




LEA KANNAR-LICHTENBERGER

# DISTORTED TRUTHS





‘ At the heart of Lea’s work is a creative inquiry into society’s continuing destructive dynamic with nature and the reach of its damage. She reminds us that nature does not lie. ’

Ivana Jirasek, Curator *Deception* solo exhibition,  
Accelerator Gallery, Ultimo NSW 2017

LEA KANNAR-LICHTENBERGER  
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TRUTHS

Curated by Lisa Sharkey

# CATALOGUE ESSAY

by Dr Laetitia Wilson PhD

How we humans think about our world, planet Earth, is significant; attitudes determine actions towards and within it. The ecological philosopher, Timothy Morton thinks of our world as at the 'end of the world'.

This is not to be taken literally but rather as the finality of the concept of 'world', along with 'nature', 'environment' and 'horizon.' Morton writes; "The end of the world occurs when we no longer have a meaningful horizon against which events take shape."<sup>1</sup> This means that in an information overloaded culture, "Concepts such as world are plausible only when distinctions between here and there, or foreground and background are possible."<sup>2</sup> In other words, it is no longer possible to think that our actions here have no effect on what happens over there and vice versa. We do not exist in our 'own world' separate from the greater environment. Global warming is all encompassing; it does not happen 'over there' it is right here, right now, we are all within it, breathing it in. In this understanding the concept of 'world' is akin to simulacra, a construction removed from the lived reality. There is no sense in saving the notion of 'world', but rather there is an urgency to acknowledge and act on our embeddedness within and our entanglement with both the fellow human and non-human and the forces and substances that not only surround us but also flow through us, pollute and caress us.

Artist Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger takes this seriously, she thinks through relationships between the human and non-human, she collapses distinctions between the here

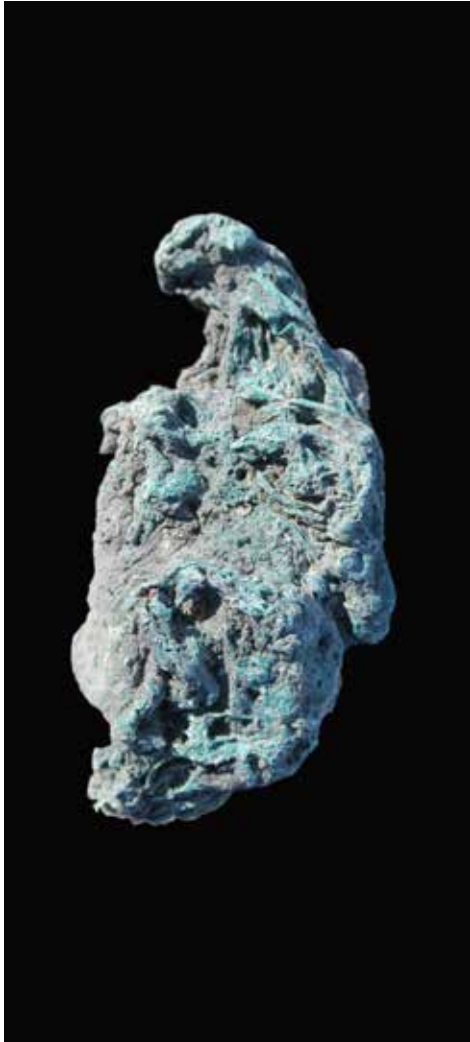
and over there and calls for a realisation that our actions in this world are never inconsequential. This is clearly articulated in the video work *Deception* where the bustling city intersection of Alexandraplatz in Berlin filmed at ground level is overlaid with the vision and sound of the melting Antarctic ice of Deception Island. Here we are made palpably aware of humanity as not separate from the natural world, but as a veritable ecological agent, a planetary force.

[Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger thinks through relationships between the human and the non-human, collapses distinctions between the here and over there, calling for a realisation that our actions in this world are never inconsequential.](#)

*Deception* is the main artwork as part of a number of works based on Kannar-Lichtenberger's response to time spent in Antarctica. Melting glaciers are one of the simplest yet most powerful indicators of global warming, yet it is all too easy to live in ignorance of their existence. While they make global warming pan-geographically tangible, they are not local and not visible to most of the world's industrialised cities. Kannar-Lichtenberger brings the out-of-sight into-sight, gently confronting us with the realities



***Deception I Berlin*** 2017,  
Runtime video 01:00 sec looped  
Runtime sound 03:00 sec  
Sound by Maria Alfonsine and  
Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger  
Projection of Berlin street scene  
onto melting glacier Deception  
Island, South Shetlands Islands,  
Antarctica, size varies



**Unhappy Feet I** 2018,  
Pigment print on archival  
photo paper 200 x 110 cm

**Unhappy Feet II** 2018,  
Pigment print on archival  
photo paper 200 x 110 cm

of changing planetary conditions and the impacts of humanity. To be more specific this is certain sectors of humanity, it is not humanity as a whole but primarily white, western, male humanity of industrialised nations.

Despite geographical isolation, Deception Island, Livingston Island and Telefon Bay in Antarctica, show as much a record of the impact of humanity as almost anywhere on planet Earth. As the glaciers melt, waxy, oily slurry rises up from the remains of the whaling industry; skeletal ruins of the industry are simply left to rot at the surface and plastic detritus dots the coastline. The increase in tourism, the polluting presence of luxury liners and colonial land grabs for resources below the ice, all add to this litany of damage to the area. A place considered pristine, untouched and marketed because of this, is anything but. Kannar-Lichtenberger's Shackletonesque voyage on a 12-metre boat enabled intimate witnessing and recording of such realities, highlighting the problems inherent to how 'world' is thought of as matter for invasive exploration and exploitation.

Following on from and during this journey a series of photographs, drawings, video and installation works were made to non-didactically picture the polar environment and what is occurring there. Some of these form a part of the solo exhibition *Distorted Truths*. A video work also titled *Distorted Truths* is projected down onto a plastic-embedded lump of ice. It records a glacier dripping horizontally, while the ice melts vertically, slowly revealing the plastic detritus as it melts into a very large petri dish. All that will remain is the rubbish in a pool of water. It is a layered composition about global warming, its consequences, its denial, the inability to face the problems of mass-waste and the

false (distorted) information distributed via various media channels. We are, some say, living in an era of post-truth, where politics is detached from policy. This is a tragedy when what is needed is a return to truth and a massive cognitive shift regarding the actuality of the state of our ecology. This is about realising solidarity and empathy with, rather than exploitation of other entities, whether they are animal, vegetal or mineral.

Kannar-Lichtenberger presents things as they are. The Livingston Island photographs simply picture a glacier here today and imply its future absence. This series speaks for itself as a monument or indeed anti-monument to a global ecosystem in a fragile balance. Glaciers are the anti-monuments of our time that quite possibly mark the end of our time as a dominating species on planet Earth. They are anti because they do not reify and elevate the power and accomplishments of primarily white male humanity, but rather reach down to the ground and belie permanency. They are a literal indicator of disappearance that is further echoed across flora and fauna beyond their dripping anti-monumentality.

This picturing of glacial ice continues throughout the exhibition in various guises including the photographs *Livingston I Presume I, II, III*. Here the Livingston island glacier is photographed through binoculars, making for a vignettted partial view. This is suggestive of the vision of explorers such as David Livingstone, the celebrated British explorer who was a strong supporter of global colonial and commercial expansion. The absence of a broader, more holistic vision in this endeavour is literalised through this partial view, showing blindness, or a kind of tunnel vision towards what lies in the darkness, in other words – the rest of the world.



**Gagged** 2015,  
3 channel video and sound  
installation 14:00 looped,  
performed by Molly Morphew,  
choreography and directing by  
Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger with  
written text by Carl Safina 2015,  
size varies

More urgently then, the large-scale photographs *Unhappy Feet I* and *II* feature a dense clump of plastic that has been collected by Kannar-Lichtenberger from a penguin colony. The form of the compacted plastic is in the shape of the interior, the stomach and colon of a penguin. The penguin from which this piece came consumed the plastic but was unable to chew to stop eating or indeed to regurgitate it. For this and so many other creatures, plastic became wedged inside and minimally degraded by stomach acids and so it killed the creature that benignly consumed it. The form looks like an alien meteorite but it is the stuff of humanity, the end point of single-use plastic. It is the shame of a throw-away post-industrial capitalist consumer culture that is wallowing in ignorance, hypocrisy and absence of accountability.

This thought and gesture of calling for empathy toward the non-human is furthered in *Gagged* (2015), an earlier video work by Kannar-Lichtenberger that presents a text from ecologist Carl Safina alongside a close-up video of a performer repeatedly gagging. The text describes an albatross bird swallowing a toothbrush, gagging on it and walking away from its young that it is unable to feed. This is a harrowing work which mirrors an even more harrowing reality that demands to be widely acknowledged if we are ever to massively shift awareness to simply change basic everyday habits.

While it might not be useful to think of ‘world’ in romantic terms, there is, arguably, still a need to think of the planet Earth. Especially given that, as Donna Haraway argues “the certainty of what counts as nature – a source of insight and a promise of innocence – is undermined, probably fatally.”<sup>3</sup> Critical to *how* we think of Earth and how we think through ideas of world and worlding is a deeper ecological awareness and adjusted thinking about our existence as not separate from the natural world and its various entities but veritably entangled. Morton calls for a ‘geophilosophy’ that does not think simply in terms of human events and human significance. Instead it posits a ‘symbiotic reality’, a messy and permeable reality. In this sense worlding becomes holistic and flattened and our core ideas about existence shift from debilitating states of denial, hypocrisy and inaction and towards respect, empathy, an ethics of care and responsibility and positive action. This is what the art works of Kannar-Lichtenberger call for, lest we be not only overwhelmed but utterly overcome by monsters of our own making.



**Dr. Laetitia Wilson** is a Perth based lecturer, curator and freelance writing with a doctorate in media art theory. She is currently working with SymbioticA at the University of Western Australia on an exhibition to be held at PICA commemorating 200 years since the publication of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein: or the Modern Prometheus*.

<sup>1</sup> Timothy Morton, *What Does Hyperobjects Say* <http://ecologywithoutnature.blogspot.com.au/2012/12/what-does-hyperobjects-say.html>

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Morton, *Poisoned Ground: Art and Philosophy in the Time of Hyperobjects*, *sympløke*, Volume 21, Numbers 1-2, 2013, p.39

<sup>3</sup> Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinvention of Nature*, Verso, London, 1991, p.194



Left: *Livingston I Presume I* 2017,  
Pigment print on archival  
photo paper 200 x 110 cm

Above left: *Livingston I Presume II* 2017,  
Pigment print on archival photo paper  
200 x 110 cm

Above right: *Livingston I Presume III* 2017,  
Pigment print on archival photo paper  
200 x 110 cm





## CURATOR STATEMENT

Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger travelled to Deception Island in the South Shetland Islands, Antarctica, to research and experience the impact of how the ‘armies of today’ are consuming our fragile earth and oceans. This exhibition is a commentary through artworks that brings awareness to the tyranny of tourism and its decimation of the environment. Attention is brought to this through an examination of how far plastics and micro-plastics have infiltrated the pristine wilderness. Lea’s intensely thought-provoking work requests us to reflect, awaken and respond to our behaviour. Ultimately it aims to bring awareness and encourage change to our inertia around Climate Change and the use of plastics and micro-plastics that are creating irreparable devastation of our oceans and marine life. This is expressed in Lea’s three channel projection *Gagged* 2015, the viewer, discomfited by the sound and images of a woman gagging. This represents the many seabirds feeding their young who are choking on the plastics that they fish from the ocean. Will we be left gagging on our own consumerism?

### Lisa Sharkey M.A. Curator

**Lisa Sharkey** has been involved with the arts industry both in Australia and Internationally for over 40 years, working with film industry directors such as Jane Campion, Alex Proyas and Rolf De Heer. During her career Lisa has curated and installed exhibitions for Stills Gallery, Head On Photo Festival, The Blake, Mosman Art Prize, and The Moran Art Prize; in 2015 curating Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger’s solo exhibition at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery. Lisa completed her Master of Arts at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney in 2015, majoring in photography.



Above:

***Dissipation*** (Pentptych) 2018,  
Livingston Island five Glacier images  
dye-sublimate on Voile 200 x 110 cm

Top right:

***Elemental Obsolescence*** (Detail) 2018,  
Pigment print on archival photo paper  
120 x 80 cm

Bottom right:

***From Johnsons Dock***  
(Detail) Livingston Island Antarctica, 2017,  
Japanese Book 10 x 250 cm

## ARTIST STATEMENT



*Distorted Truths* is an exhibition that looks to create an intersection between our contemporary lives and their global effect. It is not just our impact from a distance that is examined here but our very presence in the eco system. Exploring the role of contemporary society in Climate Change, the Anthropocene and contemporary consumerism via tourism and effect on the viewed utopian destination, this exhibition continues the discussion and begins a few new ones.

My vision begins as the artist traveller, working to create art that investigates the impact of contemporary society and tourism on sensitive ecosystems and island communities through immersive residencies or eco-tourism. With so many holiday destinations and islands leading the Instagram and 'bucket list' of the modern traveller and in many ways remain oblivious to their impact.

*Distorted Truths* is an examination of the questions that surround our very presence within these landscapes and in this instance the perceived pristine environment and Antarctic adventure. Of how a remote place such as Deception Island, Antarctica is being affected where the dynamics of our physical impact is perhaps not always evident.

*Unhappy Feet* 2018, photographic works that brings the isolated and unseen to the urban and exposes Deception Island and its secrets. A place that one would have thought unaffected by our society but through this work and others in the exhibition the viewer is confronted by how we are effecting and affecting Deception Island. This island, which by its isolation, its surrounding waters, it and its wildlife remains virtually invisible to our world.

With works like *Deception I Berlin* 2017, I reveal just one part of a dialogue; a discussion to create further awareness around how society's actions have a 'butterfly effect' on such a remote, utopian destination. This discourse sits the viewer at the very centre of the work, an artwork that brings the contemporary world into our idealised destination, by way of projecting videos of street scenes on to the results of our contemporary world... the melting ice/glacier.

This exhibition works to traverse the traditionally held disciplinary boundaries between the sciences and the humanities. Through an interdisciplinary eco-critical vision I hope to reveal the (questionable) pristine through a window of our fast changing world. With the use of various mediums from the traditional such as photography and drawing, to the new media of video, sound and installation I hope this creates an immersive experience that brings us to terms with the scale of the challenges ahead.

Right: *1 of 2.075 in 2017*, (detail) 2017, the year of the least floating ice since records began. Pigment print on archival paper 120 x 80 cm





# CURRICULUM VITÆ

## CV of Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger Born Sydney Australia 1964

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS – INTERNATIONAL

- 2017 Venice Summer Academy – Palazzo Zenobio Venice  
Impressions Print Exhibition – Galway  
International Art Fest – Galway Mayo Inst of Tech, Centre for Creative Arts & Media – Ireland  
ASCI Biodiversity/Extinctions – The Silva Gallery of Art Pennington School
- 2016 Stunning Edge Contemporary Ceramics Exhibition – Taiwan  
10th Arte Laguna Prize – Shortlisted – Sculpture and Video
- 2015 ASCI Biodiversity/Extinctions – New York Hall of Science
- 2014 Where's the Art in Bio-Art? – School of Visual Arts (SVA) Flatiron Gallery Manhattan  
NYABF – MoMA PS1 Long Island – SVA New York  
Living Things are NOT Cooperating – Bio-Art Residency Exhibition SVA New York
- 2013 Semi Living – Bio-Art Residency Exhibition SVA New York  
MGC – Manhattan Graphics Juried Print Exhibition – New York  
Portrait in Print – Centre for Contemporary Printmaking – Norwalk Connecticut USA

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS – AUSTRALIA

- 2017 Harbour Sculpture – Woolwich Sydney
- 2016 Inkmasters Print Exhibition – Cairns Qld  
Waterhouse Natural Science Art Prize S.A.  
North Queensland Ceramics Award (biennial)  
Elemental – M Contemporary Projects – NSW  
2088 Mosman Regional Art Gallery NSW  
*Fresh Paint – Grilled Chicken* Articulate Project Space NSW
- 2015 SCA Post-Graduate Show – NSWCNWAP – Chippendale New World Art Prize – NSW  
2088 Mosman Regional Art Gallery NSW
- 2014 Inkmasters Print Exhibition – Cairns Qld  
Art Concerning the Environment – Scope Gallery Vic

- Print and Works on Paper Awards – Swan Hill Regional Gallery – Vic  
Swan Hill Print & Drawing Prize – Swan Hill Regional Gallery – Vic  
Under Pressure Printmedia Exhibition – Red Gallery Glebe NSW  
2088 Mosman Open Exhibition – Mosman Regional Art Gallery NSW
- 2013 Fisher's Ghost Open Art Prize – NSW  
Verge Art Awards finalist in 2D and 3D – Sydney University Postgraduate Exhibition  
SCAP – Sunshine Coast Art Prize – QLD

### RESIDENCIES, RESEARCH AND COLLABORATIONS

- 2017 Culture at Work Ultimo – Residency working with research from Antarctica, Mar 6 to present  
Deception Island (Antarctica) – Research 19 days  
The Ninth Wave project 'Floating Lab' on board the Guluk of the Netherlands, Jan 7 to 26
- 2016 Faroe Island Residency – Research 4 weeks  
The Clipperton Project 'Floating Lab' on board the Johanna of Vagur, June 3 to 28
- 2015 Lord Howe Island – Water sampling, sound recording, filming and research, April 25 to May 9  
The Clipperton Project – Inaugural floating lab Western Australia, March 2015
- 2014 Galapagos Islands Researching – filming, sound recording and research, Oct 1 to 15  
Bio-Art Summer Residency – SVA New York, May 19 to June 20  
Lord Howe Island – Water sampling, filming and research, Jan 12 to 26
- 2013 Bio-Art Summer Residency – SVA New York, May 21 to June 21  
OMG – Octopus Mandala Glow – Collaborative Performance work with Prof Victoria Vesna chair UCL Art/Sci, Aug

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2018 Spectrum Project Space WA, May 17 to June 2
- 2017 Gagged in Dystopia – Interlude Gallery Glebe Point Rd Glebe NSW, Jan 27 to Feb 4
- 2015 Colliding Worlds – Hazelhurst Community Gallery – the Kingsway Gynea NSW, Mar 6 to 17
- 2013 Coding the Future – GAFFA Gallery Clarence Street, Sydney, Feb 21 to Mar 4

### AWARDS AND GRANTS

- 2014 PRSS Sydney University Research Grant – for travel to research in the Galapagos Islands
- 2013 Ocean Grove Art Prize (Vic) – 1st Prize

### TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

- 2014 – Jan 2016 Master of Fine Art – SCA Sydney College of the Arts (Sydney University) including Auditing 2nd Year Botany, 3rd year and Marine Biology at University of Sydney and, 2nd year the Art of Sound and Noise and 2nd year Art and Nature at SCA
- 2013 Master of Studio Art – SCA Sydney College of the Arts (Sydney University)

### ARTIST (FLOOR) TALKS Solo Exhibitions

- 2018 Spectrum Project Space WA, May 18 and 25
- 2017 Culture at Work – Deception, May 17 to June 10  
Interlude Gallery – Gaggling in Dystopia, Jan 22 to Feb 6
- 2015 Hazelhurst Regional Gallery – Colliding Worlds, Mar 7, 8, 10 and 11

### ARTIST (FLOOR) TALKS Group Exhibitions

- 2017 Culture at Work – Open day, April 29
- 2016 Skyfire project space, Mar 13  
M Contemporary, Feb 20  
Articulate Gallery, Feb 6 and 14
- 2015 SCA Graduate Exhibition, Dec 5

### PUBLICATIONS

#### Conference Papers and Presentations

- 2017 *Beyond the Verbiage: Consumerism through Tourism and its manifestations in small islands and remote places.* Sustaining the Seas Conference SEI (Sydney Environment Institute) University of Sydney, Dec 12  
*Deception – Convergence of spaces brings context to time.* ISACS17 Symposium ZKM Karlsruhe Germany, Sept 30  
*Beyond the Idealised Mosaic: Stepping outside the comfort zone.* MAAANZ Symposium Hobart, Aug 18  
*On a Knife's Edge: exploring the tourism industry and consumerisms environmental effects through art.* Joint paper presentation with Lina Espinosa (Columbia) 12th Annual Arts in Society Conference, June 14 to 16

- 2016 *Gagged in Dystopia: the use of plastic and non-politically correct materials in the creation of art.* 11th Annual Arts in Society Conference UCLA (University of California Los Angeles), Aug 12  
*There Be Dragons: human impact on the unique environments of the Galapagos and Lord Howe Island.* Lecture about my research at Spektrum, (Art Laboratory Berlin), May 22  
*Gagged in Dystopia*, ISEA (International Symposium of Electronic Art) Hong Kong May 19  
*Gagged*, Presented at the Opening Keynote speech by Monica Gagliano PhD Jane Goodall Institute; Symposium Interconnectedness Brussels, May 14  
*There Be Dragons: human impact on the unique environments of the Galapagos and Lord Howe Island* – Lord Howe Island Museum, April 13
- 2015 *Exploring the Microscopic World of Plant Communication* – NMiCA (New Materialism in Contemporary Art) at SCA (Sydney College of the Arts), Aug 31  
*There be Dragons: human impact on the unique environments of the Galapagos and Lord Howe Island* – AESS (Association of Environmental Sciences and Studies) at UCSD (University of California San Diego), June 23 to 29  
*Distinction with a Difference: exploring the ecospheres of the Galapagos and Lord Howe Islands with controlled tourism* – AMOS (Australian Metrological and Oceanographic Association) Conference Brisbane, July 15 to 18
- 2014 *Metaphor for Evolution: From Weed to Tree and exploration of the Dandelion* – Affective Habitat – Humanities Conference – ANU Canberra, June 19 to 21

### PUBLICATIONS GENERAL

- 2016 Art the Science Blog – <http://artthescience.com/blog/2016/03/11/creators-lea-kannar-lichtenberger/>
- 2017 Video Interview – Interlude Gallery <https://vimeo.com/210705521>
- 2017 Artist and Climate Change – June 12, 2017 – *Exploring Tourism and Contemporary Societies' Effect on Three Utopian Ideals*

# SOLO EXHIBITION DISTORTED TRUTHS – LEA KANNAR-LICHTENBERGER EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

## Exhibition List of Works

*Livingston I Presume I*, 2017, Pigment print on archival photo paper 200 x 110 cm

*Livingston I Presume II*, 2017, Pigment print on archival photo paper 200 x 110 cm

*Livingston I Presume III*, 2017, Pigment print on archival photo paper 200 x 110 cm

*Unhappy Feet I*, 2018, Pigment print on archival photo paper 200 x 110 cm

*Unhappy Feet II*, 2018, Pigment print on archival photo paper 200 x 110 cm

*Elemental Obsolescence*, 2018, Pigment print on archival photo paper 120 x 80 cm

*From Johnsons Dock – Livingston Island Antarctica*, 2017, graphite, Japanese Book 10 x 250 cm

*1 of 2.075 in 2017*, (detail) 2017, the year of the least floating ice since records began. Pigment print on archival paper 120 x 80 cm

*Distorted Truths*, 2018, (Ephemeral work) Perspex Petri Dish 120 cm diameter x H12 cm, block of ice H100 x 35 x 25 cm, plastics collected from Deception Island, with projection video *Distorted Truths*, size 120 x 100 cm

*Deception I Berlin*, 2017, Runtime Video 01:00 sec looped, runtime Sound 03:00 sec, sound by Maria Alfonsine and Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger; Projection of Berlin street scene onto melting glacier Deception Island, South Shetlands Islands, Antarctica, size varies

*Gagged*, 2015, 3 channel video and sound installation 14:00 looped, performed by Molly Morpew, choreography and directing by Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger with written text by Carl Safina 2015, size varies

*Telefon to Whalers Bay*, 2018, runtime 01:00 sec looped, time-lapse of Journey from Telefon Bay to Whalers Bay Deception Island

*Dissipation*, (Pentptych) 2018, Livingston Island Glacier dye-sublimate on Voile 200 x 110 cm

**Front and back interior of cover** – end pages *Livingston I Presume VI and VIII* 2017

**Cover** *Dissipation* – Livingston Island Glacier 2017

**Page 12** Photograph of Lea at Whalers Bay taken by Tristan Tyrrell

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the late Jens Lichtenberger for his unwavering support of my artistic journey. Lisa Sharkey for her curation of the exhibition and emotional support. The Ninth Wave and captain of the Geluk, Tecló Gonzalez Garcia with whom I journeyed to Antarctica and the Edith Cowan University for their support in staging this exhibition.

Lea Kannar-Lichtenberger  
32 Cove Street, Birchgrove NSW 2041  
[www.leakannar.com](http://www.leakannar.com)  
+61 417 130 560



ISBN-13: 978-0-6481106-0-6

‘there is a tension within Kannar-Lichtenberger’s work between the aesthetic and the repugnant, between meditating on the deceptive beauty of artifice and on the beauty of the natural world and the devastating effects of its abuse’

Dr Laetitia Wilson

