



ERIN COATES &

ANNA NAZZARI

DARK WATER

LIN  
DEN. NEW  
ART

Even the title, *Dark Water*, makes me feel a little uncomfortable, as if I have swum too far out and now can't touch the bottom. I realise too late, that I am out of my depth and testing my limits in currents that swirl beneath me.

Our relationship to water, as an island nation, is a complex one, we are lovers of the ocean edge, delighted by our ability to catch a wave and glide back into the safety of the shore. Yet we're always a little unsure about what lurks below, unseen and unknown.

## INTRODUCTION

For the collaborating artists in this exhibition, Anna Nazzari and Erin Coates, the ocean has been a place of both fascination and awe. Gothic themes are explored alongside more prescient concerns about human's impact on this precious environment. *Dark Water* encourages us to consider our relationship to the oceans beauty to ensure we respect its power.

This exhibition would not be possible without the hard work and support of the following people. Our thanks are extended to:

- > Erin Coates and Anna Nazzari for developing such a strong body of new work to exhibit at Linden
- > Dr Rebecca Coates, Director, Shepparton Art Museum for officially opening the exhibitions
- > The team at Linden New Art who have worked closely with the artists to present this exhibition and develop a range of dynamic events and community engagement programs.

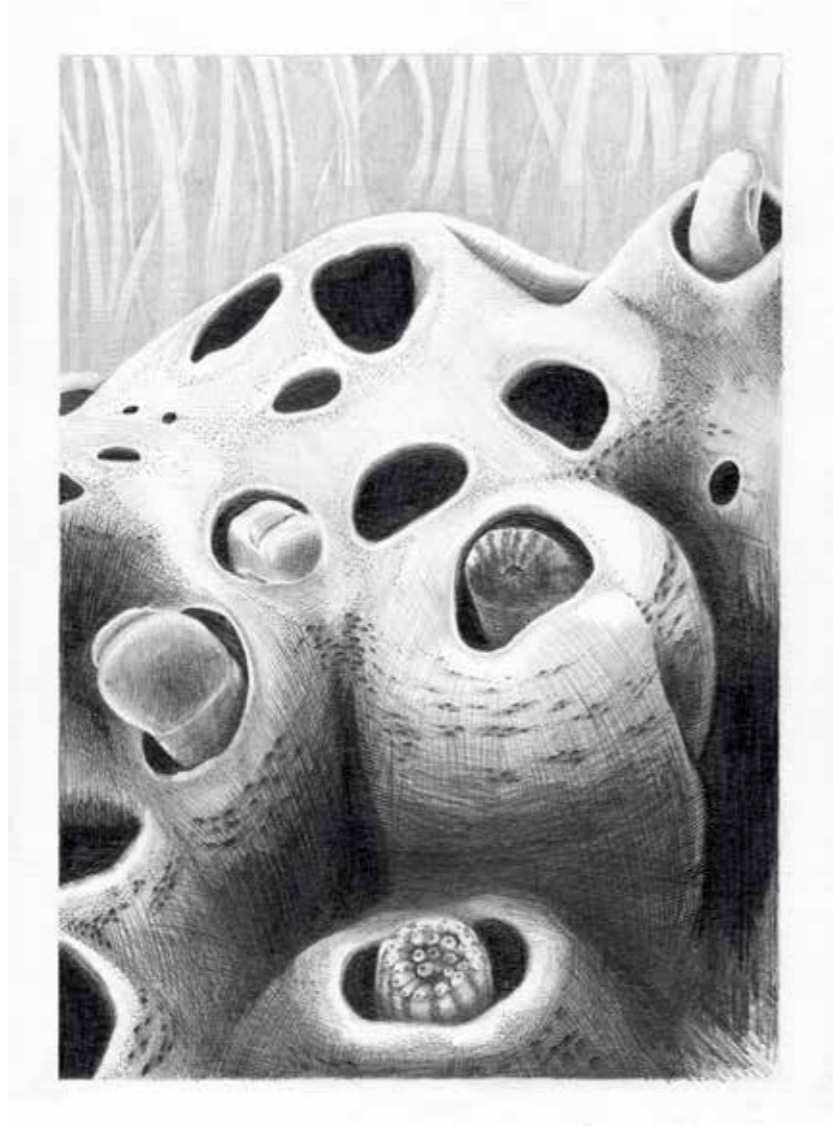
This exhibition would not be possible without the support of the City of Port Phillip and Creative Victoria.

Melinda Martin  
Director  
April 2019

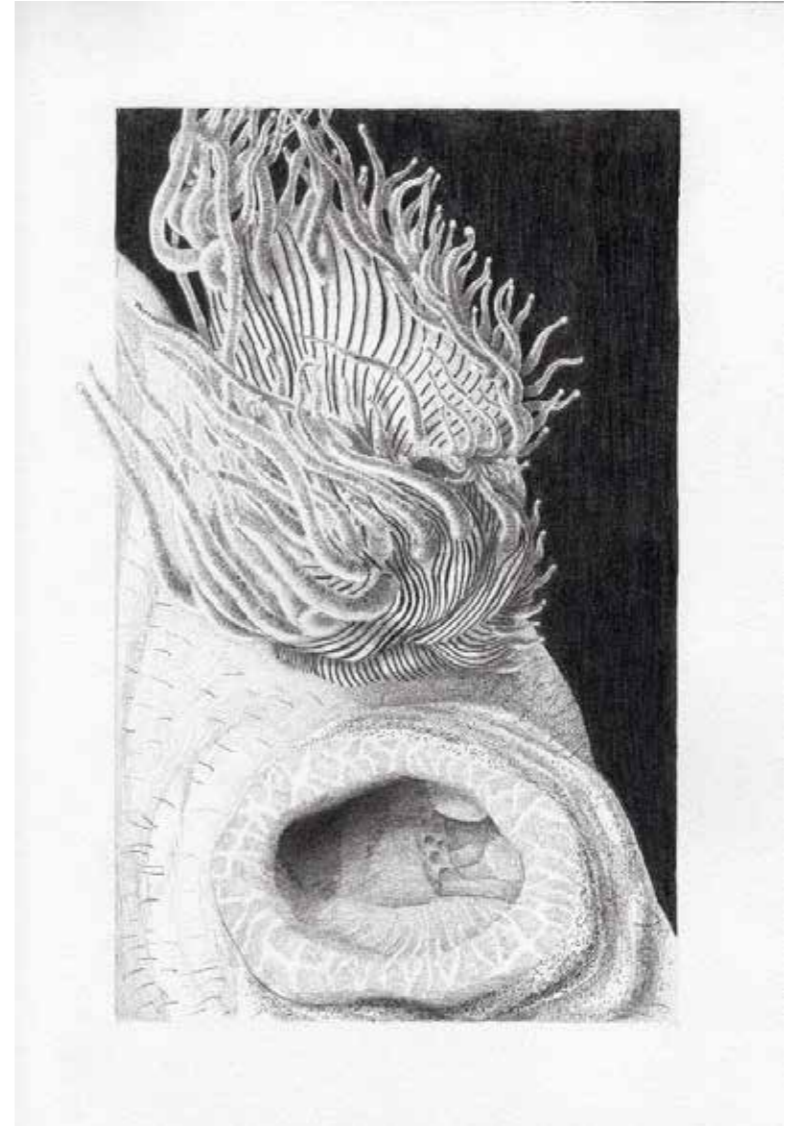
*Dark Water* has been supported with funding from the Australia Council for the Arts and the Western Australian Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries.



Erin Coates, *We Taste the Sea #1-6*, 2018, glazed ceramic, silicon and pigment, dimensions variable.  
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Michelle Becker



Erin Coates, *Sponges are the Sister Group to all Other Animals*, 2019, graphite on paper, 52 x 43cm.  
Image courtesy of the artist.



Erin Coates, *Ascidian Knee*, 2017, graphite on paper, 51 x 40cm.  
Image courtesy of the artist.



Anna Nazzari, *Orange and Pink Ascidian*, 2018, silicon and silicon paint, 15 x 15 x 12cm.  
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Michelle Becker



Erin Coates, *Pet Tunicate*, 2018, silicon, ceramic, dog hair, 3 x 8 x 9cm.  
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Michelle Becker

**JH > One of the main themes of this exhibition is the ocean, which is of such vast and vital importance to our planet, yet which can also be terrifyingly treacherous. What has drawn you to work so closely with the ocean and what are some of the things you want to convey about it in your work?**

EC > I was born in the coastal town of Albany and my family has a long history of sea faring. My dad was a professional shell diver and we had lots of relics from wrecks, whale teeth and other marine curios in the house, so I

## INTERVIEW WITH THE ARTISTS

grew up surrounded by objects and stories from the ocean. Nowadays I spend a fair amount of time in the water, and I have an endless fascination for the physiology of marine species. My fear is not of what is in the ocean, but what effect humans are having on it.

AN > For Erin and I, the ocean is a significant presence within our work. We are concerned about its degradation and ongoing survival, but also entranced by its sublime traits and abundance of mysterious species. In this body of work, all of our sculptures have arisen out of things we have witnessed snorkelling and free-diving. The Oceanic Gothic has also been a theme repeatedly explored in past projects. For, we recognise, that while the Australian wilderness has been frequently contextualised through a gothic lens, the surrounding oceans and its inhabitants: those which dwell “in” and “out of place,” regularly escape this portrayal and, the ocean, as a genre of the Australian Gothic, remains largely invisible.

**JH > Your work has been described as portraying “a unique vision of an Australian Oceanic Gothic”. What is the nature of this vision and who or what inspires your practice, as unique as it is?**

EC & AN > When people describe our work, there is often a caveat of, “that is so grotesque” or the question “why do you like working with such horrible stuff”. As an artist, it is your duty to offer some explanation, although this can only ever be one of a myriad of possibilities and, perhaps not always the answer the viewer is seeking.

As female artists working in what may be loosely described as the genre of horror, with a noticeable range of sub-genres (Oceanic Gothic, otherworldly) the peculiarities of horror hold great appeal. While horror themes for some, can be misogynistic or objectify women, it allows us to challenge what is taboo, to explore questions about culture, race, sexuality, gender and the body. In addition, horror allows us to contemplate those forces, which were once unseen or considered spurious, to show other potential realities.

As Eric G Wilson notes in *Everyone Loves a Good Train Wreck* “The deeper the darkness is, the more dazzling”. He suggests we are attracted to darker themes not because we are all sick and twisted, but more specifically, so that we can learn how to educate ourselves in dangerous situations and importantly, feel empathy for all living things.

*Dark Water* is not intended to provide easy answers. While it drifts enigmatically through narrative, it simultaneously flirts with traditional tropes of horror, in particular, that which centres on identity and the abject body.

**JH > For *Dark Water* you have produced a brand-new film of the same title. This has been shot partially underwater using amazingly detailed sets that you have created. I understand that you have even used your own homes for some of this, which is a big commitment. What have been some of the main challenges of the film project?**

EC & AN > The film has complex sets and was shot across three locations. One of the biggest challenges with this, was effectively managing time. Scheduling actors, cinematographers, sound recordists, make up artists etc. to all arrive on set at the same time and, knowing that they are only available for a limited number of hours, meant the props, the sets and house all have to be ready well in advance. Like all projects, you always think you have more time than you do and, we would love to say that we weren’t still making or fixing things before each shoot but that would be a lie.

Another challenge was dealing with the submerged set, which we weren’t able to test underwater in advance of the shoot. The set was constructed in Erin’s backyard and then pulled apart, transported and re-assembled in a diver-training pool. While we knew we needed weights to partially sink the set, the amount that was needed was more than we had accounted for. There were some frantic moments when the piles of concrete slabs and metal weights we’d tied to the set started sliding off and, it began to launch out of the water like an iceberg. Fortunately, our amazing crew and divers stayed calm and focussed and we sunk the set without killing anyone.



Cinematographer Dion Borrett and Underwater Camera Operator Jasper Silver on the set of *Dark Water*.  
Photograph: Erin Coates



Erin Coates & Anna Nazzari, *Dark Water*, [film still], 2019. Image courtesy of the artists.

**JH > The blend of the domestic setting with the almost extra-terrestrial quality of the underwater world you have created speaks very poignantly to the experience of alienation and isolation that can occur through grief or depression, and also in early motherhood, when the home can feel claustrophobic and familiar surroundings are no longer comforting, but a source of anxiety. Can you explain more about the symbolism or metaphoric elements of the various set components and of the underwater realm generally?**

EC & AN > In *Dark Water*, Gemini, the main protagonist is grieving the loss of her dead mother. This loss manifests as an expulsion of the mother and, the secret she never disclosed, that Gemini ate her twin in utero.

Gemini is living in a house, whose architecture has become a metaphor for her mother's womb and birthing canal. For Gemini to be reborn she must cast off the abject through different stages: masturbation, drinking milk, gagging, vomiting, wounds and birthing. This is a massive expulsion that vacillates between an internal body and warped external reality in which other fleshy life-forms appear.

In *Dark Water*, Gemini and her mother are figuratively and physically linked to the ocean. Science tells us the ocean gave birth to all life – and metaphorically is the mother of living existence. For, it is here where single celled organisms fused and became multicellular to eventually diversify and explode into other invertebrates and life-forms. Thus, in acknowledging abject body tropes, it was appealing to purposely link the mysterious-ness of the ocean with the enigmatic and misunderstood qualities of a woman's body. We do this with tongue firmly planted in cheek and, an awareness of the patriarchal history of labelling nature, the sublime, the unknown as untameable feminine entities.

**JH > The film also has a very special sound component?**

EC & AN > *Dark Water* has given us the opportunity to work with renowned composer and sound artist Cat Hope. We worked with Cat Hope on our very first Oceanic Gothic collaborative project: *Cetaphobia*, so it is great that she is able to see our development and work with us, to musically expand upon this genre. Cat is particularly interested in how *Dark Water* examines psychological thresholds and the limits of bodies in relation to oceanic environments, having worked with the impact of sound on bodies as pressure in her own sound work.

**JH > And there are environmental messages in the film too?**

EC & AN > While the narrative of the film is not explicitly promoting an environmental message, it is underscored by our concerns about the human destruction of ocean habitats via plastics, other pollutants and climate change. We both spend a lot of time in West Australia's ocean and have based our props on species from these waters. We see firsthand the changes happening in the ocean, most noticeably, coral bleaching and the entanglement of marine-life in human rubbish. We hope that *Dark Water* will make people both curious and respectful of the ocean, wherever they may reside.

**JH > We are very excited to be hosting *Dark Water* at Linden, not least because you are presenting a number of art forms that we have never shown before. One of these is the amazingly intricate film set of oceanic forms made from silicon and ceramics, each of which is an artwork in itself, but also your show includes scrimshaw works. Can you explain what is involved in this practice and the history behind it?**

EC & AN > Scrimshaw is the art form of incising imagery into whale teeth and, in Australia dates back to the 18th century. It is rarely practiced nowadays and 'scrimshanders' typically only use antique teeth leftover from the days of commercial whaling. The craft is still practiced in Albany, which is where we initially learnt the practice. It is largely considered a masculine craft, which is why our approach, as contemporary female visual artists, is unique in Australia. The scrimshaw works for *Dark Water* use a set of antique sperm whale teeth that were sourced from deceased estates and auctions in Albany, where the last whaling station in Australia closed in 1978. Although whaling is an indisputably unsustainable activity that had to end, we are fascinated by the stories of people who worked on whale chasers during this time. They had a lot of knowledge about whales and a surprising amount of reverence for them.

Traditional scrimshaw is a craft dominated by heroic imagery and our approach challenges this trope yet firmly engages with the traditional processes used to incise this material. We are not interested in using the teeth and scrimshaw as a medium empty of signifiers, but more so to acknowledge the history of whaling through new directions.

Displaced from the mammoth body housing them and the immense body of water containing it, the antique sperm whale teeth symbolically express an uncanny relationship with the physical land and, a loss of natural habitat. The imagery we incise on the teeth enhances this symbolism by centring on gothic themes related to "mysterious,



Anna Nazzari, *The Seance*, 2015, scrimshaw on antique sperm whale tooth, 19 x 7 x 3cm [installation view].  
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography



Erin Coates and Anna Nazzari, *Dark Water*, 2019 [installation view].  
Image courtesy of the artists. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography



sublime oceans or oceans of the mind/psychological seas". Our renderings are often based on narratives, which depict real and imagined marine ecosystems that are familiar yet subtly conflict with the reality of the viewer and the origins of the artefact.

**JH > You have been working together over the last five years. Can you describe your working relationship and what you both bring to your projects?**

EC & AN > Our working relationship is based on collaboration, flexibility and compromise. Often when we start a project, we have envisaged a pie-in-the-sky idea, which is verging on impossible and needs reigning in. Over time, we plot, plan and slowly modify our idea, and then often have to learn new skills to realise the project. In more recent projects, especially in relation to our film work, feedback and skills outside of our collaboration has become super important.

AN > When it comes to specific strengths, Erin is extremely talented, organised, pragmatic and possesses a "nothing is impossible" attitude, which means even if we have a completely insane idea – I know that with her support, there is no way it is not going to happen.

EC > Anna is a master at acquiring new skills in relation to technical art making, and is also an excellent researcher and writer, so it is great both hashing out ideas with her and also learning practical techniques. When it actually came to making the film *Dark Water*, we both took on a lot of extra roles: grant writing, script writing, crowd funding, set design, prop-making, set dressing, directing, producing and pretty much managing everything in between. It was a pretty epic journey, one that was both demanding and fulfilling.

**JH > What is coming up next for you both?**

EC & AN > We have an exhibition at Turner Galleries, Perth, in October of 2019 and something big in the pipeline that we can't talk about yet. Anna is also currently working on a new script and Erin is participating in the Video Brasil Biennale in Sao Paulo later this year. And, we are really keen to get *Dark Water* into some film festivals. We love shifting our work from a gallery to a cinema context and exploring how it reads in this space ... and of course seeing our work on the big screen is pretty thrilling!



Erin Coates, *Dark Water*, 2019 [installation view].  
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography



Erin Coates & Anna Nazzari, *Internal Interior*, 2019, silicon, ceramic, human and animal hair, sperm whale tooth, wood, wallpaper, 120 x 180 x 15cm [installation view]. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography



Erin Coates, *Suspended Reanimation*, whale teeth, silicon, wood, 40 x 22 x 10cm, 2019 [installation view]. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography

Erin Coates is a Perth-based visual artist and creative producer working across film, sculptural installation and drawing. Coates' practice examines our relationship with and within the spaces we build and inhabit, focusing on the limits of our bodies and physical interaction within given environments. The film genres of body horror and the

Australian Gothic permeate her practice, with protagonists often finding ways to physically interact with everyday spaces by using utopic, absurdist and guerrilla strategies.

## ERIN COATES

Coates' work was included in the significant survey exhibition *The National: New Australian Art*, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, 2017. Her work was recently shown in the Hiroshima Museum of Contemporary Art in Japan, and the exhibition *HyperPrometheus* at Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Perth in 2018.

Erin has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Curtin University, Perth and a Master of Fine Arts from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

Visit > [erincoates.net](http://erincoates.net)



Erin Coates. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Yvonne Doherty.

Anna Nazzari currently resides in Perth and has been a practicing artist for over ten years. She has exhibited in Western Australia and the Eastern States and her collaborative and non-collaborative screen-based works have been shown in national and International film festivals.

## ANNA NAZZARI

Nazzari's practice centres on the investigation of mythological tales, superstitions and supernatural histories/events that emphasise moral certainty and foster a reading of the absurd. In recent exhibitions, this concern has focused more specifically on the Oceanic Gothic with

a particular interest in Western Australian coastal waters and how its inhabitants operate as alternative characters in gothic narratives. Her work often combines old world skills with contemporary art processes and can manifest as sculptural forms, video, drawing, photography or combinations of these.

In 2011, Nazzari completed a Doctorate of Philosophy (Art), which analysed the absurd fate of gender ambiguous narratives.

Nazzari currently works as a Lecturer at Curtin University's Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry, via the OUA Art program.

Visit > [annanazzari.com.au](http://annanazzari.com.au)



Anna Nazzari. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Michelle Becker.



Anna Nazari, *Dark Water*, 2019 [installation view].  
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography



Erin Coates, *We Taste the Sea #1 - #15*, 2019, glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, varied dimensions [installation view].  
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography

ERIN COATES & ANNA NAZZARI

*Dark Water*, 2019  
2K video with stereo sound  
15 minutes, Edition 1/5  
\$3,500

## LIST OF WORKS

*Internal Interior*, 2019  
silicon, ceramic, human and animal hair, sperm  
whale tooth, wood, wallpaper  
120 x 180 x 15cm  
\$9,500

ERIN COATES

*Ascidian Knee*, 2017  
graphite on paper, 51 x 40cm  
\$750

*Polychaete Flesh*, 2017  
graphite on paper, 43 x 50cm  
\$500

*Echinoderm Dentada*, 2019  
graphite on paper, 43 x 50cm  
\$750

*Ear Finger Zoanthid*, 2019  
graphite on paper, 44 x 51cm  
\$750

*Gastropod Dentada Vs Favid Parasite*, 2019  
graphite on paper, 44 x 51cm  
\$750

*Sponges are the Sister Group to all other Animals*, 2019  
graphite on paper, 52 x 43cm  
\$600

*We taste the sea #1*, 2018  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 8 x 14 x 8cm  
\$230

*We taste the sea #2*, 2018  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 10 x 12 x 7cm  
\$230

*We taste the sea #3*, 2018  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 7 x 12 x 9cm  
\$250

*We taste the sea #4*, 2018  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 9 x 11 x 10cm  
\$230

*We taste the sea #5*, 2018  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 16 x 12 x 10cm  
NFS

*We taste the sea #6*, 2018  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 15 x 9 x 12cm  
\$350

*We taste the sea #7*, 2019  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 9 x 6 x 5cm  
\$120

*We taste the sea #8*, 2019  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 11 x 16 x 10cm  
\$250

*We taste the sea #9*, 2019  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 8 x 14 x 10cm  
\$230

*We taste the sea #10*, 2019  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 8 x 7 x 6cm  
\$120

*We taste the sea #11*, 2019  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 5 x 7 x 6cm  
\$130

*We taste the sea #12*, 2019  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 8 x 13 x 8cm  
\$180

*We taste the sea #13*, 2019  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 9 x 10 x 10cm  
\$180

*We taste the sea #14*, 2019  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 8 x 12 x 7cm  
\$200

*We taste the sea #15*, 2019  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, 9 x 14 x 9cm  
\$250

*Gastric Colony #1 - #10*, 2019  
glazed ceramic, silicon, pigment, dimensions varied  
1 polyp \$50, 3 polyp \$70, 4 polyp \$90, 9 & 10  
polyp \$180

*Suspended Reanimation*, 2019  
whale teeth, silicon, wood, 40 x 22 x 10cm  
\$2,200

**ANNA NAZZARI**

*The Adventures of Sis I*, 2019  
illuminated photograph, 38.5 x 46cm  
\$375

*The Adventures of Sis II*, 2019  
illuminated photograph, 38.5 x 46cm  
\$375

*The Adventures of Sis III*, 2019  
illuminated photograph, 38.5 x 46cm  
\$375

*Tentacled*, 2019  
watercolour on paper, 58 x 47.5cm  
\$750

*Rose Coral Wreath*, 2019  
watercolour on paper, 58 x 47.5cm  
\$750

*Host*, 2019  
watercolour on paper, 58 x 47.5cm  
\$750

*The Phantom Leg*, 2015  
scrimshaw on antique sperm whale tooth,  
16 x 8.5 x 2.9cm  
\$2,000

*The Séance*, 2015  
scrimshaw on antique sperm whale tooth,  
19 x 7 x 3cm  
\$2,300

*Burial Grounds*, 2015  
scrimshaw on antique sperm whale tooth,  
14 x 9 x 2.5cm  
\$2,000

*Milk*, 2015  
scrimshaw on antique sperm whale tooth,  
16.5 x 5.5 x 3cm  
\$1,500



Erin Coates & Anna Nazzari, *Internal Interior*, 2019, silicon, ceramic, human and animal hair, sperm whale tooth, wood, wallpaper, 120 x 180 x 15cm [detail]. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography

# EVENTS

## MEET THE ARTISTS > ERIN COATES & ANNA NAZZARI

03.05.19 > FREE

BOOK A SPOT > [bit.ly/darkwater-artist-talk](http://bit.ly/darkwater-artist-talk)

Catch a preview of the exhibition and hear from the artists about their unique and compelling practice, how they work as a creative duo, what inspires their multidisciplinary practice and the challenges of filming underwater.

## NOTABLE OBSERVANCES > WORLD OCEANS DAY

04.06.19 > \$35

BOOK A SPOT > [bit.ly/linden-oceans-day](http://bit.ly/linden-oceans-day)

This year, World Oceans Day is celebrating leadership in preventing plastic pollution in our oceans and sharing solutions that inspire and activate the global community. Join a thought provoking discussion with artists Rox De Luca and Penelope Davis along with Port Phillip EcoCenter founder Neil Blake in conversation with Linden New Art Director Melinda Martin.

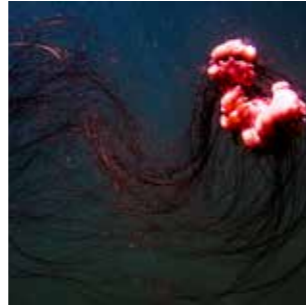
## SPECIAL EVENT > THE GRUBBY URCHINS

13.06.19 > FREE

BOOK A SPOT > [bit.ly/grubby-urchins](http://bit.ly/grubby-urchins)

Be emersed in the oceanic environment created by artists Erin Coates and Anna Nazari and experience **The Grubby Urchins** for a night of **sea shanties**.

Presented in collaboration with the Port Phillip Library Service.



Anna Nazari, *Otherworldly Sis* [detail], 2019, giclée print, 48 x 36cm



Erin Coates free diving in Cozumel, Mexico. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Kate Driver.



Erin Coates, *We Taste the Sea* #1-6, 2018, glazed ceramic, silicon and pigment, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Michelle Becker

## SPECIAL EVENT > WINTER SOLSTICE SWIM

22.06.19 > FREE

BOOK A SPOT > [bit.ly/winter-art-swim](http://bit.ly/winter-art-swim)

The Winter Solstice is the shortest day of the year - it is the mark of mid winter. And this year, we are taking you to the dark waters. In collaboration with Grant Siedle and artist Kit Wise, join us to celebrate the closing of our exhibitions, the shortest day of the year and the frighteningly cold water.



Winter Solstice Swim 2014. Photograph: Dara Clear.

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PUNT  
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COVER IMAGE > Erin Coates & Anna Nazzari, *Dark Water film set*, 2019. Image courtesy of the artists.