

LARGE WALL TEXTS

Coral Futures

15 November 2025 – 1 February 2026

**Erub Arts [Jimmy John Thaiday, Florence
Gutchen, Nancy Naawi, Lavinia Ketchell]**

Helga Groves

Laresa Kosloff

Nicholas Mangan

Rachel O'Reilly

Marian Tubbs

Coral Futures presents a range of poetic and speculative responses to coral, the small marine animals which form the foundations of healthy reef ecologies, now facing unprecedented, existential threats from human-induced climate change. This exhibition brings together new and recent projects by First Nations and other contemporary Australian artists, considering coral's importance to the survival of vital marine ecosystems like the Great Barrier Reef, as well as its implications for broader cultural, economic, and environmental systems.

Coral has long been considered the “canary down the coal mine” of climate change, due to its susceptibility to rising ocean temperatures, weather events like cyclones, and agricultural run-off. These impacts manifest themselves through

increasingly frequent and severe coral bleaching, destruction by crown of thorns starfish, and related mass die-off events, making the species one of the most visible victims of the climate crisis.

Viewed primarily from a distance through media coverage, the challenges wrought by climate change can appear daunting and insurmountable. Focusing instead on a single species, *Coral Futures* seeks to make sense of the cascading environmental crises now being experienced in Australia, as well as globally. The artworks and practices brought together in this exhibition demonstrate a plurality of approaches and a sustained engagement with the subject. Together, they offer multiple, considered perspectives, acknowledging coral's deep cultural significance for First Nations people, its economic and social

value to coastal communities, and its vulnerability to rising sea temperatures and shifting weather patterns. *Coral Futures* speaks to these and many other connections that render this species vital to the health, or decline, of our planet.

This exhibition is presented in partnership with the University of Sunshine Coast Art Gallery, Queensland, where it will be shown 1 August - 17 October 2026.

Marian Tubbs

Marian Tubbs' assemblage-focused practice explores broad research interests including digital technologies, materiality, language and ecology. Tubbs conflates material juxtapositions between body and object, high and low culture, analogue and digital, physical and virtual, natural and artificial, to transform the everyday. Often constructed from the physical and digital detritus of contemporary life - from found photos and surveillance footage to scavenged disposable items - her works position objects, images and text in new or unexpected combinations to question traditional notions of value.

The origins of this exhibition, *Coral Futures*, lie in part with Tubbs' 2019 video essay *Nervous Systems*, which uses

images, footage and sound ripped from the internet, to illustrate the life cycle of coral, as well as its intersections with human, economic, and social activity. The film begins with computer-generated imagery of spawning coral, accompanied by text describing the marine animal's reproductive cycle, scored to a DIY porn soundtrack featuring a squeaky bed frame and sample from a Missy Elliot song. This is interwoven with the story of an image purportedly of the Great Barrier Reef, published in French surrealist Andre Breton's 1937 book *Amour Fou* (Mad Love), though the image depicts a reef off the Bahamas. Through the inclusion of this historical sidenote, *Nervous Systems* questions the authenticity of images, an approach reinforced by its highly artificial rendering of undersea life.

As the video's fragmented narrative unfolds, further linkages are established: the history of coral mining in Moreton Bay, south-east Queensland; coral's status as a sought-after material in jewelry; and Pantone's selection of "Living Coral" as the company's 2019 colour of the year. Material Flow, a term originally developed to describe the complexity of industrial supply chains, resonates with Tubbs' approach to art making, evident in *Nervous Systems*' bringing together of disparate images, audio and text to articulate new and thoughtful connections between coral, the real, and the virtual.

Alongside *Nervous Systems* (on display downstairs) a grouping of new and recent photo media works by Marian Tubbs reflect the artist's continued engagement with coral as a subject. *have we built our*

own resorts (architectural body) 2023 is a hand-cut photo assemblage, exploring tensions between pleasure, labour and luxury. Made in the aftermath of the 2021 floods which devastated the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, where the artist lives, it is impossible not to read cascading climate crises into the work, in addition to its focus on leisure and manufactured utopias. *have we built our own resorts (architectural body)* juxtaposes advertising images of idyllic waterfalls with a giant tangle of kelp washed up on shore, and a first-person text recounting a zoomer's (Gen Z) beach day. The meme-like narrative presents the subject at a magnificent water vista completely self-satisfied with a mango, beach furniture and most importantly, her technology. While dystopian and unnerving this work is satiated with a self-reflexive honesty.

Most recently, Tubbs has embraced lenticular printing, whereby two or more images are interlaced, to appear animated when the viewer's body travels around the works. A development in the artist's assemblage-focused practice, the format is well suited to Tubbs' thoughtful juxtapositions of incongruous imagery. *the lotus eaters (wellness)* 2025, imagines a futuristic, concrete ruin inhabited by vertically climbing corals and cascading blueberries, speculating alternative fertilities against a backdrop of rising sea temperatures and unprecedented mass bleaching events.

In the imaginatively titled triptych *and then plants are confused with stones. rocks look like brains, stalactites like breasts, veins of iron like tapestries adorned with figures* 2025, Tubbs

presents a Bruegelesque landscape of land and sea animals co-existing in nature. Drawing on her recent Noosa Natural Ecologies Residency, Tubbs situates her digital compositions in a dynamic dialogue with AI-generated imagery. These visual collisions spill into one another across surfaces that dissolve and reconfigure in response to the viewer's movement through space.

While often humorous and surreal, the works also carry political resonances, resisting dominant narratives of technological progress and ecological decay. Tubbs blends rich visuals of both natural and synthetic forms, drawing from encounters both global and local. In her hands, coral is but one material and subject, infinitely connected.

Laresa Kosloff

Laresa Kosloff makes performative videos, short films, audio works and site-responsive artworks. Her practice examines various representational strategies, each one linked by an interest in the body and its agency within the everyday. Recurrent themes across the artist's practice include humour and tension between received cultural values, individual agency and free will.

Kosloff's recent, short films are assembled and edited entirely using stock footage sourced from the internet. The artist uses overlay and dubbing techniques to construct narratives about corporate duplicity, neoliberalism and the climate crisis. The artist describes this process as akin to ventriloquism, whereby commercial clips are used to

parody the market cultures for which they were initially designed. Humour features throughout these films, which play upon the absurdity of corporate greed and the systemic failures of late-stage capitalism.

In *The Bleaching* 2024, the challenge of saving the Great Barrier Reef is outsourced to Artificial Intelligence (AI). Instead of identifying a scientific solution, the AI offers a comprehensive analysis of the power structures which have facilitated human-induced climate change, including white supremacy, the military-industrial complex and the rise of the billionaire class. At the very moment when artists in Australia and globally are fighting to protect their intellectual property and content from being mined to train AI, *The Bleaching* is a refreshing antidote to the prevailing sense of futility and strikes a hopeful tone. In Kosloff's

constructed narrative, coral becomes the protagonist of its own story, afforded agency (represented through the voiceover of Yidinji and Meriam actress and director Rachael Maza) in its struggle against human greed and the machines.

FOR KIDS:

Imagine if the coral living in the Great Barrier Reef could tell its own story.

In this film, AI is asked to help save the reef, but instead of fixing the problem it just starts talking about how human greed is hurting the planet.

This artwork is made from video clips the artist finds on the internet, which she edits to make surprising or funny new meanings.

Talking Coral becomes the hero of the film, showing that no matter how small we are, we still have a powerful voice that deserves to be heard and can help create real change.

If the coral could understand you, what would you ask it?

Do you think it's okay to use jokes when talking about serious problems?

Do you think technology will help heal the planet or make things worse? What invention would you create to help the Earth?

Erub Arts

Erub is the most north-eastern of the Torres Strait Islands, where the Great Barrier Reef ends, and is home to approximately 400 *Erub le* (people). Historically, Erub Island (also known as Darnley) relied on strong trade links and relationships with the people of Papua New Guinea to its north, and Cape York, the northernmost point on the Australian mainland, to the south.

Central to Torres Strait culture is the belief that islands, sea, sky, and all nature, possess a soul or spirit. Christianity was brought to the Islands in the late 19th century by English missionaries, who landed on Erub on July 1st, 1871. This first contact between Torres Strait Islanders and missionaries came to be known as the Coming of the

Light, a holiday celebrated to this day. Erub's famous All Saints Church was built in the early 20th century, its limestone walls constructed from burnt coral and basalt gathered from the Reef.

In the 1960s, American company Tenneco was granted a licence by the Bjelke-Petersen state government to undertake exploratory drilling for oil on the Great Barrier Reef near Erub Island. This and other attempts to mine the reef were ultimately unsuccessful, following sustained protest by environmentalists and scientists, led by Queensland activist and poet Judith Wright (1915-2000) who documented the campaign in her 1977 book *The Coral Battleground*.

Since opening in 2009, Erub Arts has provided a platform for the community to express their unique identity and sea

country through creative practice. In particular, the centre has fostered collaboration and cross-cultural exchange through an innovative practice which has brought their work international attention and acclaim. Erub is one of several Indigenous Art Centres across Australia's north which have become recognised for their colourful and whimsical sculptures made from ghost nets, the fishing line and other plastic waste which washes up or is left on beaches and can re-enter the marine environment during tidal and storm events.

Ghost nets are a leading cause of strangulation, ingestion and death of marine life, such as turtles. They also have the potential to disturb and displace coastal plant and animal communities. Over time, the materials that make up

ghost nets slowly deteriorate to form microplastics, which damage natural food chains and ecosystems.

Home Reef 2025 is a collaborative work by senior Erub artists Jimmy John Thaiday, Florence Gutchen, Nancy Naawi, and Lavinia Ketchell, made especially for *Coral Futures*. The panoramic textile depicts the vibrant marine life that inhabits the eponymous Reef connecting Erub Island with the larger Great Barrier Reef system, and beyond. Explaining the sea's significance to Erub culture, Florence Gutchen has said: *"The ocean holds all mankind together; we are all connected by it and we must look after it."*

By transforming plastic rubbish rescued from the ocean into engaging and instructive works, Erub artists draw

attention to their deep connections to the sea and demonstrate the importance of individual and collective action in protecting ecosystems like the Great Barrier Reef.

FOR KIDS:

This artwork was made by four artists from Erub Island, the most north-eastern island in the Torres Strait. They belong to the Erubam Le, the First Peoples of the island.

Their families have cared for their sea, sky, and land for thousands of years.

The artwork is made from fishing nets and plastic waste that wash up on their beaches, it can harm animals and plants, so by turning this rubbish into art, they are making sure it doesn't end back up in the ocean.

The Erubam Le lived for thousands of years with healthy waterways. Why do you think there is so much rubbish in the ocean now, including on the shores of Erub Island?

The artists have a deep connection to their island and to nature. When and where do you feel connected to nature?

What do you do to care for Country?

Helga Groves

Helga Groves is a multidisciplinary artist working across painting, weaving, sculptural forms, drawing and animation. Deep geological time, indescribable natural phenomena, and geophysical processes are enmeshed in her meticulous practice to investigate the defining physical properties of ancient matter, fleeting environmental episodes and climate conditions. Her abstractions convey a uniquely layered sense of place, as first-hand observation of natural environments spanning multiple habitats, remains intrinsic to her art practice.

The triptych *Sea Surface Temperatures (Anomalies Series 2008 – 2025)*, 2025 extends on an earlier series of abstract paintings by Groves which referenced scientific graphs used to record

environmental changes. The cluster of vertices featured in each of the three panels of the work suggests the rise and fall of ocean temperatures, from above and below. A mesh of small squares covers the surface of the painting, amplifying the directional effect and visual flow. The colours throughout integrate warm and cool tones, analogous of how the artist imagines fluctuations in sea surface temperatures.

A rise in sea surface temperatures is one of several factors contributing to coral bleaching. During the Summer of 2024-25, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Health Update recorded above average sea surface temperatures. Their recordings informed the creation of *Incremental - Sea Surface Temperatures - Summer 2025, 2025*.

The artist's intention with *Incremental - Sea Surface Temperatures - Summer 2025* is both cautious and optimistic, in providing an awareness of the ongoing efforts in monitoring environmental conditions to preserve coral cover and supporting reef resilience.

Groves' new painting and textile, examining the relationship between rising sea temperatures and increasing incidences of coral bleaching, are contextualised by an earlier work, *Deep Ocean Currents* 2004. The multi-panelled work features text sandblasted onto glass, recounting the thousand-year journey of the world's oceans circulating the globe. The narrative originates from the spoken words of a scientist on a radio program describing the natural mechanism of deep ocean currents. This vivid audio description inspired Groves to create this

artwork including the verbatim text. The narrative is conveyed over the five panels, layered over hand-woven fishing line in monochromatic tones. Each segment's colour evokes its oceanic location, delineated by oval mounts recalling the shape of early world maps.

The artwork is a subtle yet impactful reminder that slow-moving, deep ocean currents are a vital force regulating Earth's climate, and in particular, marine ecosystems. Viewed together, Groves' works reflect the artist's sustained, close observation of macro and micro climactic phenomena, illustrating the impact of broader, global weather patterns on the health and viability of coral populations.

Nicholas Mangan

Nicholas Mangan is internationally recognised for unearthing and interrogating the stories embedded in objects, events and spaces. His practice, situated at the intersection of sculpture and film, generates disconcerting and politically astute assemblages that form the foundation of his research-driven projects. Attentive to the primacy of material through its ability to both convey and conceal narrative, the artist frequently mines hidden histories to boldly confront some of the most contested issues of our time.

Mangan's sculpture and video project *Core-Corallations* 2021-24 continues the artist's decade-long interrogation of extractive industries and their impact on geopolitics and climate change. As its

title suggests, the body of work focuses on the Great Barrier Reef as a metaphor for the ideological barrier which has plagued Australia's response to issues including climate change and migration.

Core-Coralations (Bronchial Diversion)

2024 is a floor-based sculpture made up of smaller sections, fabricated in a coral composite material. Its branching, lung-like appendages, cast from plastic PVC piping, have coral growths emanating from their extremities, transforming the object into an organic and mechanical hybrid. The installation occupies the gallery space so that the viewer must navigate it cautiously. Placed directly on the floor, *Core-Coralations (Bronchial Diversion)*, forms a physical obstruction, in a similar way to coral reefs providing a protective barrier for island and coastal regions.

Presented on an adjacent wall, *Ossuary (Lid)* 2024 is cast from the lid of a polystyrene box, made of small beads of petrochemical (derived from fossil fuels) that resemble coral polyps. These boxes are used to transit fresh seafood and other commodities for human consumption across land and sea borders. Mangan uses these boxes as molds for casting coral bone fragments (typically sold for domestic aquarium tank filtration) into hybrid forms. Made from coral, they also include traces of polystyrene; fossils of the Anthropocene that describes reef heating and coral death.

Mangan's art locates human history in the context of deep geological time. In it, coral becomes a potent material and subject to explore timely concerns, such as the ongoing impacts of colonialism,

humanity's fraught relationship with the natural environment and the complex and evolving dynamics of global politics.

FOR KIDS:

This artwork looks a bit like pipes, coral, and lungs all at once. The artist wanted us to think about how people and the planet are connected.

This sculpture is made of lots of different stuff, including:

- Coral (actual coral from a reef)
- Aragonite (a type of natural crystal)
- Mineral powder (crushed stone)
- Acrylic resin (a clear, hard-setting glue)
- Nurdles (tiny plastic pellets that often pollute the sea)

- Fibreglass (tiny sharp bits of glass inside plastic)
- Reinforced plastic grating (a kind of industrial flooring)
- Mild steel (a tough metal)
- Enamel paint (a shiny, colourful coating)

What does this sculpture remind you of?

How would you like to express your concern about the environment?

What should we do to make waterways healthier?

Rachel O'Reilly

Rachel O'Reilly is a queer settler Australian artist/writer/researcher. Her previous project, *The Gas Imaginary* 2013-21, used poetry, drawing, and the moving image to track the rollout of the US-led fracking industry in Australia. It culminated in the feature-length installation *INFRACTIONS* 2019, commissioned by KW Berlin, which platformed frontline First Nations artists and elders between Gladstone (Yallarm) and the Northern Territory.

In her third major moving image commission, *NORTHERN WATERS* 2025, she responds to the archive of the historic 'Save the Reef' campaign 1967-75, which culminated in the protection of the whole of the Great Barrier Reef from the global oil industry. At the time, Indigenous

people lived under apartheid conditions in Queensland, and the activists had no idea of the reef's Indigenous cultural heritage.

Today, hyper-real images of coral bleaching episodes - divorced from historical understanding - circulate as part of a sentimental 'offshore' visual culture, while biodiversity policies do little to protect at-risk species. Reef and rainforest World Heritage areas are connected by rich intertidal zones least likely to be valued by Western imagination and aesthetics. Ongoing First Nations governance was recognised in conservation policy only recently.

NORTHERN WATERS creates a landscape of perspective from violently unequal experiences of industry, tourism and 'environment' defences in North Queensland's (under)-protected

areas. The work was shot in Mission Beach on Djiru country (home of the original 1960s reef campaign), at the renamed Girringun National Park, and the re-gained Nyuwagi pastoral and eco-tourism property, Mungalla Station, and takes in Townsville's marine research infrastructures and archives on Wulgurukaba and Bindal country. It attends not just to at-risk ecologies, but also playfully and patiently to the objectivity of 'management', and incommensurable archives of refusal. The result is an illuminating, media-sensitive periodisation of aesthetic power and planetary action in a region that is rarely mediated to global audiences non-touristically.

Featuring (in order of appearance):
Phil Rist (Nywaigi), Sonya Takau (Jirrbal),
Percy Neal (Guru Bana

Kungunghj/Djungan), Leonard Andy (Djiru), Margaret Moorhouse (Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook), Rohan Lloyd (reef historian), Hillary Smith (marine biologist), Jacob Cassady (Nywaigi), Isaac Cassady (Nywaigi).

List of Works

Marian Tubbs

Nervous Systems

2019

Video

Courtesy of the artist and STATION,
Melbourne + Sydney.

Laresa Kosloff

The Bleaching

2024

4K Video(made from commercial stock
footage)

Narrator: Andrew Hansen

The Reef: Rachael Maza (Yidindi/Meriam)

Female voice: Soula Alexander

Sound design: Craig Conway/Final Sound

Music: Secession Studios

Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery,
Melbourne.

**Jimmy John Thaiday, Florence
Gutchen, Nancy Naawi, Lavinia
Ketchell**

Home Reef

2025

Ghost net

Courtesy of the artists and Erub Arts,
Darnley Island.

Helga Groves

***Sea Surface Temperatures
(Anomalies Series 2008-25)***

2025

Oil paint, pigment and medium on linen

Courtesy of the artist; Sutton Gallery,
Melbourne; and Milani Gallery,
Brisbane.

Helga Groves

Incremental - Sea Surface

Temperatures - Summer 2025

2025

Hand woven fishing line, Perspex,
wooden shelf

Courtesy of the artist; Sutton Gallery,
Melbourne; and Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

Helga Groves

Deep Ocean Currents

2004

Hand woven fishing line, sandblasted
text on glass, wooden frames

Courtesy of the artist; Sutton Gallery,
Melbourne; and Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

Nicholas Mangan
Core-Coralations
(Bronchial Diversion)

2024

Coral, aragonite, mineral powder,
acrylic resin, plastic nurdles,
fiberglass, reinforced plastic grating,
mild steel, enamel paint.

Courtesy of the artist; Sutton Gallery,
Melbourne; and LABOR, Mexico City.

Nicholas Mangan
Ossuary (Lid)

2024

Coral, aragonite coral, gypsum

Courtesy of the artist; Sutton Gallery,
Melbourne; and LABOR, Mexico City.

Marian Tubbs

***and then plants are confused with
stones. rocks look like brains,
stalactites like breasts, veins of iron
like tapestries adorned with figures***

2025

Lenticular photographs

Courtesy of the artist and STATION,
Melbourne + Sydney.

Marian Tubbs

The lotus eaters (wellness)

2025

Lenticular photographs

Courtesy of the artist and STATION,
Melbourne + Sydney.

Marian Tubbs

have we built our own resorts

(architectural body)

2023

collage, cardboard, laser digital print on
Hahnemühle paper

Courtesy of the artist and STATION,
Melbourne + Sydney.

Rachel O'Reilly
NORTHERN WATERS

2025

HD single-channel video and acrylic wall
painting

103:00 min

Video Chapter Headings:

'Prologue', 1. 'The Offshore Museum', 2.
'Conditions of ~~Production~~ Conservation',
3. 'Post-Mission Ecologies', 4. 'Refusals
of the National/Universal', 5. 'Littoral
Battle Lines', 6. 'Near-shore Science', 7.
'Dammed Frontiers', 8. 'Surveilled
Environments', 'Epilogue'.

Credits:

Director/Research: Rachel O'Reilly

Editor/Visual Research: Sebastian
Bodirsky

Cinematography/Sound: Jarod Woods

CGI maps/Sound effects: Joseph
Burgess

Djiru advisor: Leonard Andy

Additional Camera/Sound: Rachel
O'Reilly

Colour Grading: Sebastian Bodirsky

Music: Unregistered Lodges

Archival footage: Courtesy of Margaret
Moorhouse

Additional drone footage: Steven
Nowakowski

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