

Kate McMILLAN

(born 1974 in Hampshire, UK. 1982-2012 Perth, Australia. Lives and works in London, UK)



***The Past Is Singing In Our Teeth* (2017-2025)**, 2-channel HD video installation, 6:33; 3:11, colour, sound

The Past is Singing in our Teeth (2017-25), by British/Australian artist Kate McMillan interweaves the real and imagined histories and dreams of the artist's mother, and a young girl played by the artist's daughter. Steeped in a shamanistic ritual of the artist's own invention, this intergenerational 'fairy tale' fills the gaps in memory that time and migration leave for the imagination. *This video installation* extends the notion that artworks, objects and even smells can serve as an umbilical cord back in time, thus functioning as an intermediary with the past. In this case, the past is a fictional reinvention of histories and memories lost to past generations. *The Past is Singing in our Teeth* reconstructs a labyrinth of lost things through a film-based installation that imagines a lost archive of women's knowledge, a remembrance of which is triggered through the exploration of objects and landscapes.

Filmed at four diverse landscapes in Britain, *this work unfolds as a visual poem interwoven across two unsynchronized videos. In the larger of the two projections, a ghostly girl appears and disappears on a windswept beach beneath looming cliffs. Collecting seashells, she holds a conch shell to her ear to listen to the memories of the ocean's song. This translucent girl appears again in the landscape beside a lake, and amongst the trees of a sun-dappled forest. Wearing a 'spell gown' and a silver necklace studded with the girl's own baby teeth, she carries through the forest sculptural instruments used in the making of the subtle soundtrack of this work. These ritualized objects, created by the artist from artifacts of her memories, are the focus of the second projection, in which the same young girl plays with hag stones and sculptures, while the artist's hand comes into view, writing new narratives or re-writing old ones in the incomprehensible shorthand of her mother's handwriting.* Through this poetic palimpsest of imagery, this work amplifies the unseen, articulating the way memory inflects and informs the present, not as a series of linear and knowable narratives, but as an ambiguous, constantly changing, beautiful and haunting residue of the past. In so doing, it intrinsically captures how we are rooted in the landscapes of our own histories.

ARTIST BIO

www.katemcmillan.net

Dr Kate McMillan is an artist based in London. She works across media including film, sound, installation, sculpture, and performance. Her work addresses a number of key ideas including the role of art in attending to impacts of the Anthropocene, lost and systemically forgotten histories of women, and the residue of colonial violence in the present. She is the author of the annual report "Representation of Female Artists in Britain" commissioned by the Freelands Foundation. Her academic monograph 'Contemporary Art & Unforgetting in Colonial Landscapes: Empire of Islands' (2019, Palgrave Macmillan) explores the work of a number of first nation female artists from the global south, whose work attends to the aftermath of colonial violence in contemporary life. McMillan is currently a Reader in Creative Practice and Deputy Head of the Department of Culture, Media and Creative Industries at King's College, London.

Kate McMillan's previous solo exhibitions include 'The River's Stomach (Songs of Empire), 2025 commissioned by theCOLAB at The Roman Bath's on Strand Lane; 'Never at Sea', St Mary le Strand Church, London, UK (2023), touring to Salisbury Cathedral, UK, in 2025; 'The Lost Girl, Arcade Gallery, London (2020); 'The Past is Singing in our Teeth' presented at MOMENTUM, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany (2017), which in 2018, toured to the Civic Room in Glasgow, and Arusha Gallery for the Edinburgh Arts Festival in Scotland. Other solo exhibitions include 'Instructions for Another Future' (2018), Moore Contemporary, Australia; 'Songs for Dancing, Songs for Dying' (2016), Castor Projects, London, UK; 'The Potter's Field' (2014), ACME Project Space, London, UK; 'Anxious Objects', Moana Project Space, Australia; 'The Moment of Disappearance' (2014), Performance Space, Sydney, Australia; and other

earlier exhibitions. Her work has been featured in various museums and biennales, including the 17th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2010); the Trafo Centre for Contemporary Art, Poland (2013-14); Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai (2015); Art Gallery of Western Australia; Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, Australia; Perth Institute for Contemporary Art; John Curtin Gallery, Perth; Govett Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand and the Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney.

Her work is held in private collections around the world, as well as in the Christoph Merian Collection, Basel; Soho House Collection, London; The Ned 100, London; Art Gallery of Western Australia; Wesfarmers Arts Collection; KPMG; Murdoch University, Australia; University of Western Australia and Curtin University, Australia. Since 2002 she has also undertaken residencies in London, Tokyo, Basel, Berlin, Sydney, Beijing and Hong Kong. She has resided on the Board of the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA) and the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) based in Sydney.