private enclosure in the service of free-market expansion, it has been critiqued by the left for the ideology that underpins it: an individualist, extractivist, and accumulationist worldview that relies on an erasure of pre-capitalist modes of regulating the commons and the production of inhabited lands as *terra nullius*.<sup>2</sup> Hardin's essay enunciates, requires, and relies upon a patriarchal, colonial, settler petrocapiatist worldview to even make sense. That is the subject position it produces. That is its given. And it is this given that figures prominently as a site of critique in Lyndal Osborne's work, giving the title to her current exhibition, *Mutation of the Commons*.<sup>3</sup>

In the context of Osborne's work, the word "mutation" conjures the practice of genetically modifying organisms<sup>4</sup> as well as of geoengineering and other *deus ex machina* techno-fixes to global



<sup>2</sup> Contra Hardin, feminist economist and Nobel Prize Laureate Elinor Ostrom argues that throughout human history there has, in fact, *never* been an unregulated commons. What this means is that Hardin's tragedy is not, in fact, of the *commons* but of *capitalist private property*. I am indebted for this note and my thinking on the commons to generous conversations with the cultural theorist Sourayan Mookerjia.

<sup>3</sup> Having brought Hardin's essay to bear on my thinking here, I'd like to suggest that the commons referred to in Osborne's title are, indeed, in the first instance, tragic. The tragedy is not, however, the tragedy that Hardin points to, but the one that is pointed to by the very worldview that his essay requires. This is why, instead of a *tragedy* of the commons, Osborne give us its *mutation*.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the 2010 *Endless Forms Most Beautiful*





◆ *Shoalwan: River Through Fire, River of Ice, 2003*  
3 X 70 X 35 FEET

climate change so common in the Western popular imaginary.<sup>5</sup> It also references those mutagens dispersed unpredictably (referenced in Hardin's critique) through run-off and waste and by-products of everything from mono-cropping to strip-mining. While first and foremost referring to a world being literally mutated at the molecular level (through plastic particles in the oceans and in our drinking water, for example), Osborne's title can also be taken to refer to the very methods, the labour, that the artist engages in as she methodically, gradually, ongoingly, gleans materials from public and private spaces, and "mutates" them into something of another order entirely.<sup>6</sup>

Through large-scale, aesthetically sophisticated, sculptural installation works, Osborne invites her viewers to reflect on the impact of fossil fuel induced global warming, biodiversity under threat, and the fragile ecosystems of which we are all a part. Many scholars who have written of Osborne's work have referred to the taxonomic qualities of her installations, as seed pods and pencil nubs are given equal hierarchy, undermining the nature/culture distinctions that are accepted, post-Enlightenment, as common sense.<sup>7</sup> Many have also written about her "cabinet of curiosities" logic, as aesthetic delight guides each object's position within a given composition. Additionally, Osborne's lifelong practices of beachcombing, collecting, and gathering materials that appeal to her have been discussed as ways of challenging the value/waste binary central to the current garbage-ification of the planet.<sup>9</sup> While these are all apt and important

aspects of her work, what I want to focus on here is how Osborne's *Mutation of the Commons* functions at the level of the exhibition itself to inspire a mode of attention characterized by care.

Having had the opportunity to travel to Calgary in October of 2018 to observe Osborne and collaborator John Freeman, during one of their trips to Nickle Galleries at the University of Calgary in preparation for the installation, and to listen in as they discussed translating their detailed floor plans and diagrams into a three-dimensional reality, it became clear to me that, as much as each individual work in the exhibition has its own genesis and history, each exhibition is treated, by Osborne, as, itself, a *work of art*, with the relation between each work treated with as much care as the relations within each work proper. In a 1989 essay "Re-viewing Modernist Criticism" the conceptual artist and theorist Mary Kelly writes that in "terms of analysis the exhibition system marks a crucial intersection of discourses, practices and sites which define the institutions of art within a definite social formation. Moreover, it is exactly here, within this inter-textual, inter-discursive network, that the work of art is produced as text [...] an exhibition is a system of meanings, a discourse, which taken as a complex unit or enunciative field can be said to constitute a group of statements; the individual works comprising fragments of imaged discourse or utterances which are anchored by the exhibition's titles, subheadings and commentary but at the same time unsettled, exceeded or dispersed in the process of their

<sup>5</sup> Popular movies that immediately come to mind include *Geostorm* (2017), *Interstellar* (2014), *Snowpiercer* (2013), and *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004).

<sup>6</sup> My thinking on mutation is indebted to conversation with the science fiction scholar and writer Joshua (Sha) LaBare.

<sup>7</sup> On the post-Enlightenment nature/culture divide in the context of the energy humanities, and for an important feminist critique of contemporary petroculture, see Sheena Wilson, "Energy Imaginaries: Feminist and

Decolonial Futures" in *Materialism and the Critique of Energy* (eds. Brent Ryan Bellamy and Jeff Diamanti. Chicago and Edmonton: MCMPrime Press, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> See David Garneau's wonderful reading of Osborne's work in the exhibition catalogue "Lyndal Osborne: The Poetic Structure of the World" for the Southern Alberta Art Gallery (2000).

<sup>9</sup> See "Evolving Installations: an Interview with Lyndal Osborne" by Briar Craig in *Lake: a Journal of Arts and Environment* (Issue 6: 2011).





articulation as events” (58-59, emphasis added). Inspired by Kelly’s assertion we might ask the following of Osborne’s *Mutation of the Commons*: what does it do, not only—or even primarily—at the level of any individual work, but at the level of the exhibition as a whole? How does it configure its viewers as subjects? What does it *render palpable* and how? How does it solicit affective identification or dis-identification? How does it move and delight and entrance and warn and inspire and invite?

At the level of the exhibition, I’d like to suggest, we are asked to witness fields of mutation at play, made up of relics from landscapes already long in peril. We are asked to witness places and spaces that have been mapped onto each other—most often through collecting, manipulating, and arranging objects from paired sites in Osborne’s two homes, Australia and Alberta—in such a way as to awe through both overwhelming scale and deep wells of detail. We are asked to engage with the artist in a practice of what Donna Haraway has called “speculative fabulation” (2013) that is part visual seduction and part *memento mori* to disappearing worlds.<sup>10</sup> Sometimes this is done through reworking materials in such a way as to elicit wonder and mourning, as in the 2018 *Coral Project* and earlier *Curtain of Life* (2016).<sup>11</sup> Sometimes it is done through gathering bits from worldscape already lost, ravaged by fire or flood and reconfiguring these into new landscapes, as in *Shoalwan: River Through Fire, River of Ice* (2003). Through practices such as these, not only does Osborne literally mutate the materials of the commons and ask us to

contemplate these mutations, but she highlights the degree to which the very idea of the commons is a mutation within which practices of care are at stake. The world is mutating. Yes. But the very notion of a commons that should or could be enclosed is a capitalist mutation that requires radical rethinking.

Museums and art galleries are political spaces that must ongoingly be reclaimed from the capitalist art-economical logics that all too often define them. They must be claimed as sites where conversations can be staged, conversations that change action and that seed new modes of care. Osborne’s work is not about interpreting climate change statistics or direct action politics. Those are necessary, and data visualization has its place. But data visualization in its instrumentalized modes has failed to impact and motivate change. We know the climate is changing. We know that the devastating effects that surround us will have consequences beyond our ken. Our children and our children’s children will suffer in ways that are incomprehensible to us. This we know, and more headlines and graphs have not shifted—at a scale that matters—how we live life, day to day: the cars we drive; the long hot showers. Instead of more and better facts and figures, Osborne’s work suggests, what is needed is a different mode of *inhabitation*; a new mode of *sensing* within this historical moment, commonly referred to as the Anthropocene.<sup>12</sup>

Allied with this perspective, Caroline Jones’ 2017 *The Global Work of Art* argues that “[...] the art world is no longer a place where representations picture an external world, but a potentially

<sup>10</sup> In the words of artist and theorist David Garneau, Osborne reshapes “nature as specimen and memento....dead bodies [that] are arranged to recall the land-scapes from which they were taken.” David Garneau. “Lyndal Osborne: Unnatural Science.” In Lyndal Osborne Bowerbird: Life as Art, exhibition catalogue, Alberta Gallery of Art, 2014; p 22.

<sup>11</sup> Both are testimonials to dying coral reefs that use manipulated gourds, sound, and lighting to create diorama dedicated to rendering genocide visible.

<sup>12</sup> Proposed by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer in 2007 to name the geologic impact of humans on the planet, the term “Anthropocene” has increasingly been taken up across the arts and humanities. While widely used, the term is a contested one, and many critical alternatives have been proposed (Moore 2015; Haraway 2016; Myers 2017; Demos 2018). These other terms (the capitalocene, the plantationocene, the chthulucene, the planthroposcene, the phagocene, etc.) each, through different valences, underscore the degree to which “Anthropocene,” with its generalizing anthropocentric focus, can too easily mask the uneven work of capitalism, colonialism, and other interlocking systems of domination.

eventful site *in which a different world might not merely be pictured, but produced*" (202, emphasis in the original). This is not where her argument stops however. Jones insists that in order for something to actually be *produced* by the work of art, something is needed from *us*. *We* must work. "The passive viewer will get nowhere" she tells us (211). Instead, "humans with bodies, minds, and cherished identities" must allow themselves the risk of being "jeopardized in the encounter" (211). In other words, rather than politics being implicitly inscribed as a quality of an artwork itself, the political capacity of an artwork emerges as an *encounter* between artwork and an active viewer who is, herself, *working the work*. Here, the work of art is turned from noun to verb. Before the work of art, *we* are put on call. We are called to account. The artwork is an invitation. And it is up to us to accept this invitation and do the *work* of art.

So what is the work that Osborne's exhibition-as-work asks of us?

As a totality, *Mutation of the Commons* attunes us to a world in crisis that is always already, and ever, creative and fecund in its realms of possibility. The scale of her practice, produced with the intensity of the care-filled labour it requires right up on its surface, invites us to contemplate slowly,

over time, and *inhabit* a world—a concrescence of decades of gentle, slow walking, looking, collecting, touching, holding, manipulating, and arranging. And it needs our bodies, hearts, and minds to do the work. The work of walking, looking, thinking, reacting, acting, loving, hoping, dreaming, holding our hands and eyes and hearts out in front of us, looking to model new relations of care in the world. This is what is most pressingly rendered through the installation. *Care*. Care of things that make no sense within a capitalist, consumption-driven worldview. Care for the overlooked. Care for the commons.

Osborne's *Mutation of the Commons* does this: it models and enacts a world view that demands slowness, desire, love, and micropolitical acts of attention, of attunement.

I end with an instruction piece:

*Unsettle yourself.*

*Glean.*

*Care.*

*Look.*

*Collect, touch.*

*React, act, love, hope, dream.*

*Stay, without clear answers.*

*Repeat.*

## WORKS CITED

Adele E. Clarke and Donna Haraway (eds.), *Making Kin not Populations* (Prickly Paradigm Press, 2018).

Underscore the degree to which "Anthropocene," with its generalizing anthropocentric focus, can too easily mask the uneven work of capitalism, colonialism, and other interlocking systems of domination.

Briar Craig, "Evolving Installations: an Interview with Lyndal Osborne by Briar Craig," *Lake: a Journal of Arts and Environment*. Issue 6. 2011. 53 & 55.

T.J. Demos, "V. Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Gynocene: The Many Names of Resistance," *Still Searching: An Online Discourse on Photography*, Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland (June 12, 2015), <http://blog.fotomuseum.ch/author/tj-demos/>. Last accessed March 2018

David Garneau. "Lyndal Osborne: Unnatural Science." *In Lyndal Osborne Bowerbird: Life as Art*, exhibition catalogue, Alberta Gallery of Art, 2014 pp 36-57.

---. "Lyndal Osborne: The Poetic Structure of the World." Exhibition catalogue, Southern Alberta Art Gallery, 2000.

Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

---. "SF: Science Fiction, Speculative Fabulation, String Figures, So Far." (*Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*, No.3., 2013).

Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science*, Vol. 162, No. 3859. (13 December 1968), pp. 1243-1248.

Steven Harris, "Time for a Witness," in *Witness: Sherri Chaba and Lyndal Osborne* (Sherwood Park, AB: Gallery@501, 2012).

Caroline Jones, *The Global Work of Art* (University of Chicago Press, 2017)

Mary Kelly, "Re-viewing Modernist Criticism" *Screen*, Volume 22, Issue 3, 1 September 1981, Pages 41–52.

Jason Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London: Verso Books, 2015).

Natasha Myers, "From the Anthropocene to the Planthropocene: Designing Gardens for Plant/People Involvement," *History and Anthropology* 28, no. 30 (2017): 297–301.

Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge University Press, 2015)

Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (Mentor, New York, 1948)





## Artist Statement

Over the past two decades I feel that my life and my art practice have come together. The issues that concern me are rapid urbanization, shrinking rural communities, seed diversity, GMO engineering in agriculture and the loss of Australia's coral reefs. These are all issues that have directly affected me at different times in my life—as an adolescent growing up in Australia and now, living on what was once the outskirts of the city of Edmonton.

In all of my work, whether drawing, working on a lithographic stone or developing sculptural installations, the natural world has always been central. Since childhood I have collected natural materials wherever I lived. These collections became the materials that I turned to for both visual inspiration and for the creation of three-dimensional forms. How to assemble the collected materials to create new forms and how to display them became the challenge of my installation process.

Many of my sculptures and installations are made from organic materials such as seedpods, plant roots, dried fruit skins, stalks, and shells. To complement the natural and foraged, other saved materials are utilized, such as discarded

wire, used laboratory glassware and equipment, scrap plastic, and *papier-mâché*. I like to combine materials in unexpected contexts so that they develop new metaphorical meanings quite separate from their original histories.

To me, discovering the energy that binds global issues to local interpretation is found in making with my hands and collecting my own raw materials. I look for visual equivalents and to my imagination rather than literal interpretations of the ideas I am representing. For example, *Tracing Tides: a Topographical Investigation* was created during two residencies, over two years on two continents where I wanted to underscore the coastal culture and fishing industry as they stand in such jeopardy. The upper trays are topographies of what I saw and experienced. The lower levels are metaphorical too, as they are about the connections with family, culture and community.

With actual experiences certain details resonate because they suggest opportunities to be expressed visually and sculpturally, and help me select the components for each work. For example, in my research for *Shoalwan: River of Fire, River of Ice*, I stayed at Bundanon on a tidal river, the Shoalhaven

in New South Wales Australia. I decided to pair the heat and fire of this river experience with the icy extremes of the North Saskatchewan River, near my home, to set up a creative tension. In *Shoalwan* and *Tidal Trace* have included marine debris alongside naturally occurring materials. This reflects on our disposable culture but in the case of *Shoalwan* viewers often comment that the floating forms suggest the North Pacific Gyre's floating trash vortex that breaks down into smaller pieces that endanger marine life. Often, I find that the interaction of viewers and their response to the work mirrors my own sense of how the work came to be created and constructed. In *Shoalwan* I observed the viewers as they walked, peered and bent down around the perimeter of the piece exactly mirroring the way I experienced exploring these rivers myself.

The most consistent element in all my work is the repetition of forms. Small hand-held forms accumulate into large scale, expressive installations. In the process, much time is spent thinking about the work and how visual metaphors (like the laboratory setting for *Endless Forms Most Beautiful*) can be powerfully expressed. I enjoy working on the repeated construction of extremely detailed forms and the element of playfulness this can introduce into studio activities. The labour-intensiveness slows the process down, and I engage fully with the work and ponder the issues of concern. Sometimes the creative process takes months, but can also span many years. The contemplative time spent on these activities helps me know when the work is finished.

*Mutation of the Commons* spans twenty-one years of my artistic practice as an art professor, teaching and producing art at the University of Alberta, and since retirement working full-time as a professional artist. It has been a privilege to be able to be both a teacher and an artist.

I continue to walk around the river, the fields and the ocean, to grow gardens and collect natural materials at various times of the year and in different places. I see firsthand the dramatic changes that are taking place where I live. I think

about the issues of global climate change and realize that it is going to take a huge shift in our lifestyle to alter the course of these events. Though discouraged in my belief that our species will be able to make this paradigm shift, my work is driven by my attention to these concerns.

I look forward to what life brings as inspiration for new works.

## List of Works

In order of appearance in catalogue:

### CORAL PROJECT, 2018

Variety of shells, Cuttlefish, Sea urchins, rib-bones, corks, paint, dye, strings, aluminum sheeting, wood table with driftwood collected in New Zealand, Sculpture and acrylic shelves.

Video component created by John Freeman.

1.5 x 13 x 15 feet

### SURGE, 1996-2008

Sculptural installation: water reeds, string, gel and steel.  
12 x 12 feet

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

### CURTAIN OF LIFE, 2016

Gourds, seeds, metal, monofilament line, glues, paint.

The sound track of birdcalls created by John Freeman.

20 x 10 x 3 feet

### TIDAL TRACE, 2004-2013

Lyndal Osborne and John Freeman

Styrofoam, dried day lilies, shredded paper, kelp, moss, shells, paper-covered puffballs, tea bags, scrap plastic, pumice and partially destroyed lobster traps, photographic images, video and poem.

10 x 18 x 26 feet

### ORGANISMS, 2012

Aerial roots, artificial teeth, banana stalks, Broome stalks, Canola seeds, chicken bones, chopped rubber, copper wire, crab/lobster bands, Cuttle fish, Day Lilly flowers and stalks, discarded plastic, DNA model, Dogwood, dried grass, earth, elastic bands, felt, Eucalypt nuts, Eucalypt seeds, Evening Scented Stocks, felt stoppers, glue, Horsetail, Hosta flower stalks, indoor plant leaves, kelp, kelp floats, Kurrajong seedpods, Larch, leather, lobster antennae, Lotus, Monsterio, moss, mussels, paint, paper mache, pencil crayons, pipettes, plastic stir sticks, pom-poms, Protea leaves, Queen of the Night, Rhubarb seeds, rope, Russian Lilac, sea fan, seaweed,



seed pods, Port Jackson shark eggs, shuttle cocks, speaker wire, sponge wands, Spruce, steel pins, steel, telegraph wire, thumb tacks, Tree Fern, Tuckamore twigs, twine, twist ties, Wild Clematis, and Willow. Digital ink-jet print on polyester fabric.  
4 x 6 x 4 feet

**SHOALWAN: RIVER THROUGH FIRE, RIVER OF ICE, 2003**

Most of the material used in this exhibition has been collected from the banks of the North Saskatchewan River, Edmonton and the Shoalhaven River, NSW, Australia. Constructions are made from over 7,800 recycled glass jars, 300 dishes and bowls made from recycled phone books, wood, lights, Plaster of Paris, and over 400 varieties of collected natural and industrial materials. Collected materials include: Acacia Seed Pods, Grass, Russian Lilac Seeds, Alberta Wild Rose, Gum Nuts, Russian Olive Seeds, Australian Scallop, Horse Skull Bones, Rusty Nails, Avocado Seeds, Horsetail, Sand, Banksia leaves and seed pods, Illawarra Figs, Sculptamold, Illawarra Flame Tree Flowers, Sea Balls, Barnacle Shells, Iron Pyrite, Sea Urchin, Birch Bark, Ironbark Gum, Sedum Flowers, Horse Bones, Jacaranda Seed Pods, Port Jackson Shark Eggs, Ocean-washed Brick, Juniper Berries, Sheoke Seeds, Bull kelp Roots, Kelp, Shotgun Shells, Bunyah Pine Cones, Kelp Balls, Snake Skin, Burnt Trees, Lamb's Ear Seeds, Spear Grass, Burrawang, Larch, Spruce Cones, Caragana Seeds, Larch Cones, Statice Flowers, Carnation Petals, Latex, Stringy bark Gum, Charcoal, Lavatura, Sumac, Chestnuts, Lime Grass, Sunflower Roots, Chilies, Limpets, Sunflowers, Cicada Shells, Locust Acacia, Sweet Clover Roots, Coral, Magnolia, Tea Leaves, Coral Tree Blossoms, Mangrove Seed Pods, Tellinidae Clam, Cottonwood Fluff, Mangrove Seeds, Terebridae Shells, Cow Parsnip Flowers, Maple Seeds, Termite Nest, Coyote Ribs, Messmate Gum, Tree Parasites, Cycad Nuts, Money Plant, Clematis, Tree Bark Lichen, Day

Lily Stalks, Monkey Rope Vine, Tulips, Deer Antler, Moose Antler, Virginia Creeper Seeds, Dill Roots, Moth Plant Seedpods, Wasp Nest, Dog Pelt Lichen, Mountain Ash Berries, Water Reeds, Dogwood, Mushrooms, Wattle Tree Balls, Dogwood Berries, Mussels, Nests, Wild Clematis, Eucalyptus Bark, Norfolk Pine, Wild Cucumber, Farm Implements, Operculum, Willow, Fern Root, Orchids, Window Pane Shells, Fingernail Shells, Fishing Lures, Pear Hakia, Yarrow Flowers, Flax Seed, Pine Cones, Pine Branches, Fossils, Frog, Poinciana Seed Pods, Fungi, Poppies, Fungus, Port Jackson Fig, Gaillardia Heads, Protea Leaves, Garlic, Pumice, Ginseng, Pumpkin Seed, Quartz, Glasswort, Rhubarb Seeds, Golf Balls, Rose Hip Seeds, Grape Branches, Rose Petals, Woody Pear.

Original music, *The Bundanon Suite*, by percussionists, Daryl Pratt and Alison Eddington, Sydney, Australia.  
3 x 70 x 35 feet

**TRACING TIDES: A TOPOGRAPHICAL INVESTIGATION, 2001**

Halogen lights, wood, foam, stain, natural and man-made materials. Alder seeds, Astilbe flowers, Banana skins, Barnacle shells, Bird skulls, Blanket flower, Broome stalks, Cedar, Centura, Cloves, Chestnuts, Conch shells, Crab bands, Date Palm, Day Lily, Date pits, Dogwood, Driftwood, Ferns, Fish bones, Grape skins and stalks, Grass, Hosta flowers and stalks, Kelp, Kombucho mushroom, Larch, Lamb's Ear, Statice, Laventura, Lichen, Lime grass, Lobster bands, Maple seeds and stalks, Mussels, Rope, Scrap Plastic shards, Seal bones, Sea Foam stalks and seeds, Shotgun cartridges, Sponges, Spruce, Sumac, Sweet Clover roots, Telephone wire, Tomato roots, Wasp nests, Wattle seed pods, Willow Parasites, Yellow Willow.

5 x 24 x 18 feet

### ENDLESS FORMS MOST BEAUTIFUL, 2006

Seed pods: wire, foam paint, pink, blue, yellow and turquoise pipets, ceramic capacitors, dyed sponges, lemons, gourds, speaker wire, tea leaves, banksia leaves, corn flowers, horsetail, chicken bones, shotgun shells, acacia seeds, sedum seeds, ginseng, corn stalks, poppy heads, cap-tubes, dyed cotton wool, sand, tea bags, thread, gel, dracaena stalks, kelp, floats, seaweed, Mexican vine, Iris stalks, metal, plastic tubing, glass flasks, wood, Wolf Willow seeds, Chinese Blue Lantern, Speckled Horsehair Lichen and Eucalyptus seeds.  
6 x 30 x 10 feet

### FERTILITY, 1997-2018

Mixed media installation: single ball of oranges, single ball of Cow Parsnip, many balls of wildflowers, emu eggs, bao bab seed pods, shells, papier mache, crayon drawing, twine and paint.  
10 x 2 x 2 feet

\*Cow Parsnip ball, Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

## Curriculum Vitae

*Lyndal Osborne's work is represented in 75 permanent collections in USA, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, including universities, corporations, regional and provincial art galleries and the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa.*

Full curriculum vitae available at: [www.lyndal-osborne.com](http://www.lyndal-osborne.com)

### BORN

1940 Newcastle, NSW, Australia

### EDUCATION

1971 MFA, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin (Printmaking)

1961 BA, National Art School and Sydney Teacher's College, Sydney, Australia

### TEACHING

1971- Assistant, Associate & Full  
2004 Professor, University of Alberta, Edmonton (Professor Emeritus)

### SELECTED AWARDS

2016 Atco Gas Award for Outstanding Lifetime Achievement

2006 Salute to Excellence Award, City of Edmonton

2006 Alberta Centennial Medal

2005 Helen Collinson Award, Edmonton Artists' Trust Fund

2004 Performance Award, Salute to Excellence, City of Edmonton

1998 Elected Member, Royal Canadian Academy of Art

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2018 *Mutation of the Commons*, Nickle Galleries, Calgary, AB

2017 *Metaphors for Evolution*, Art Gallery of Grande Prairie, Grande Prairie, AB

2016 *Coevolution*, Vernon Public Art Gallery, Vernon, BC

*Lyndal Osborne Shoalwan: River through Fire, River of Ice*, The Reach, Abbotsford, BC

2015 *Where Rivers Meet Sea*, Art Gallery of Burlington, Burlington, Ontario

*Cabinet of Curiosities*, Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta

2014 *Lyndal Osborne: Looking at Nature*, Galerie Jean-Claude Bergeron, Ottawa, Ontario

*Bowerbird: Life as Art*, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta

2013 *Rivers*, University of Manitoba School of Art Gallery, Winnipeg, Manitoba

*Cabinet of Curiosities*, BMO World of Creativity, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta

2012 *Where Rivers Meet Sea*, The Rooms: Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John's, Newfoundland.

*Tracing Tides*, Discovery Centre, Gros Morne National Park, Nfld.

2010 *ab ovo*, Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan

2008 - *Ornamenta*, Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; Esplanade Gallery, Medicine Hat, Alberta; Harcourt House Arts Centre, Edmonton; Penticton Art Gallery, Penticton, B.C.; Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery, Kitchener, Ontario; Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, Ontario

2006 *Garden*, Art Gallery of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta  
*Shoalwan: River Through Fire, River of Ice*, Capital X, Sportex, Edmonton, AB

2004 *L'oeuvre au naturel ou du naturel a l'oeuvre*, Musée Régional de Rimouski, Rimouski, Québec

2003 *Shoalwan: River Through Fire, River of Ice*, Whyte Museum of the Rockies, Banff, Alberta  
*Selections from Poetic Structure of the World*, Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery, Kitchener, Ontario  
*Illusions*, Prairie Art Gallery, Grande Prairie, Alberta

- 2002 *Geographies & Objects of Enticement*, Kelowna Art Gallery, Kelowna, B.C.  
2000 *Poetic Structure of the World*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge, Alberta

**SELECTED DUO AND GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

- 2017 *I am Western*, cSpace King Edward Gallery, Calgary, Alberta  
2016 *A Little Bit of Infinity*, Enterprise Square Gallery, Edmonton, Alberta  
2015 *Imprints*, AFA Travelling Exhibition Program, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta  
*Water*, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff, AB  
2014 *90 x 90*, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta  
*Our Own Backyard* (with Mary Abma), Judith & Norman Alix Art Gallery, Sarnia, Ontario  
*Regions of Distinction: Edmonton members of the RCA*, Enterprise Square Gallery, Edmonton AB  
2013 *Ecotone*, Nickle Galleries, Calgary, Alberta  
*Size Matters: Big Prints from around the World*, Enterprise Square Gallery, U of A, Edmonton, AB  
*Ecotone*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge, Alberta  
2012 *Flax Field*, collaboration with John Freeman, Concordia University College, Edmonton  
*Animal*, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia; Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, Ontario  
*Imprint: Art from the AGA Collection*, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta  
*Witness*, with Sherri Chaba, Strathcona County Art Gallery @ 501, Sherwood Park, Alberta  
2011 *4th Biennale Internationale Portneuf*, collaboration with John Freeman, Deschambault, Québec  
*2112: Imagining the Future*, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, Australia  
*Animal*, Kenderdine Gallery, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Museum London, London, Ontario  
*Cereal Gen*, with Alex Moon, University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, Lethbridge, Alberta  
*Farm Show: Seeding*, Red Deer Museum and Art Gallery, Red Deer, Alberta  
*Farm Show: Growing*, collaboration with Sherri Chaba, Red Deer Museum and Art Gallery, Red Deer, Alberta  
2010 *A Renaissance*, organized by Art and Life, Enterprise Square Gallery, Edmonton  
*Timeland: 2010 Alberta Biennial of Contemporary Art*, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton  
2009 *10th Symposium international d'art in situ*, collaboration with John Freeman, Val David, Québec  
2008 *Seeing Through Modernism: Edmonton 1970-1985*, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton  
*Oil, Science & Soil*, collaboration with Sherri Chaba, Capital Arts Building Gallery, Edmonton  
*Imagining Science: An Exploration of Science, Society and Social Change*, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton  
*Landscape Stories*, Moose Jaw Gallery, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; Kennedy Art Gallery, North Bay, Ontario  
2007 *Landscape Stories*, Esplanade Gallery, Medicine Hat, Alberta  
*Tidal Trace*, collaboration with John Freeman, Kerry Woods Gallery, Red Deer, Alberta  
2006 *Landscape Stories*, Thames Gallery, Chatham, Ontario  
*Tidal Trace*, collaboration with John Freeman, Yukon Arts Centre, Whitehorse, Yukon  
2005 *Alberta Biennial of Contemporary Art 2005*, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff; Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, Alberta  
2004 *human/nature: Contemporary Canadian Installation*, Kenderdine Art Gallery, Saskatoon, SK; Doland Modern Art Museum, Shanghai, China; Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre, Hong Kong  
*Tidal Trace*, collaboration with John Freeman, The Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton  
2001 *River City*, The Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton  
*Fluttering Ways*, (Triennial), Adria Palace Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic  
2000 *Lines of Site: 2000*, Old Town Hall Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic

**SELECTED CATALOGUES**

- 2017 *Lyndal Osborne: Coevolution*. Lubos Cullen, R. Boulet (Vernon Public Art Gallery)  
2016 *Shoalwan: River Through Fire River of Ice*. Laura Schnieder (The Reach, BC)  
2015 *Of Water and Tides*. Denis Longchamps, Jacques Talbot (Art Gallery of Burlington, Ontario)



- 2014 *Our Own Backyard: Mary Abma & Lyndal Osborne.* Lisa Daniels (J N Alix Art Gallery Sarnia ON)  
*Bowerbird: Life as Art.* Curated by Catherine, essays by David Garneau and Melinda Pinfold (Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta)
- 2013 *The Rooms PAGES (Where Rivers Meet Sea).* Melinda Pinfold (The Rooms, St. John's, Nfld.)
- 2012 *Where Rivers Meet Sea: Lyndal Osborne.* Melinda Pinfold (The Rooms, St. John's, Nfld.)  
*Witness: Sherri Chaba and Lyndal Osborne.* Steven Harris (Strathcona County Art Gallery 501 Sherwood Park, Alberta)
- 2011 *2112: Imagining The Future* (RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, Australia)  
*Anima.*, Corinna Ghaznavi (Museum London, London, Ontario).  
*Lake: A Journal of Arts & Environment.* Briar Craig (UBC Okanagan, Kamloops, B.C.)
- 2009 *Timeland: 2010 Alberta Biennial of Contemporary Ar.*, Richard Rhodes (Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta)
- 2008 *Imagining Science: Art Science and Social Chang.* eds. Sean Caulfield and Timothy Caulfield (University of Alberta Press, Edmonton).  
*Lyndal Osborne: Ornamenta.* Linda Jansma and Virginia Eichorn (Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, Ontario)
- 2007 *Landscape Stories: Erik Edson, Lyndal Osborne, Rod Strickland.* Daniela Snepova and Diana Sherlock (Thames Art Gallery, Chatham, Ontario)
- 2004 *human/nature: Contemporary Canadian Installatio.* Amy Gogarty (University of Alberta, Dept. of Foreign Affairs & Canadian Consulate)
- 2003 *Shoalwan: River Through Fire, River of Ice.* Lisa Christensen (Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff, Alberta)  
*Geographies & Objects of Enticement.* Ihor Holubizky (Kelowna Art Gallery, Kelowna, B.C.)
- 2000 *Lyndal Osborne: The Poetic Structure of the World.* David Garneau (Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge, Alberta)
- SELECTED REVIEWS**
- 2015 Gil McElroy "Lyndal Osborne at the Art Gallery of Burlington" *Akimbo Blog* (February 17)
- 2014 Matejko, Agnieszka. "Collector's Delight". *Vue Weekly*, February 13-19  
Griwkowsky, Fish. "Transforming Nature's Gifts". *Edmonton Journal*, February 1 (E4)
- 2013 Matejko, Agnieszka. "Lyndal Osborne and Sherri Chaba." *Sculpture*, Volume 32, #4 (May 2013)  
Priegert, Portia. "Natural Abundance." *Galleries West* (Summer), pp 36-39
- 2012 Hayward, Karla. "Meet the Collector (Where Rivers Meet Sea)." *The Telegram* (St. Johns, Nfld.), September 21, 2012, p A1, B1-3
- 2012 Ryan, Janice. "Installations explore effects on oil industry and landscape." *Edmonton Journal* (Edmonton) July 28, 2012.
- 2010 Garneau, David. "Lyndal Osborne: ab ovo." *Vie Des Arts*, #218 (Spring), p16.

# Acknowledgements

I am very honoured to be invited to exhibit a large body of works that spans many years as an artist. My gratitude goes to Michele Hardy, Curator, and Christine Sowiak, Chief Curator, of the Nickle Galleries for their initiative in creating the exhibition, *Mutation of the Commons*. This is the first time I have had an opportunity to exhibit such an extensive body of work in Calgary.

I would also like to thank the staff of the Nickle Galleries and especially the preparators John Hails and Doug McColl, for the assistance, generosity and care that they put into this project.

The essayist for this publication, Dr. Natalie Loveless, deserves special thanks for her vision, insights and ongoing encouragement throughout its preparation. It is a rare pleasure to have had the opportunity to talk and discuss one's work in depth with such eagerness and informality. Thank you as well to Robert R. Janes for his contribution.

Joshua (Sha) LaBare is the person who had the brilliant idea for the title of the show. Thank you.

I also wish to thank my current assistant, Kelly Johner, for her ongoing help at all stages of the creation and installation of the work. Many others have helped in the collection of materials, the production and installation of the work.

My partner, John Freeman, deserves a very special acknowledgement for his help and unstinting support with every aspect of the show—its creation, storage, technical and especially all digital work that he is responsible for.

Finally, I wish to thank the Canada Council for the Arts and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts for their generous funding assistance, which has contributed to the preparation of this exhibition.

Lyndal Osborne  
2018

---

## ROBERT R. JANES

Robert R. Janes is the Founder and Co-Chair of the Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice, Editor-in-Chief Emeritus of *Museum Management and Curatorship* and a Visiting Fellow in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester (UK). His scholarly interests include organizational change, museums and Indigenous Peoples, and the social responsibilities of museums. He was given a Blackfoot name in 1995 and his museum publications have been translated into nine languages. His latest book, *Museum Activism* (with Richard Sandell), is in press. He lives in Canmore, Alberta.

---

## NATALIE S. LOVELESS

Natalie S. Loveless is an artist, activist and curator as well as associate professor in the department of Art and Design at the University of Alberta, Canada where she also directs the Research-Creation and Social Justice CoLABoratory. Loveless' forthcoming book, *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation* (Duke University Press), examines debates surrounding research-creation and its institutionalization, paying particular attention to what it means—and why it matters—to make and teach art research-creationally in the North American university today.



## ***Lyndal Osborne: Mutation Of The Commons***

27 September – 15 December 2018

Curated by Michele Hardy

Mary-Jo Romaniuk | Vice Provost  
and University Librarian  
Christine Sowiak | Chief Curator  
Michele Hardy | Curator  
Lisa Tillotson | Registrar  
John Hails | Head Preparator  
Doug McColl | Preparator  
Marla Halsted | Business Operations and Museo  
Marina Fischer | Collection Specialist

### **Lenders to the Exhibition:**

Alberta Foundation for the Arts  
Lyndal Osborne

### **Installation Assistance:**

John Freeman, Kelly Johner, Aaron Sidorenko,  
Katy McKelvey, Chelsea Rushton, Meagan White,  
Samantha Schneider.

### **Catalogue Contributors:**

Robert R. Janes, Natalie Loveless, Michele Hardy

Catalogue Photography | Dave Brown,  
LCR Photo Services

Catalogue Design, Printing | Kallen Printing Inc.

### **Nickle Galleries**

Libraries and Cultural Resources  
University of Calgary  
2500 University Drive NW  
Calgary AB T2N 1N4  
[www.nickle.ucalgary.ca](http://www.nickle.ucalgary.ca)

© 2018 Nickle Galleries and Contributors  
ISBN: 978-0-88953-417-9



**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**  
Nickle Galleries



**Alberta  
Foundation  
for the Arts**



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
Nickle Galleries