

10 Degrees Hotter was almost the name of this gallery but we couldn't all agree. Some thought it sounded like a boy band, others thought it was a mouthful. The phrase came out of a way of describing the conditions of being in Western Sydney— on any regular summer day, it can be five to ten degrees hotter in the west compared to out east. This artificial climate is created by the urban heat island effect, where hot air gets trapped in the vast concrete expanse between the mountains and the coast. Not to trivialise the real implications of this effect in the face of climate change, we saw this heat bubble as a metaphor for the energy that emerges out of the western suburbs and Pari as a way of keeping it here. *10 Degrees Hotter* became a way to express our affection for the west and all that entails.

Extending from the title, the works in this exhibition incorporate references to heat in some way — whether it be climate, cooking, smoking or burning. Auntie Kerrie Kenton's *Daramu Bugi Goomeda (Tree Bark Spirit)* is a response to the government clearing of trees in Parramatta which directly contributes to the warming of the area. The heat island effect is a physical manifestation of spiritual disturbance due to land stripping. For Auntie Kerrie, a Watte Wanne Knowledge holder of the Darug and Dhunghutti Nations, "Trees hold our stories, our history, our songs."¹ On the bark's underside, invasive insects have carved tracks into the scribble gum reminiscent of the insidiousness of urban development.

Taking the site of the highest recorded temperature in Sydney as a starting point, Nicole Barakat uncovers the recent history of geological and urban change of Penrith Lakes² at Castlereigh. Originally a plain, then a quarry and soon to be an aquatic recreation park, Penrith Lakes is a microcosm of the gentrification happening in the west. In conversation with local Darug groups,³ Nicole has gathered organic material from this site of agitation to create natural dyes for elements of her work *القلب يسمع | al-qalb yasma'a/the heart listens*.

In a near future scenario, Serwah Attafuah imagines a cyborg wading in wastewater, rising "like the decibels of the omnipresent human scream of greed."⁴ While this simulation is fictitious, it's not that far from reality as Parramatta is located in a high flood risk area.⁵

Altar-like in its reverence, Haines & Hinterding's *EarthStar* is a visual, audio and olfactory tribute to our local star. The installation comprises telescopic imagery recorded by the artists in their Blue Mountains studio and sound produced live by converting the sun's radiation through two cylindrical antennae. The accompanying vessels are perfumed with the chemical compounds of ozone, inviting a multi-sensory experience.

Mechelle Bounpraseuth serves up ceramic replica bowls of pho, mi goreng, chicken feet and Asian sweets. Here, Mechelle has assembled the greatest culinary hits of the western suburbs. Food is core to culture, and often central to identity — even if we're not always aware of it. What are the implications, then, of food safaris that drop into Western Sydney to consume, 'gram and leave? Conversely, could mi goreng usurp the meat pie as the quintessential suburban meal, and if so, what is the relationship between celebration, acceptance and assimilation? Mechelle's work makes all these things digestible.

Similarly, Leila El Rayes has constructed a scene familiar to those who know the area. *Live Painting (Revved Up)* flips the hyper-sexualised imagery of Orientalist harem paintings and instead ‘re-paints’ with symbols that have become ingrained in the masculine identity of the western suburbs: the shisha, the motorbike and sportswear.⁶ Leila has choreographed the performance to be intimidating – suffocating fumes, revs and shouts from the boys and bikes, and yet in the eye of the storm we see the tenderness of masculinity.

EJ Son’s ceramic works also grapple with the complexities of masculinity. The shape of the larger vessel is “inspired by the way gym bros walk, they have such huge lats they can’t have their arms by the side, with their chest puffed up.”⁷ Goopy on the inside and hard on the outside, eggs are a recurrent motif in EJ’s work representing both vulnerability and resilience.

Gianna Hayes’ installation is an ode to generations of black resistance. Reflecting on the use of heat treatments to control black hair, the work balances the softness and strength required to navigate white projections of beauty.

Shivanjani Lal performs her own version of burning incense in her family’s backyard in Lidcombe. In this intimate video diptych dedicated to her matrilineage, we witness the passing of day and night marked by the smouldering haldi (turmeric).

Burning is often linked with regeneration and healing. Hyun Lee’s landscapes show the aftermath of a burnt national park. The origins of the fire are ambiguous: it could be back burning, deliberate destruction, carelessness or natural causes. Whatever the source, bush fires can be regenerative, particularly for eucalypts, which require the activation of heat to germinate.⁸

Out of the frying pan and into the fire. Thanks for making our party *10 Degrees Hotter* ;)

Love from Pari <3

1 Kerrie Kenton, artist statement.

2 www.penrithlakes.com.au

3 Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation, Dharug Ngurra Aboriginal Corporation and the Dharug Strategic Management Group .

4 Serwah Attafuah, artist statement.

5 SMH, Nine minutes to flee: Parramatta’s ‘catastrophic’ flash-flooding warning, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/nine-minutes-to-flee-parramatta-s-catastrophic-flash-flooding-warning-20190214-p50xtv.html>

6 OneFour, Spot the Difference, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ajjtwz930>

7 EJ Son, artist statement.

8 ANU, Fire adaptive traits of Eucalypts, <http://biology.anu.edu.au/fire-adaptive-traits-eucalypts>