

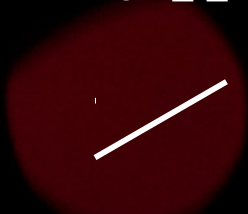
NIGHTINGALES

CONFLICT
AND THE FABRIC
OF LIFE



8 - 29 Aug 2023

Rodrigo Hill \ Karen Barbour \ Xavier Meade
Declan Patrick \ Alberto Alvarez-Jimenez



SOLASTALGIA

Essay by
Karen Barbour



Featuring Rodrigo Hill lens-based artist, Karen Barbour movement artist, Xavier Meade visual artist, Declan Patrick movement artist and Alberto Alvarez-Jimenez law expert. This exhibition is the result of this transdisciplinary collaboration between researchers in Te Kura Toi School of Arts and Te Piringa Faculty of Law at Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato, with the support of international collaborating artists Maryam Bagheri Nesami, Helene Burgstaller, Elias Cohen Braumuller, Geoff Gilson and Se-Rok Park.

'Solastalgia' refers to the pain and distress caused by environmental change in our home environment (Albrecht, 2005). The concept of solastalgia is the pivot point in this exhibition exploring curatorial possibilities and multimedia installation strategies to investigate and articulate how embodied research in the arts and social sciences informs the interpretation of international humanitarian law.

In the broadest sense, all research involves the researchers' embodiment and especially so in arts-based and creative practice research. More specifically, using embodied research

methods to gather and express complex nuanced understandings means paying attention to embodied experiences and their meanings in every moment of research. The work of movement/dance artists draws on heightened attention to sensory input, to proprioception and kinesthetic awareness, to thoughts and emotions in lived experiences in relationship with others and environments around us. Painting and lens-based approaches were applied as curatorial strategies to present immersive and sensorial interpretations. Initiated as a collaboration by law academic Alberto and arts academic Karen, the intention to work with embodied and artistic processes inspired invitations to other artists. Amongst us all we embody diverse cultural experiences, languages and expertise. What you see in this exhibition represents this embodied and transdisciplinary research process and some of our insights into solastalgia.

The research began with readings and online discussions of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). All of the researchers grappled with the moral

Front cover:
Solastalgia workshops I
Rodrigo Hill
Performer: Geoff Gilson
2022
Digital photographic print

Left:
Solastalgia workshops I
Xavier Meade
2022
Acrylics and inks

Right:
Solastalgia Workshops II
Rodrigo Hill
Performer: Helene
Burgstaller
2022
Digital photographic print

Back cover:
**Solastalgia: Conflict
and the Fabric of Life**
Rodrigo Hill
2023
Digital photograph
on translucent fabric



complexity of IHL, expressing a deep discomfort in the purpose of IHL, which exists both to prohibit civilian harm, and also to guide military commanders making decisions in armed conflict situations in which there is likely to be civilian harm. While civilian harm is typically quantified as loss of life, the impact of injury and trauma, destruction of home environments and tearing of 'the fabric of life' also constitute significant harm. A breakthrough in our research arose in thinking more deeply about the embodied impact of the destruction of home environments

and tearing of 'the fabric of life'. In this breakthrough, the concept of solastalgia resonated with our own experiences of living with destruction in our home environments. In Aotearoa this can be relocated and connected to colonisation, land use exploitation and intensification, extreme weather and climate change, rather than armed conflict. Investigating solastalgia and how IHL might more fully recognise such embodied experiences of harm, became our focus. We represent our engagement with IHL through inclusion of animated text, sound excerpts of

readings and legal objects, including an initial legal publication arising from this research.

Through immersive workshop processes, movement artists sought empathetic understandings of civilian experiences of solastalgia, considering how embodied knowledge might be utilised in understanding ways to protect others with lives very different to our own. Visual artist Xavier Meade observed and responded in paint and pen, creating many works in the immediacy of the improvised moment.



Rodrigo photographed and moved alongside the movement artists, interpreting, responding and recording gestural (re)actions in spontaneous ways. The embodied improvisations were recorded by cameras positioned within the studio, and sound artist Se-Rok Park created a soundscore for the final improvisations in the workshops. These painting, photographic, sound and movement elements generated throughout the workshops have been curated and installed as a representation of our process.

This research project covers multi-modal approaches to solastalgia as ~~both~~ concept and feeling. Here creative practice and academic research approaches were at times fused and intersected as modes of inquiry and art practice. Rodrigo and

Declan re-located the investigation of solastalgia to a destroyed home seen in the featured video solo, and light box photographs. These components further explore solastalgia through site specific approaches, video performance and installation. Xavier reflected on the principle of proportionality through large scale painting and drawing. Alberto and Karen have written publications for a legal audience. And finally, in opening this exhibition, Karen, Declan and Helene return to reflect in the improvised moment of performance, the impact of IHL on our embodied experiences, literally responding to the writing and residue of text and sound in our bodies.

We researchers acknowledge the support of funding from Te Wānanga o Ngā Kete Division of Arts, Law, Psychology and Social Sciences Research Committee and appreciate the flexibility and adaptability of transdisciplinary research methods and online platforms that allowed this

project to continue ~~discussion and workshops~~ during stages of global pandemic lockdowns in 2021. We also thank student Laine Baldwin for animations and editing, and Maria Rabino Neira for research assistance. Finally, enormous thanks to Ramp Gallery colleagues and to the Ramp Festival team.

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