

– Media Release –

**Groundswell: recent movements within art and territory
opens at the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Friday, 4 September, 6pm**

**“When a problem emerges, so too does a unique opportunity to observe, to
take stock, to reinvent.”**

Carmen Ansaldo, SPARK NT Curator

Groundswell: recent movements within art and territory showcases the diversity, technical mastery and social importance of nineteen Northern Territory artists. Their creative practice plays a wider role in the process of mass social, political, and cultural change. *Groundswell* gives a voice to these artists who are concerned about water sustainability and its impact on their communities' futures.

The exhibition was borne out of concern for the Territory's dwindling water supply. SPARK NT Curator, Carmen Ansaldo, wanted the title of the exhibition to not only reflect upon the idea of water geographically, but also infer to a mass movement of humanity. “This is part of my ambition to re-imagine the curator as political organiser” said Carmen Ansaldo.

At the heart of *Groundswell* the impacts of climate change cannot be ignored. The ongoing research of scientists, the call to action from environmentalists and the artists' interpretation are all what Ansaldo refers to “as the first responders to this crisis”.

Ansaldo wants to bring attention to this important issue that is threatening the livelihood of communities around the Territory, the water supply is running out from the Top End down to the Central Desert. No longer is she satisfied with the worn, catch-all statement that art simply 'starts a conversation'.

“Assembling a travelling exhibition centred on this unavoidable reality is to unambiguously question the role of art within the process of change – urgent, revolutionary change. Rediscovering how to move together as a collective force is our sole option if we are to adequately confront the most pressing and dangerous questions of our livelihoods” said Ansaldo.





Artback NT

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Level 2, Harbour View Plaza,
8 McMinn St, Darwin City NT 0800
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Through *Groundswell* Ansaldo addresses water sustainability across four key areas: **access** concerned with commercial projects that threaten ecosystems and the ownership rights of water; **contamination** the disposal of waste products and the effects on groundwater; **scarcity** the drying of aquifers effecting clean drinking water; and **culture** the obligations that come with caring for Country.

Artists in the exhibition respond to these themes in a varied and considerate manner through moving image, visualised data, painting, printmaking, ceramics, and sculpture. Artist **Lee Harrop** has made an artist's book that details distils of scientific data derived from drilled core samples to create slick diagrammatic representations of ground contamination levels. Ceramicist **Mel Robison** creates casts of the skeletons that have perished within drought ravaged geographies and maps these locations by etching on them. **Nadine Lee** considers the healing properties of water as a fundamental component within Larrakia ceremony.

The message of the exhibition aims to empower the visitor and equip them with information to have agency in their ability to make a positive difference. Ansaldo wants to implore audiences to move from a "position of witness to a place of active participation".

"Carmen is driven by an activist's passion and draws together a range of works by artists who focus our attention on the centrality of water to the well-being of community and Country. A call to action as much as an aesthetic experience, *Groundswell* engages profoundly with a pivotal and pressing issue of our time" said Louise Partos, Executive Officer, Artback NT.

"Together we can turn the tide to create something deeper than the sum of our individual parts."

Carmen Ansaldo, SPARK NT Curator

Carmen Ansaldo, SPARK NT curator and selected artists are available for interview upon request.

Media Enquiries

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Exhibition Dates

Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Darwin, 4 – 30 September 2020

Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, 5 March – 3 May 2021

Nyinkka Nyunyu, Tennant Creek, 15 May – 31 July 2021

Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts & Culture Centre, Katherine, 17 September – 30 October 2021

Exhibiting Artists

Ruby Djikarra Alderton, Niall Barrington, Lindy Brodie, Jonathan World Peace Bush, Aly de Groot, Jeremiah Garlingarr, Jacky Green, Lee Harrop, Kelly Lee Hickey, Winsome Jobling, Tarzan JungleQueen, Maicie Lalara, Nadine Lee, June Mills, Patricia Phillipus Napurrula, Sarah Pirrie, Mel Robson, Andrick Ross, Jennifer Taylor

Public Programs, Northern Centre for Contemporary Art

Artists in Conversation with Aly de Groot, Maicie Lalara, Nadine Lee and Sarah Pirrie, Saturday 5 September, 11am – 12pm

Artists in Conversation with Lee Harrop, Winsome Jobling, Tarzan JungleQueen and June Mills, Saturday 12 September, 11am – 12pm

Water Forum: perspectives from the Top End, Saturday 19 September, 11am – 12.30pm

Brace Yourself: beach dance with June Mills, Sunday 20 September, 5.30 – 6.30pm, Mindil Beach

About the SPARK NT Curator Program

This is the third exhibition to be produced as part of the SPARK NT Curator Program, an Artback NT initiative which supports an independent or emerging curator, residing in the Northern Territory, to develop an exhibition project for tour. SPARK NT is designed to foster critical thinking in art and curatorial practice and provide artists from the Territory with opportunities to showcase their work within a curated touring exhibition.