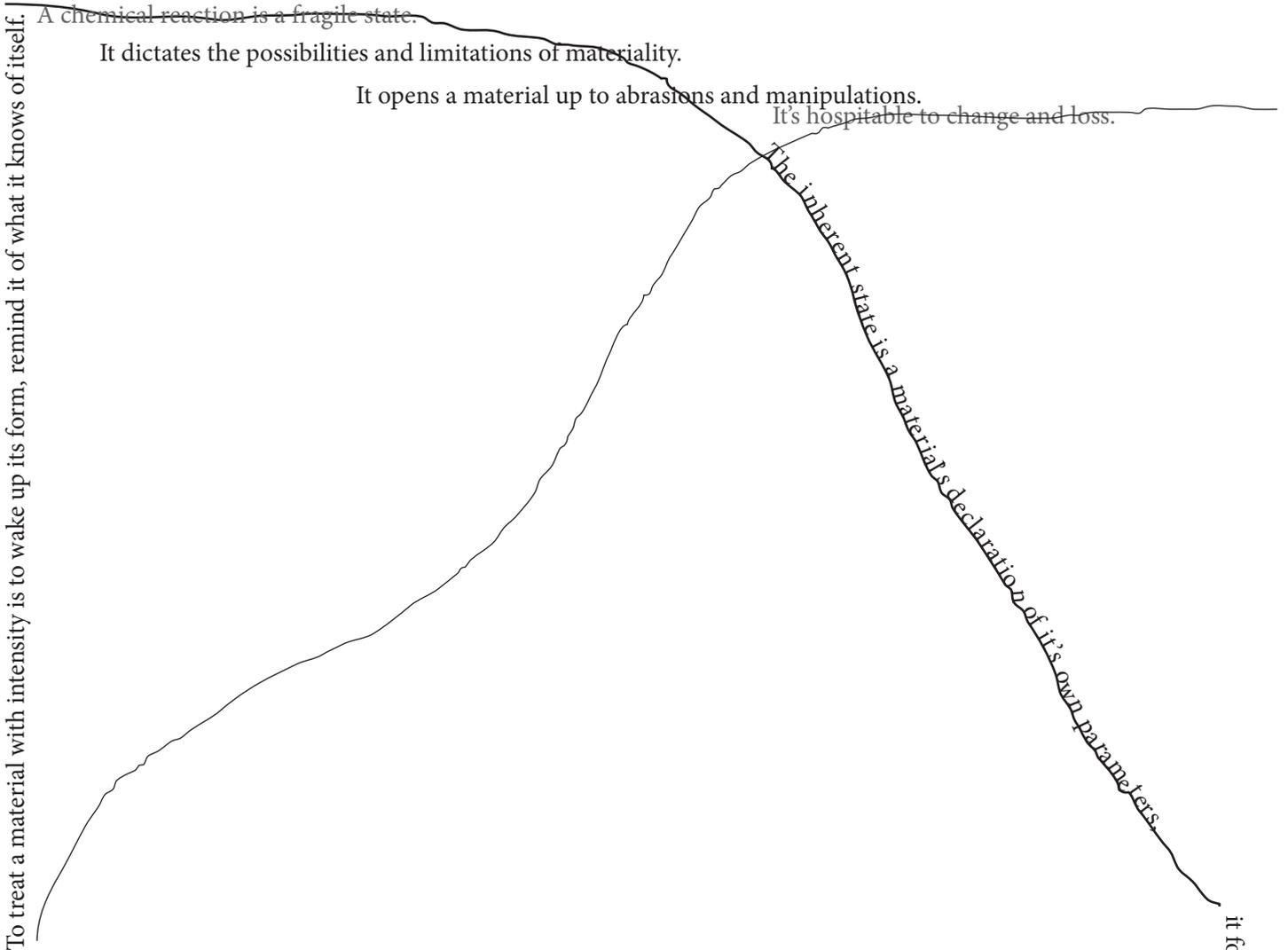


Shifting Forces



Shifting Forces brings together four artists whose practices use and manipulate materiality as a means to explore the natural and the supernatural, the chemical and the phenomenological. The work of Gabrielle Skye Nehrybecki, Nina Rose Prendergast, Julien Comer-Kleine and Sean McDowell encompass hybrid forms of sculpture, painting, drawing, video and sound to propose interactions with states of transition. Borrowing systems from the natural world, these artists advocate for the non-material to give form to that which is often indiscernible.

In deploying processes that varyingly welcome and protest against deterioration and loss – casting, recycling, imprinting, engraving, melting, filming, archiving – the complex philosophical systems associated with particular materials and how we preserve them are thrown open. Presenting dismembered and altered ecosystems, *Shifting Forces* questions the autonomy of materials, situating the artist as a facilitator of flux.

Sean McDowell's patina paintings evoke many images: geological forms, weathered monuments, expansive oceans, fields of abstraction. They are anachronistic, encouraging subjective hypotheses from a set of potential references. Deploying sculptural conventions in painting, McDowell leads the copper surface into ambiguity. There is an artificiality to these objects which have been allowed to dictate the terms of their own shift.

The process of patination lends itself to anachronism. When a monument undergoes this chemical process – the oxidation of a metal – it reveals itself slowly, shroud in fame and notoriety, then necessarily subjected to questioning. Patinated monuments visualise public time, reinstating a new image of themselves unrecognisable from the past. Here, McDowell has sped up this process, facilitating chemical change in his studio.

Similarly, once cast in bronze, the egg carton is presented as a monument to the banal. The banal provides the security of repetition, allowing us to order the expectations of everyday life through recurring imagery.

it forges its own path when subjected to reactionary processes.

McDowell severs such predictability. There is a sense of the overused or the commonplace colliding with the exhibition context. These are central ideas in McDowell's practice, both artistic and curatorially, in which he consistently investigates the dissonance between the image and the object, re-presenting as a strategy to re-contextualise. Here, the egg carton is playfully embalmed, complicating an escape route from mundanity.

An autonomous system of glass and steel, Comer-Kleine's installation amplifies sound to externalise non-material interactions. His work is a proposition, suggesting that the inherent quality of any material is its ability to be exposed to a myriad of forces and maintain essence rather than form. Heat is an important process in this investigation, throwing glass into a highly chaotic state. For Comer-Kleine it is a process that allows for the least predictable of outcomes, leaving the material to define its own bends and cracks.

Comer-Kleine's work seeks to establish autonomous systems, seeing the role of the artist as that who merely sets the parameters for material exchange. He is careful not to overstate the artist's ability to remain absent. His installation is a series of propositional gestures, setting up an ecology that once exhibited, inhabits itself. The steel plates are self-governing; where light hitting glass performs its own sounds.

Nina Rose Prendergast's drawings are iterations of her ongoing interest in the micro-imperfections of fossils and gemstones formed under highly pressurised systems. They draw out the tension between the assumed stability and actual fragility of ancient material and the value systems that lead to their preservation. The stippled patterns of her drawings are at once grounded and fleeting, so fine in detail that at moments any discernible image fades into its support. They suggest a need for delicate handling and remind us that fragility is a precondition for conservation.

Prendergast leans into the fleeting, filling her work with references and symbols of the dead. During lockdown, she began walking through cemeteries, borrowing Latin epitaphs from headstones.

Requiem. Derived from the Latin verb 'to rest', a Mass for the soul of the dead most commonly practiced by the Catholic Church.

The notion that rest is achieved through ritual codes Prendergast's work with the complex principles of preservation and conservation. 'To rest' an object in a museological sense is to remove it from display, often severing public access and ongoing interpretation. Much like geological forms, institutions have long desired to fix the value of archives or objects to time and place. Prendergast's work reframes 'dead' material, suggesting that fossilisation does not dictate inherent stability. In establishing a paradox between the durability of geological forms and the impermanence of human life, Prendergast suggests that ancient material might overcome its own staticisation.

Presented on a 1970's JVC Videosphere, Nehrybecki teases traces of the Red Triangle Slug in footage of activity and non-activity in a similar line of enquiry. Through a series of masks, she gestures towards complex dualities: the macro and the micro, the seen and the unseen, rest and activity, the environmental world and the built environment. The Red Triangle Slug (*Triboniophorus graeffei*) is Australia's largest native land slug found along the east coast of Queensland and New South Wales. These slugs are enigmatic, often only showing themselves in wet, dark habitats, grazing on microscopic algae and on the surface of smooth-barked eucalypts. Their scalloped tracks are decorative and distinct, leaving traces of their flourished nighttime activity.

In Nehrybecki's video installation, macro footage literally upscales the often-unseen creature. The work hones in on the microscopic to embrace ecosystems and their flora and fauna and implore the incidental significance of human existence in the scheme of time immemorial. Through dual masks, Nehrybecki gives us a glimpse into a world outside of our own.

Shifting Forces is concerned with the matter from which something is or can be made and the potentiality of this premise. Presenting fragments of dismembered and altered ecosystems, these artists question the autonomy of materials, their value systems and their metaphysical potential. In deploying processes of translation and transformation that allow materials to dictate their own form, each work exposes states of shift. It is there, in the intermediary between extremities, that complex relations emerge.