

28	Remi Siciliano, <i>Dirtscapes (after Bandicoot) #1</i> , archival pigment print, 61 x 75 cm	1/5	\$1,600
29	Remi Siciliano, <i>Dirtscapes (after Bandicoot) #2</i> , archival pigment print, 61 x 7 5cm	1/5	\$1,600
30	Remi Siciliano, <i>Dirtscapes (after Bandicoot) #3</i> , archival pigment print, 61 x 75 cm	1/5	\$1,600
31	Remi Siciliano, <i>Dirtscapes (after Bandicoot) #4</i> , archival pigment print, 61 x 75 cm	1/5	\$1,600
32	Remi Siciliano, <i>Dirtscapes (after Bandicoot) #5</i> , archival pigment print, 61 x 75 cm	1/5	\$1,600
33	Remi Siciliano, <i>Plexus</i> , archival pigment print, 110 x 113 cm	1/2	\$4,500
34	Remi Siciliano, <i>Inhabiting Emulsion #1</i> , archival pigment print, 77 x 110 cm	1/3	\$2,800
35	Remi Siciliano, <i>Inhabiting Emulsion #2</i> , archival pigment print, 77 x 110 cm	1/3	\$2,800
36	Remi Siciliano, <i>Inhabiting Emulsion #3</i> , archival pigment print, 77 x 110 cm	1/3	\$2,800

About | Remi Siciliano

Remi Siciliano is a Sydney-based Photomedia artist exploring the potential to collaborate with other organisms and environments to make images. Siciliano practices Ecological Image-Making, her methodology for embracing and celebrating all the different organisms, materials and forces at play within her work. Collaborative interactions entangle and confuse the divisions between artist, organism, material, subject, object and landscape. Working ecologically dissolves these categories as we know them, and Siciliano's work begins to imagine future possibilities of relating and collaborating.

Visit www.gallery.photoaccess.org.au to learn more about *Permeating Ecology*.

Huw Davies Gallery
26th May - 25th June 2022

photo
access

Permeating Ecology Remi Siciliano

Siciliano presents a series of works arising from playful collaborations with photographic materiality, non-human organisms, and natural forces. Fungal networks grow through 35mm negatives documenting landscapes, while moisture softens and encourages the film emulsion to peel. Images emerge at the meeting point of growth and decomposition.

Permeating Ecology explores the value within multispecies collaboration. By Siciliano intentionally relinquishing technical control within her practice, other organisms and natural processes interact with photos away from human influence. The artist becomes just one of the many forces at play in the process of cultivating images.

Site Fidelity And Residues Of Commitment

In late 2021 I picked up some fish and chips in Bondi and rode my motorcycle to Centennial Park. I met my partner and together we wandered to the edge of the duck pond, setting up on a small wooden platform jutting out over the water. It was a hot, dry afternoon and the sun was heavy in the Western sky. The resident colony of Grey-headed Flying Foxes (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) were beginning to leave their roost for the day—we had timed our picnic for this moment. They swooped languidly overhead, dipping their bellies into the pond. We were close enough to see babies clinging to mothers' tummies, and pink tongues lapping cool water from sunlit belly fur.

This Flying Fox colony exist in the precarious environment of urban green space—The Park—a collaged simulacra of habitats and ecosystems. Within this frankenenvironment, invasive turtles and geese flourish beside endemic spoonbills, black swan and purple swamp-hen. A natural aquifer also springs forth from the earth here. Once supplying fresh water for the entire Sydney colony, it now seeps in slow dynamic wetness for an enduring grove of melaleuca trees within which this particular flying fox colony make their home. The bat droppings and the tea-trees paint the bubbling swamp in a medley of vibrant and fragrant hues.

Supported by



The works of Remi Siciliano have changed the way I look at fruit-bats, landscapes and ruins. Her process-driven practice can be read as the residues of dedicated and abiding efforts—a commitment—to producing visual culture in collaboration and conversation with nonhuman lifeworlds. While the bats are shy here, the works in “Permeating Ecology” present a selection of images that showcase Siciliano’s most enduring and forthcoming collaborators—the “dirt-matter” of fungus, soil and leaf litter, and the chemical materiality of photography itself. Within these collaborations chance and discovery inform novel pathways for image-making. Multi-species anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing discusses the place-making practice of foraging for mushrooms in “Unruly Edges”.¹ She describes the delight in discovery, the desire to return to landscapes produced in this delight, and the engendering of familiarity through these processes. In this way, practices that engender familiarity also produce new subjectivities—the landscape, its inhabitants and the forager are transformed as they become familiar to one another.

Siciliano’s practice is led by this *delight in discovery* that in turn shapes a desire for *return* and generates a transformative *familiarity*. “Permeating Ecology” has been led by little revelations. The discovery of mycelium growing within the emulsion of 35mm film did not lead to an abandonment of the materials as “damaged”, “contaminated” or “ruined”. Instead, they open questions for Siciliano that lead her into years-long practices of fostering familiarity with the forces that yearn and conspire to contribute materially to her images. “Plexus” and the series “Inhabiting Emulsion” are products of familiarity, and the outcomes of subsequent intentional work beside fungi.

Similarly in the “Dirtscapes” series of lumen prints, the delight of a one-off encounter between the artist, photo-sensitive papers, a wild Long-Nosed Bandicoot (*Perameles nasuta*) and sunlight-as-reflected-by-the-moon, has resulted in an ongoing series of attempts to engage the endemic mammal. In “Dirtscapes” as in “Plexus” and “Inhabiting Emulsion” we can locate yearnings—not just for the artist to create meaning in the form of an image, but for an ecology of materials and organisms reaching out to permeate one another. Yearnings from mycelium for substrate to metabolize, yearnings from the chemical emulsion for light and stability, and yearnings from light itself for a place to become warmth. All these yearnings contribute to the figuring of place and landscape which inform Siciliano’s photography.

I might adopt a more ecological term for this knotting together of place-making, desire, landscape and familiarity in “philopatry” or *site fidelity*—commonly exemplified in the return of nesting turtles to the same beaches annually, or migratory birds tracing intricate flight ways between the Northern and Southern hemispheres, informed by fruiting or flowering plants, bodies of fresh water, or opportunities to mate along the way.²

Siciliano’s works could also be viewed as residues of a kind of site fidelity—the yearning-for and storying-of a “place” that exists as an imbrication of the play between psychic, material and geographic locations.

Within this multi-material, multi-species knot of yearning—what Karen Barad might call a spacetime mattering—we can also see the generative power of relinquishing human control.³ Particularly in the case of her works with fungal mycelium, Siciliano sets up the parameters from which her photographic images arise, while the aesthetic dimension and design are partly “decided” by other organisms/forces. These agential human/nonhuman relationships are inherently critical to photography.⁴ Because of its inherit relationship to the nonhuman, photography as a technology is well-placed to destabilize and complicate anthropocentrism—the philosophical idea of humans as the centre of morality, creativity and analysis in the world—an idea at the core of many of our contemporary ecological crises.

Part of the work of undoing the violence of anthropocentrism and the contested and differential event(s) we call The Anthropocene might be engaging in new activities that engender inter-species practices of place-making and site fidelity. New media and visual cultures that evidence this fidelity might then act as “lures” for audiences to commit themselves to their own delights, discoveries and familiarities. In Remi’s photography I have been lured into greater contemplation of the inter-species sites and places that delight my spirit and bring meaning and colour to my lifeworld.

Deborah Bird-Rose describes the allure (and lures) of native Australian flowering gums as the products of intricately attuned connectivities between plants, light, geography, the seasons and a great many nectar feeding pollinators.⁵ The Grey-headed Flying Fox has evolved beside these gums with the perfect tongue for drinking their nectar, and furry face for distributing their pollen. The residues of this relationship are Australia’s great forests, without which human life here would be vastly more difficult.

What forests might grow from your discoveries of delight and familiarity?

Blake Lawrence is a writer, visual artist and drag queen from Yaegl land and waters in Northern NSW. They live and work on Gadigal country in Sydney, NSW. They have exhibited and performed nationally, and published work in *Runway Journal* and *Vault Magazine of Australasian Art & Culture*. They have upcoming writing in *Unlikely Projects* and *Queer Studies in Media and Popular Culture* (Intellect Books).

³ Barad, Karen. “TransMaterialities: Trans/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings.” *GLQ* 21, no. 2-3 (2015): 387–422.

⁴ Zylinska, Joanna. *Nonhuman Photography*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017.

⁵ Deborah Bird-Rose. (2017). *SHIMMER: WHEN ALL YOU LOVE IS BEING TRASHED*. In *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* (p. 51–). University of Minnesota Press. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt1qft070.7>

¹ Tsing, Anna. “Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species: For Donna Haraway.” *Environmental human ities* 1, no. 1(2012):141–154.

² Van Dooren, Thom. *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.