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# Luminous relic



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### COVER

Alexander Boynes, Mandy Martin and Tristen Parr

*Luminous relic* (detail, still) 2017

pigment, sand, crusher dust, acrylic and oil on linen;  
three-channel high-definition video with stereo sound  
score; 6 minutes, 10 seconds

260.0 x 1,150.0 cm

Courtesy of the artists and Australian Galleries,  
Melbourne and Sydney

Photographer: Andrew Curtis

## Artists' statement

### Alexander Boynes, Mandy Martin and Tristen Parr

*Luminous relic* is a major collaborative painting and moving image work by Mandy Martin and Alexander Boynes, with a score by Tristen Parr. Based on fieldwork around industrial Geelong, this urgent, politically charged work examines the ongoing and cumulative effects of industrialisation and natural resources consumption on landscapes, fragile ecosystems and human conditions.

A sense of intimate connection between industry, carbon emissions, the end of the fossil fuel era, and a lurid dawn heralding freak winds and, far across the ocean, a collapsing ice shelf, underlie the artistic response from each artist in *Luminous relic*. Mandy Martin has built up layers of ochres, sands, iridescent and fluorescent pigments to literally paint the body of the industrial complex into the ice shelf. This high key reflective surface allows the multichannel video work by Alexander Boynes to play with the element of time in what appears to be a static moment. As time-lapse footage of industrial Geelong unfolds, it allows an alternative narrative of calving icebergs and melting glaciers, hence the title *Luminous relic*, derived from historian Tom Griffiths' 2016 book *The Art of Time Travel*. This melding of imagery talks on the one hand about the waste of human capital in Australia, and our failure to take up a renewable future on the other.

Tristen Parr's reflective score interprets the industrial sounds of Geelong and of ice melting and cracking. These are blended with the sound of electronically manipulated cello creating an other-worldly sonic landscape. The score adds pathos and gravitas to the contemplative space and sublime proposition of *Luminous relic*.



Tristen Parr, Mandy Martin and Alexander Boynes alongside *Luminous relic* in the studio. Reproduced courtesy of the artists. Photographer: Valerie Chetelat ©

## Artists' studies

### Alexander Boynes



*Luminous relic study 1* 2017  
pigment and enamel on aluminum  
120.0 cm x 120.0 cm  
Reproduced courtesy of the artist



*Luminous relic study 2* 2017  
pigment and enamel on aluminum  
120.0 cm x 120.0 cm  
Reproduced courtesy of the artist

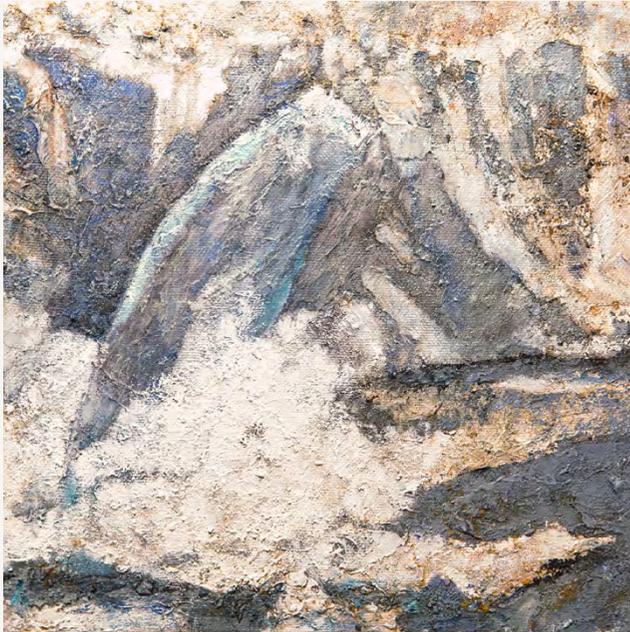


*Luminous relic study 3* 2017  
pigment and enamel on aluminum  
120.0 cm x 120.0 cm  
Reproduced courtesy of the artist



*Luminous relic study 4* 2017  
pigment and enamel on aluminum  
120.0 cm x 120.0 cm  
Reproduced courtesy of the artist

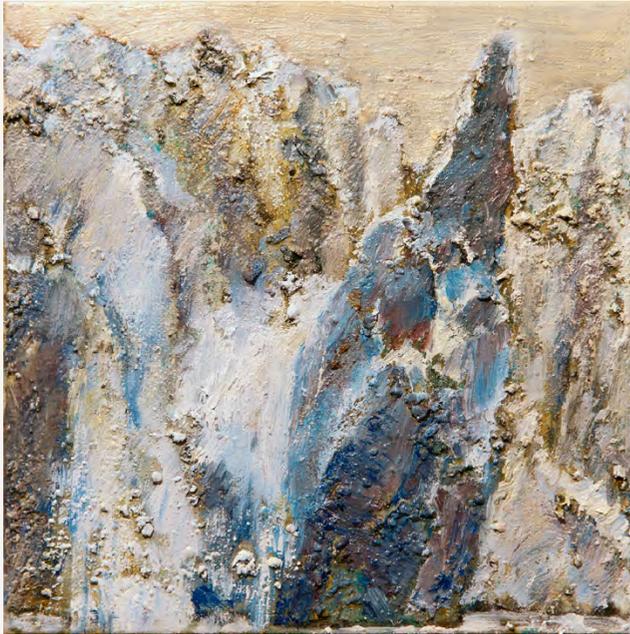
## Mandy Martin



*Luminous relic study 1* 2017  
pigment, sand, crusher dust, acrylic and oil on linen  
60.0 x 60.0 cm  
Reproduced courtesy of the artist and Australian  
Galleries, Melbourne and Sydney



*Luminous relic study 2* 2017  
pigment, sand, crusher dust, acrylic and oil on linen  
60.0 x 60.0 cm  
Reproduced courtesy of the artist and Australian  
Galleries, Melbourne and Sydney

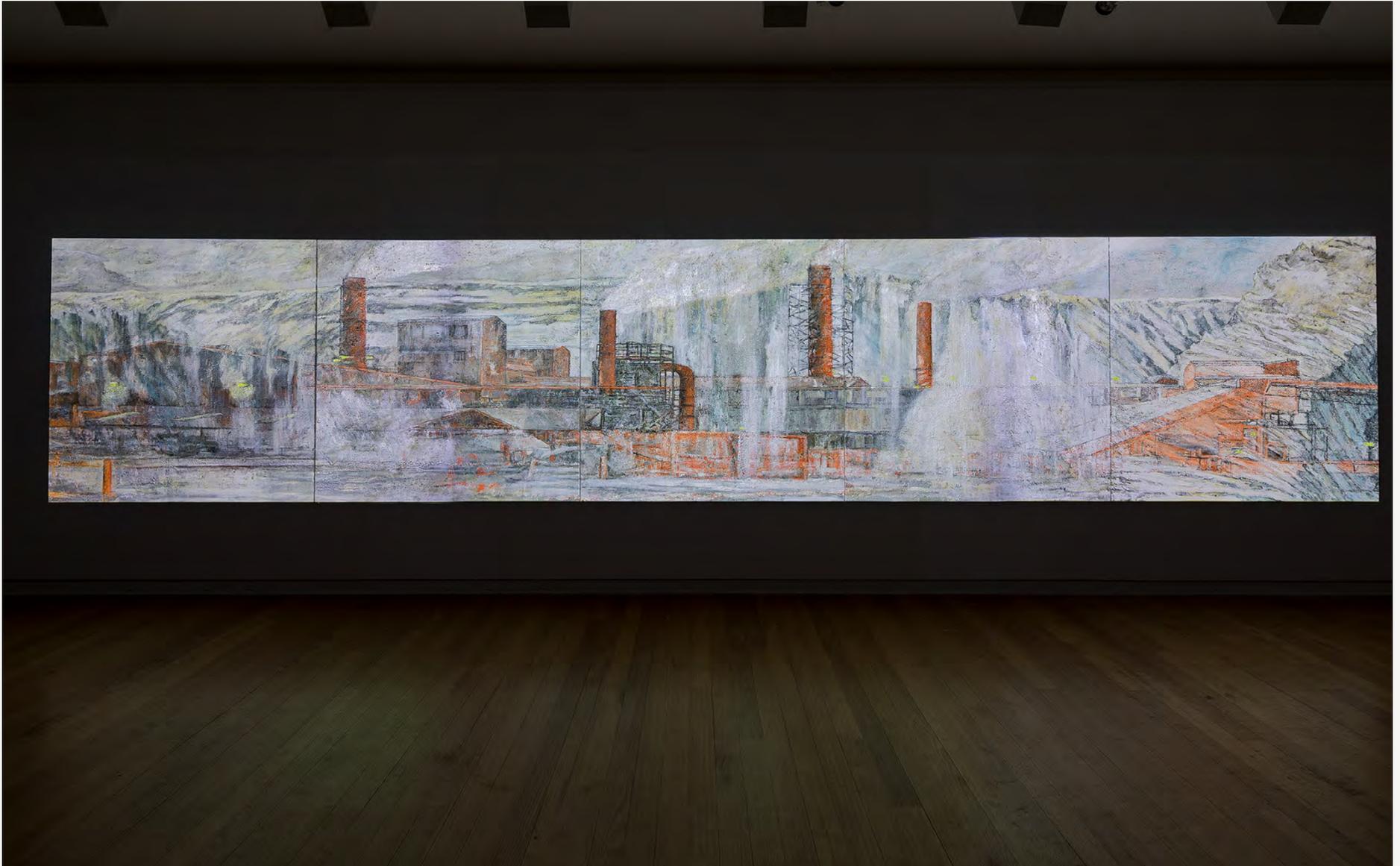


*Luminous relic study 3* 2017  
pigment, sand, crusher dust, acrylic and oil on linen  
30.0 x 30.0 cm  
Reproduced courtesy of the artist and Australian  
Galleries, Melbourne and Sydney



*Luminous relic study 4* 2017  
pigment, crusher dust, sand, acrylic, oil on linen  
100.0 x 100.0 cm  
Reproduced courtesy of the artist and Australian  
Galleries, Melbourne and Sydney

## Installation views — Geelong Gallery











**Luminous relic**—Alexander Boynes, Mandy Martin and Tristen Parr



### Jason Smith

*Luminous relic* is the third collaborative work by Mandy Martin and Alexander Boynes that integrates painting and moving image. Their collaboration in this work extends to the inclusion of a unifying soundtrack composed by Tristen Parr.

The still images documenting *Luminous relic* in situ are arranged here to provide a sense of the filmic and graphic transitions through which the layered content and context of the work are compellingly articulated. Programmed to coincide with the multi-disciplinary festival ART+CLIMATE=CHANGE 2017, *Luminous relic* addresses persistent and increasingly urgent environmental issues with which Mandy Martin has been engaged since the late 1970s, and that also emerge in Alexander Boynes's stark, humanist visions of the contemporary body, and in Tristen Parr's grave, emotive score.

The three artists travelled to Geelong in October 2016 to survey the natural and industrial landscape, and scope potential sites for collaborative drawing, painting, filming and sound-recording. Working at the same time from the same vantage point was necessary for the precise registration of the filmed scene over the painted image, on which the unique animation of *Luminous relic* is reliant, and for relevant ambient sound. The artists' fieldwork proceeded over a 36 hour period, during which a spectacular dawn and melancholic gloaming at day's end revealed the quiet beauty of Corio Bay and the strange, terrible beauty of the industrial complexes on some of its shores.

The image of the industrial powerhouse emerged in Mandy Martin's work around 1981 in the form of ominous sawtooth factories which operated as powerful visual metaphors for the degradation of the environment and what she regarded as the close of an era of civilisation by destruction. Martin rose to prominence as a young

artist associated with the leftist, activist Progressive Art Movement in Adelaide in the mid-1970s alongside influential artists including Robert Boynes and Anne Newmarch. The socio-political status of the worker, of women, and a challenge to the structures and motives of Western capitalism and cultural imperialism informed her early images and printmaking, and established an ideological framework that continues to condition her work's critical engagement with the place, power and impact of human beings in the ecologies and economies that define our local and global realities.

Martin's widely critically acclaimed early to mid-1980s paintings of factories and industrial landscapes placed her at the centre of a renewal in Australian (and international) painting of a highly energised figurative expressionism. Martin's stark, bleak images signaled environmental instability and the collision between people and nature. Her preoccupation with the industrial colonisation of landscape evolved to encompass her thinking around European colonisation of Australia via art-historical renderings of landscape, and considerations in her work (that prevail in the present) of the impact of settler cultures on Indigenous systems. Martin's work since has been based on an acute observation and physical experience of vast tracts of the Australian landscape. Her incisive readings of art, social and natural histories, and her deep immersion in contemporary environmental politics, have shaped her particular critique of the imaging, claiming and naming of landscape and place, and her participation in the historical/contemporary context of the artist/explorer/activist.

The three collaborating artists in this project are of a shared mind that 'fossil fuel refineries and chemical processing plants will be the relics of the twentieth century, just as 19th Century sawtooth factories were a relic of the industrial revolution. One sees both in Geelong, and nostalgia hangs around them as it does around manufacturing and industry in many great coastal industrial cities at the end of the fossil fuel era.'<sup>1</sup>

In *Luminous relic* Martin's painting of an unidentified industrial complex, literally fused into an imaginary ice-shelf, is a panoramic ground on which Boynes's modified moving images animate the work's concerns with the economies and scale of the extraction, processing and consumption of mineral resources; carbon emissions and the devastating effects of climate change on globally essential but hyper-sensitive environments like Antarctica. The Australian historian Tom Griffiths has been an important contributor (among others) with Martin since 1996 on two of the earliest of ten collaborative environmental art projects she has coordinated to date. In his 2007 reflection on the late Stephen-Murray Smith's 1985–86 exploration and subsequent writings on Antarctica, Griffiths observed that

'Antarctica has become valued as a luminous relic, a clue to lost ages: it enables us to travel through time to the Pleistocene Earth. Thus, it was ice that delivered the sense of urgency we now feel about global warming, because the archive of air it contains revealed that carbon emissions are disturbing the pulse of the planet.'<sup>2</sup>

The six minute cycle of *Luminous relic* commences with Martin's panoramic painting illuminated by white light, that then transitions to the ultra-violet of the projector's stand-by mode, serendipitously fluorescing Martin's pigments. Boynes's film 'fades-in', registering with the painted powerhouse but extending our view of the site across

the wall in all directions beyond the confines of Martin's canvases, a conceptual device that simultaneously preserves the material and formal independence of painting and moving image, yet strengthens their interrelation. A security bollard and chain on the extreme left panel, and a reflective, seemingly insignificant puddle of water on the road in the far right panel are just two canny visual tethers that make the component parts of this multidisciplinary work indivisible.

Boynes's film provides the everyday and eventually highly dramatic scenes for Parr's score, the haunting 'crescendo' of which is a lingering electronic lament for calving glaciers and environmental collapse. Boynes's hi-vis, fluorescent, fugitive figures of workers, of lost souls, traverse the landscape and as our entire field of view is activated by the radiating luminous phenomena of the atomised relics of our world.

The brooding character and poetic grandeur of *Luminous relic* are deeply moving. While Martin's images of the convergence of industry and nature might rise from what the art historian Ian North observed in 1989 as a 'sceptical mind abroad on a poisoned planet'<sup>3</sup>, *Luminous relic* calls for hope against hopelessness. This work initiates a powerfully thought-provoking space in which the dichotomies signalling our care for, but consumption of, the planet are starkly illuminated.

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1. Artists' statement to author, January 2017

2. Griffiths, Tom, 'The Cultural Challenge of Antarctica: the 2007 Stephen-Murray Smith Memorial Lecture', at <http://www3.slv.vic.gov.au/latrobejournal/issue/latrobe-82/t1-g-t2.html>

3. North, Ian. 'Riding the Tiger', Introduction to the catalogue, Mandy Martin, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, 1989



## Artist biographies

### Alexander Boynes

born 1982; lives and works Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

Alexander Boynes completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) at the Australian National University in 2004. Recent solo exhibitions include *Time / Body / Light*, Beaver Galleries, Canberra, 2016 and *Water Stories*, Fitters Workshop Canberra, 2016 for *Contour 556 Festival*. He is represented in the collections of Artbank Australia and University of Canberra as well as numerous private collections throughout Australia and in London.

Boynes is the Program Manager at the Canberra Contemporary Art Space where he curated *2°—Art and climate change*, 2016; *Footy fever*, 2015, *Blaze nine*, 2015, *Action stations—Peter Maloney and Louise Paramor*, 2014, and *The Triangle—Political Art* in Canberra, 2013 in addition to co-curating numerous projects.

In 2013 Boynes established PRAXIS a multi-disciplinary art collective with choreographer/dancer Laura Boynes, and cellist/composer Tristen Parr to explore the link between visual art, performance, and sound.

Boynes is involved in *Arnhembrand* which seeks to raise awareness of the work undertaken in the Djelk Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) to preserve the unique cultural and ecological environment by promoting healthy country and healthy communities through art, science and stories.

Alexander Boynes is represented by Beaver Galleries, Canberra.

### Mandy Martin

born Adelaide 1952; lives and works Mandurama, New South Wales

Mandy Martin is an Adjunct Professor Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University, Canberra. She has exhibited widely throughout Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico and the United States of America. Martin is represented in significant public collections including National Gallery of Australia, numerous state and regional galleries, in addition to the Guggenheim Museum, New York; Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art; Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, and many private collections.

From 1995–2017 her practice has focused on ten collaborative art and environment projects with Indigenous people in remote and regional Australia. Continuing this commitment is her involvement with *Arnhembrand* and her *Savannah burning* series which focuses on the importance of Bininj cool burning for Australia's emissions targets.

Mandy Martin is an active member of CLIMARTE, presenting exhibitions and public forums in the previous two festivals. For CLIMARTE 2015 she curated *The Warming* for Australian Galleries, Melbourne in which Alexander Boynes and Mandy Martin contributed *Blast 2015* a digital video loop with oil on linen.

Mandy Martin is represented by Australian Galleries, Melbourne and Sydney.

### Tristen Parr

born 1980; lives and works Perth, Western Australia

Tristen Parr is a classically trained acoustic and electric cellist specialising in new music performance, who uses integrated computer-based manipulation, to create soundscapes for dance, installation and theatre.

Parr is the Program Manager of Tura New Music, a resource centre, advocating and supporting New Music and Sonic Arts in Perth and throughout Australia. In addition, Parr is a founding member of Decibel new music ensemble, PRAXIS, silent film band Viola Dana, and Soundstorm. He has toured extensively throughout Australia, Asia, Canada, Europe and the United States of America and has recorded for Germany's SWR and ABC Classic FM. Parr has been commissioned to compose pieces for AIVDT: Anything Is Valid Dance Theatre, Barking Gecko Theatre Company, Buzz Dance Theatre, LINK Dance Company, Yirra Yaakin Theatre in Western Australia, the Australian National Museum and Queensland Ballet, as well as Louisville Ballet in the United States of America.

Parr has won numerous Western Australian music industry awards and in 2013 was nominated for a Helpmann Award for Best Music Direction.

# Luminous relic

A Geelong Gallery exhibition  
8 April to 9 July 2017  
Mandy Martin, Alexander Boynes and Tristen Parr

## Curator

Jason Smith, Director, Geelong Gallery

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## Photographers

Andrew Curtis cover, pp. 8–12, 16

Valerie Chetelat p. 3

Alexander Boynes pp. 4–7

*Luminous relic* is part of CLIMARTE's **ART+CLIMATE=CHANGE 2017**—a festival of exhibitions and events harnessing the creative power of the Arts to inform, engage and inspire action on climate change.



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