

RIMA: reaching for a word that does not exist



**Essays and Images to accompany the work RIMA
by SQUIDSILO (Ashley Scott and Julie Vulcan)**

Artist Statement

I am no longer a person. I am nothing. My truth is no longer the truth.

SQUIDSILO

We started thinking about this work three years ago. At first we talked about our interest in the tiny shifts and details of everyday life, such as a shadow or light beam on a wall or an inconsequential sound that somehow attracts your attention but it was what these might amplify in terms of mental responses that ignited our inquiry. We were aware that memories are embedded in the senses and exposure to triggers can excavate responses or stimulate associated fantasies. Imprisonment and exile provide scenarios where the range of sensory experience permitted to a person is restricted and their world reduced to a narrow chunk of stimuli. Within this world, memory responses are often out of step with the outside world a person once inhabited and are remixed with a whole bunch of new associations. Fictional and autobiographical writings by political and civil prisoners, exiles, recluses and even monks abound with this kind of limitation: a throttling of the density and variety of information that reaches the eyes, ears and skin of the subject. Sometimes that's the point of self-imposed confinement, to reduce the 'noise' of the lived world. However, the political dimension of this is that sensory confinement can be a punishment or a way to put people and ideas into some kind of cold storage. It is an inevitable topic that is especially obvious in the writing or twitter fiction within RIMA and one that Julie expands upon in her essay *A sliver of wood and a drop of blood*. It's very pertinent to the world at the present time and the society that we live in.

RIMA is constructed on layers, metaphorically, literally and virtually. In direct relationship to the physical space that Julie inhabits there is a mimic virtual room reading and regulating the inputs and outputs of the space. The architecture of the work is elaborated on in Ashley's essay *And all those colours*. Here he draws parallels to the real world and complex systems that seem immutable but are as contrary as their counterparts. Theron Schmidt teases out this double world further in his essay *Living in augmented times*. Within the context of art and daily consumer life he compares how public space and augmented space co-habit. Unpicking notions of the authentic experience and its purpose via the live, mediated, constructed and represented, he suggests a place of arrival. In comparison Anna Gibbs speaks as the receiver of the communiqué, unraveling the unsettling nature of each missive. *Interruptions in the everyday* explores the affecting nature of the layered voices in the RIMA twitter fiction.

During our residency at the Lock-Up Contemporary Art Space (A re-purposed mid 1800's era Police Lock Up in Newcastle NSW) in 2013 and in response to readings on Solitary Confinement, Julie spent a day in one of the dim cells with water only, one meal and no other form of distraction. This tiny glimpse into the reality of what solitary actually means became a driving force shaping the research and the creative writing for RIMA. Our somewhat romantic notions of a prisoner's diary were shifted into a harsher more pervasive reality.

It is well documented that healthy subjects spending just 48 hours in sensory deprivation can experience severe anxiety, extreme emotion, paranoia and hallucinations. In addition, within this same timeframe, the side effects on brain

function impair the capacity to remember and associate by up to 35%! This draws in to question many of the dubious circumstances people are held, in order to illicit statements. We can see how quickly the truth can be skewed and made vulnerable to manipulation. In *Breaking the wall*, Julie asks Charandev Singh, to expand on current and past practices of solitary confinement in Australia, based on his work as a paralegal and abolitionist. Even if we like to spend time alone we are ultimately social animals and solitary is one way of breaking the fabric of what it means to be human. The most heartbreaking accounts of time in solitary, abject conditions aside, recall the deep craving for human touch. Solitary confinement is labelled a human rights violation.

Julie Vulcan's reading of Lena Constante's autobiography initially influenced the project greatly. Her words have been adapted for the RIMA tagline, the title of the artist booklet and Julie's essay.

SQUIDSILO formed in 2010 as a collaborative extension of the independent practices of Ashley Scott and Julie Vulcan. They are committed to exploring new ways of creating and developing works that inhabit multiple simultaneous spaces incorporating the physical and the virtual. Both are interdisciplinary artists. Julie's practice is situated in performance, installation, media, text, site-responsive and durational work. Ashley is a musician, media artist and computer programmer. Their work has toured nationally and internationally separately and together.

<http://squidsilo.net>

Cover image: RIMA, remote performance for The End(s) of Electronic Literature Conference Bergen Norway, Black Box UNSW Art & Design 2015 Photo Ashley Scott

Images page 15: RIMA, the Lock-Up Contemporary Art Space Newcastle NSW Photos Jessi England Sideris 2015

And all those colours

Ashley Scott

The dark core of RIMA is a virtual room, a concise data structure in computer memory where representations of physical phenomena are recorded.

The *virtual room* looks like this:

light	: <i>value</i>
dark	: <i>value</i>
heat	: <i>value</i>
cold	: <i>value</i>
sound	: <i>value</i>
activity	: <i>value</i>
touch	: <i>value</i>

value being a number that is set continuously by the software in response to sensor readings.

This is indeed an anaemic representation of a real space.

And all those colors? All those yellows, all those reds, all those oranges? A lot of gray in there now, a lot of blue.

Jean Shepard/Charles Mingus The Clown

For the purpose of the work we need to swap the richness of a lived environment for a tiny number of named *parameters*. These are derived from environmental factors as well as elements, which might be set by the activity of performer (*touch, sound* etc.).

From the start of working on RIMA, we have been interested in making causation more sophisticated than simply "something happens, causing something else to happen" i.e. input > output. In our case when the time comes to create output, a software process examines the state of the room and active parameters set the possible outcomes for a match with the repertory of tagged text fragments, one of which is chosen.

So the system falls into two halves: one manages input that stores data akin to weather, the other is therefore like a weather station that manages output.

The blood rapidly cooled to become the same colour as the ground, because we're watching this in infrared.

Brandon Bryant, ex USAF drone pilot

In a correlation that might be drawn between the virtual room and real, lived experience, the sensor data updates the room at a much faster rate than the choices that create the output, so the majority of data is lost or comes to nothing, like noise and stimuli in our sensorium that will never provoke a response. We select what is relevant or what grabs our attention.

This is the kind of obviousness we deal with when creating a simple automaton but not to say that the behaviour of the collection of systems remains simple all the time.

In practice, even a couple of routes through which feedback can occur will create an uncertainty and/or repetition. For instance, the software responsible for the soundtrack is switched between characteristic scenes by the system's output (interrupting the live mix), in turn setting the *sound* parameter in the space data.

This system behaviour suits the presentation: RIMA does not unfold a clear, ordered narrative but a succession of fragments where the order is uncertain ahead of time. The work can be experienced within a range of personal and remote contexts (in the space, remotely in front of a computer, street-level projections, etc.) where one or more of the full complement of channels (sound, performance) is absent.

The ensemble of fragments are to be assembled by the readers, viewers and listener in a manner that aligns with our initial ideas about this work - how the observation of small details set in motion thoughts and memory associations. These are the processes and the conduits that are of interest to us.



Image: RIMA, remote performance for The End(s) of Electronic Literature Conference Bergen Norway, Black Box UNSW Art & Design 2015 Photo Ashley Scott

A sliver of wood and a drop of blood: keeping the lines open

Julie Vulcan

There are currently many paths of communication available to us and these access points offer us multiple platforms to present self-consciously constructed images of who we are and what our message is. From blatant exhibitionism to urgent calls to witness; from powerful corporations to grassroots activism; from the historical past to the speculative future there is much that we are driven to broadcast. This energy to inform is one of the most intrinsic needs entwined within self-validation and our contribution to our place in this world. It is also how we learn, differentiate, listen and make sense. Within such a noisy world of voices competing to be heard, one over the other, it is regularly the loudest that break through or talk over. Words are powerful and often misused. Yet there are softer, sustaining voices that endure and wait patiently to be heard.

In writing RIMA for a twitter feed, I needed each text to be self-contained even if ultimately it could be read as a whole. I looked at what each message held. I peered into its kernel. It had to relate to a condition, a moment, an energy conveyed in an instant. I often used the autobiography of Lena Constante as an anchor for my rhetorical prompts - *If you only had a tiny strip of paper what would your most urgent words be?*

When your words are reduced you fine-tune them. When your actions are reduced you similarly fine-tune the language of your body.

In situating RIMA within a body, it is important to me that it takes up the body of a woman – not just in the physical space but also in the virtual space that hosts the protagonists of my fictional counterparts. Penal systems of punishment and solitary predominantly conjure the masculine voice. If we do think about the incarceration of women, it is usually influenced by popular culture; the Australian 70's TV series *Prisoner*, its more recent reimagining *Wentworth* and the current TV drama from the United States *Orange is the New Black*. Generally, beyond stereotyping, we may not ponder on the series of events that have led a woman to find herself imprisoned, let alone the myriad of metaphorical prisons that have been constructed around women throughout history. We do not necessarily give her agency and we rarely think of her as a political prisoner. In the performance, the clothes I wear are a conscious choice to be seen in something mundane and everyday, rather than imitation prison garb. It is an attempt to close the gap. By choosing street-wear rather than a uniform, I intend to remove the initial signifier and the instinct you, the witness, might have to unconsciously draw a line between who we both represent. Within this choice there is an invitation to draw you closer to self-identification.

It is a fine line. Things can shift quickly, the slippage. I am you.

Time and time again, history has revealed to us that during a paradigm shift, a political upheaval or a revolution, alongside the opposition, the first voices to be 'disappeared' are the activists, the educators, the artists and the thinkers. Wrong time. Wrong place. This is a point of inquiry for me in relation to the text in RIMA. I do not pretend to understand the abject conditions. Nor do I understand the intricate details or the deals that have been woven and spun behind closed doors, to keep a civil

population at arms length and held assured that they are safe. I do not condone the actions of some prisoners. What I do question is a system that quietly and insidiously perpetuates itself while it parades its economic force to justify inhumane actions cloaked in alarmist propaganda. The final act is to relegate any 'body' that exists under its roof as having undergone a 'civil death' and a right to be human. Wrong time. Wrong place. No voice.

RIMA communicates isolation across three parallel spaces. The physical, the virtual and the future, the latter envisioned by the science fiction narrative #RIMA3. In the physical space is a body whose activity and non-activity convey the passing of time, detail the incremental shifts and reveal a cryptic code of gesture unfolding within the confined environment. In the virtual space of the twitter fiction two parallel voices transmit like a diary. The first takes us into a deeper darker reality beyond the physical space. Augmenting this it asks us to listen and in so doing question what is silenced. As we become privy to the conditions that precipitate the disintegration of a person's reality we also become acutely aware of the importance of isolated memory as ballast. The second voice introduces us to a parallel world where at first it seems like a dream conjured by the first but as it progresses we realize we are confidantes in an event unfolding some time in the future. It is an interface revealing a complex data code that sums up the energy of hope. We are on the precipice of something becoming, a new entity bound together by the experience of voices past.

Although separate these three dispatches are intricately bound together. They weave in and out of each others reality and ultimately they are a knowledge building program quietly creating a vision code that is silently inserting itself within the gross din. Ultimately these missives are trying to tell us something about ourselves about our bodies and our humanity. They are a prompt to understand that no action is isolated and to remind us that we are constantly feeding into data streams that reciprocally warp and fluidly shift our perceptions of the world. Our bodies house well-oiled and refined operating systems and similar to our communication networks they can be overpowered or compromised by adversarial messages. In a way RIMA is a cry for vigilance.

Digital media is no longer the domain of a privileged few. This is what makes working amidst social media so interesting because similar to an old school message in a bottle, you do not know where it might land in a vast sea or what action it might stimulate. However, the call to be heard has not changed over millennia only the apparatus by which it is penned. Amidst the clogged superhighways the message still has the hard task of finding its advocate. Thus the title of this essay is a nod to our resourcefulness and the materials we will find when we need to be heard.

Living in augmented times

Theron Schmidt

I am writing this in a week in which the blurring of the real and the simulated has escaped the confines of speculative art and definitively entered the mainstream--by which I mean profitability--in the form of millions of mobile-clutching players blundering their way through areas of the 'real' world that they might not otherwise visit, in search of virtual manna. The eruption of so-called 'augmented reality' heralded by the Pokémon Go phenomenon glimmers as a sanitized mirror of the simultaneous ways in which 'public space' is increasingly characterized by the propagation of terror: a heightened surveillance state, the perils of driving (or walking, or doing anything) 'while black', and the threat of indiscriminate killing that, after Istanbul, Orlando, and Nice, haunts any occasion in which we gather together in large groups. Is it any wonder that some of us might wish to hold up another layer to the world around us, one that serves to hide the world right in front of us at the same time as it sells us entry to another one?

In the face of this kind of virtualization of the world, what might be the role of a critical art practice? One line of argument might be one of rejection: to offer an alternative arena that refuses mediation. Here, the rallying cry would be Situationist mastermind Guy Debord's 1967 polemic against the 'society of the spectacle', with its opening provocation that 'All that once was directly lived has become mere representation.' Artistic practice might hold out the promise of a return to the 'directly lived' if only it could overcome representation, a view that is perhaps epitomized by iconic performance artist Marina Abramović's flavour of antitheatricity. As Abramović put it in a 2010 interview with Robert Ayers:

This is what I think: to be a performance artist, you have to hate theatre. Theatre is fake: there is a black box, you pay for a ticket, and you sit in the dark and see somebody playing somebody else's life. The knife is not real, the blood is not real, and the emotions are not real. Performance is just the opposite: the knife is real, the blood is real, and the emotions are real. It's a very different concept. It's about true reality.

And yet, a more careful examination reveals that the experience of this 'true reality' is dependent upon a consciously constructed situation. In Abramović's unsettling and influential *Rhythm 0* (1974), visitors to a Naples gallery were invited to use a range of props to interact with Abramović's compliant body, itself a prop; the visitors' defacements became increasingly aggressive and violent, until one visitor placed a loaded gun (one of the props) to Abramović's neck, and another visitor physically intervened by wrestling the gun away. And more recently, visitors to Abramović's 2015 residence in Sydney, in conjunction with Kaldor Public Art Projects, were required before entry to undertake a set of carefully systematized training exercises in order to prepare themselves for participation.

These examples offer access to an exciting reality, but at the same time reality is fabricated as a heightened experience, a removal from the everyday. They are, one might say, a form of 'augmented reality'. There is a comparison here with the idea of 'liveness', which the performance scholar Philip Auslander has argued is not the antonym to mediation, as something that mediation overwrites or destroys. Instead, the idea of the 'live' (and its seductive appeal) only has significance as a consequence

of the proliferation of mediation: in other words, the 'live' does not precede the mediated, but is produced by it.

What if we say something similar about the real in relation to the virtual or the simulated? What if the real does not precede the virtual, but is conjured by it? What if what is 'augmented' in augmented reality is exactly this additional sense of something vivid, something real, something that just might have consequences? This is not to suggest that the 'real' doesn't matter, or that everything is a simulation. In her final work, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), Susan Sontag lambasted such a notion:

To speak of reality becoming a spectacle is a breath-taking provincialism. It universalizes the viewing habits of a small, educated population living in the rich part of the world, where news has been converted into entertainment.... It suggests, perversely, unseriously, that there is no real suffering in the world.

There is suffering. Of course there is. On the subject of augmented reality and the intensification of experience, let us not forget the euphemism of 'enhanced interrogation' practiced on CIA detainees around the world. Rather than separating the real from the virtual, then, one of the roles of a critical art practice might be to remind us how they are intertwined. Performance can do this not in spite of its simulated nature, but because of it: it can engage with our simulated reality, to find ways of stitching the virtual with the fleshy.

I think something like this happens in Julie Vulcan's previous work *I Stand In* (2011-2014), a durational performance in which Vulcan tends to a series of volunteer bodies, lavishing them in the ritualized tenderness with which one might treat a sacred corpse. This work responds to the abuse and disappearance of bodies that are unreachable by care, by tending instead to bodies that can be reached. It makes no claim to be anything other than a representation--as the title itself acknowledges, these bodies are only 'stand-ins'--but neither could it be called 'mere representation' (to recall Debord's phrase). I would like to call it a kind of augmented reality, but one that generates not abstraction but fleshy sensation, enhanced touch, mortal remains. And I think this work continues in *RIMA*, Vulcan's collaboration with Ashley Scott, in which the virtual and the material are even more closely entangled: the body made hyper-body, the textual made visceral. We are already living in an augmented world. Work like this shows it to us.

Theron Schmidt is a Lecturer in Theatre and Performance Studies at UNSW Australia, and works internationally as a writer, teacher, and performer.

Interruptions in the everyday

Anna Gibbs

Tweets with the handle SQUIDSILO arrive in the Twitter stream, the brevity of the form meaning that their strangeness becomes immediately apparent at first glimpse: this is something distinct from the regular chatter, something commanding a different kind of attention from our habitual skimming glance at the latest. These arrivals create a pause in the everyday accompaniment of chatter, as if forming a pool in which time is temporarily suspended or congealed - an o like the opening of a mouth in the moment before speech and with it, sense, can form. Or on the website, the lines come and go, slowly, allowing time for attention to each. Neither assembled on Twitter under the RIMA hashtag nor on the SQUIDSILO website do these lines add up to anything like a story with all the familiar schemas of narrative that work to shape and modulate our experience of it. Even when framed in the space of the site or given a handle on Twitter, they remain somehow ungraspable, like a kind of pain we feel but can't contain with adequate description.

The term microfiction, often applied to the use of the tweet by writers and artists as a story space, seems to have little purchase here, where we are given no moorings in structure or character, however abbreviated. And although over time we might be able to piece together a situation for the speaker, either imagined or within the framing gesture of RIMA as a performance work, this is a kind of voiceless utterance, deprived of the capacity for dialogue, for reciprocal understanding or for sustained self-reflection. This is a voice in the process of being depersonalised, of a person being reduced to a bodily state, being made to have and to be nothing but a body. A person can never really be said to exist in the singular; human beings are inescapably social beings and communication with others - in the present or remembered - is the condition of our existence as a person. In solitary confinement, the certainties of time and place, which anchor us within the world, are dissolved as the rhythms of day and night are broken down by artificial light and memories merge with hallucination and with the present.

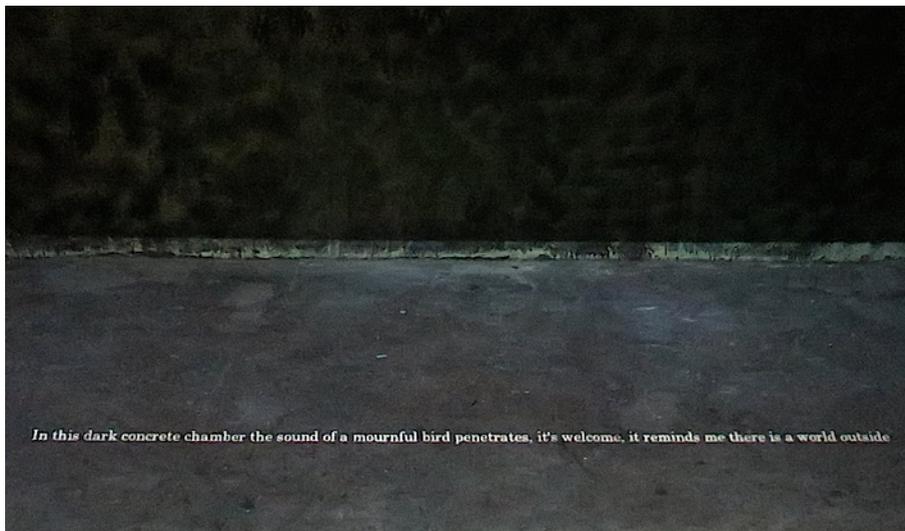
Here hallucination seems to take the form of a kind of science fiction bodying forth interrupted images of a totalitarian world whose nightmarish outlines remain indistinct and unbounded. There is a semblance of sense in the observation and reporting of an 'I', but nothing really adds up: the tropes of sci-fi - like bitten off bits of shrapnel disguised as words - are present but devoid of their containing story so that we are unmoored in narrative space; the 'I' seems to behave like an 'eye' detached from a body, offering an impossible optics refusing assembly into a coherent world.

This experimental writing is at once a gesture in the direction of fiction and the document of a durational work, an endurance performance in which a female body (amplifying Scarry's observation that the torture room is the mimicry of domestic space - and ultimately, the womb - as the condition of all human making) is made to undergo a solitary experience of confinement. This is an experience that we, the audience, can only apprehend from the outside, even as we receive its muffled reverberations in our own viscera and must struggle to make sense of them.

The experience of torture is inevitably particular, inescapably singular: RIMA aims not so much to represent it as to communicate it with all the immediacy of contagion

acting directly on bodies, on our bodies. We are affected, even contaminated by these tweets from a space of segregation, that recall, without at all pretending to replicate, the torture of the solitary confinement to which prisoners, especially political prisoners, are all too often subjected. RIMA calls this form of torture to mind, recalls it from the forgetfulness of everyday life. These interruptions in the smooth everydayness of the screen world recall to us the obligation to try to imagine what can only ever remain, strictly speaking, unimaginable. 'To have pain is to have certainty; to hear about pain is to have *doubt*', Elaine Scarry famously writes. If to represent the torture of solitary confinement is to betray it by subjecting it to doubt, to communicate something of it in this way, directly to another body, is to affirm the reality of pain itself, even if this can never be the *same* pain as that undergone by the one being tortured, nor in any way equivalent to it.

Professor Anna Gibbs teaches at the University of Western Sydney, Australia and writes across the fields of textual, media and cultural studies with a particular focus on affect theory, mimetic communication and fictocriticism. As an experimental writer she has published and performed her work internationally, and often collaborates with artists. She is currently completing a book, *'Exscryptions Memory, Movement, and the Unfolding of Space in Digital Writing'* with Maria Angel.



In this dark concrete chamber the sound of a mournful bird penetrates. It's welcome. It reminds me there is a world outside

Image: RIMA, the Lock-Up Contemporary Arts Space Newcastle NSW, 2015
Photo Jessi England Sideris

Breaking the wall

Charandev Singh is an abolitionist. As a paralegal with over 23 years of experience he works untiringly at the coal-face of racialised punishment, state violence and deaths in custody. He is at once an educator and a passionate voice for those unheard. I met Charandev in early 2016 after several email exchanges. In my quest to find thin-on-the-ground information about Australia's use and regulation of solitary, I had come across Charandev's voice in articles many times. It is essential to include his knowledge and deep understanding of the system that is so hidden and confronting for many of us to even begin to understand, let alone take responsibility. In terms of voices, in the context of RIMA and the accompanying essays, it is important to me that Charandev's is included. I asked him to respond to a series of questions designed to tease out our position in Australia. At the end of this I have listed a number of information and advocacy sites for further information

JV: In your line of work what are some of the effects of solitary that you have witnessed?

CS: The deadly and destructive impacts of solitary confinement have been consistent and escalating for over the nearly two hundred and thirty years that it has been used since the occupation and imposition of the prison nation in 1788. The effects of solitary confinement include very high rates of suicide and self-harm during and after release from segregation. Solitary confinement causes or compounds severe mental illness and distress, uncontrollable anger and other emotions, a long lasting sense of isolation, alienation and worthlessness, paranoia, disconnection and disempowerment.

Simply expressed – solitary confinement corrodes and tears away at our capacity to be human.

Among those people disproportionately targeted for solitary are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women, transgender people, victims/survivors of sexual and physical violence, people with severe mental illness and other cognitive impairments, young people (often transferred from youth prisons to adult prisons), imprisoned people's advocates/jail house lawyers, people who have become predatory in prison amongst many others.

All of the impacts of solitary confinement are intentional. Like the prison system as a whole - this is not a broken system that can be reformed to any degree. It is working as designed and intended.

Isolation is the oldest and pre-eminent weapon of all imprisoning systems – from immigration detention prisons, adult and youth prisons and all other places of institutionalised control.

JV: There is a lot of information and activist related material around segregation and solitary coming out of the USA, how does this compare with knowledge and information available to the general public here in Australia?

CS: What we know about solitary confinement is lead and driven by the voices of people in solitary confinement. Those who are enmeshed in isolation and seeking to

survive and end it, drive activist campaigning and research, academic research and litigation. In this country solitary confinement within the context of racialised punishment was a critical carceral strategy in the genocidal wars against First Nations people and in the genocidal capitalistic institutions of slavery.

The knowledge and literacy around solitary in the United States has been growing for at least forty years. The impact of over forty years of concerted speaking out, activist and academic research, litigation and journalism is only now bearing a far higher awareness of the endemic use and impacts of solitary confinement. An example of this is the essential site: 'Solitary Watch'.

In Australia there's a much lower level of awareness and transparency. There are no published State/Territory or National statistics about who is placed in solitary, why people are held there and for how long. There are no independent systemic reviews of people held in solitary. Independent scrutiny and reporting in Australia is very episodic and any window of scrutiny of prisons within prisons is quickly closed over. Colonial inquests into the deaths of people in solitary or recently released from solitary are rarely capable of undertaking systemic examinations and most of all changing practices and law.

Solitary confinement remains entrenched and is proliferating because it is both ensconced in secrecy, justified and represented to the public, as a place where 'the worst of the worst' within the 'monster factories' are held. Once the names of a few of the 'worst of the worst' are spoken; many people stop thinking critically about solitary confinement – it becomes an issue embedded in fear and self-justification – where alternatives are not even thought about; not to say anything of the incapacity to think through all the impacts of solitary that are carried by survivors.

I don't think anyone truly survives solitary.

JV: In the context of Australia's history as a penal colony, isolation is a purposeful element and in some ways can still be seen in the way decisions are being made in terms of border control, within and without its perimeters. How do you think this plays out in the modern Australian psyche?

CS: Australia is still a penal colony.

We imprison Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially women and children at rates far beyond anywhere else in the world. Aboriginal young people in WA are imprisoned at 53 times the rate of non-Aboriginal people. I encourage everyone to watch ABC 4 Corners – 'Australia's Shame - the brutalisation of children behind bars' aired on 25th July 2016 to get a real sense of what hyper racialised incarceration of Aboriginal children, including 13-year-old children in solitary confinement, is like in this country.

We mandatorily imprison asylum seekers and refugees in island prisons and the deeply abusive and secretive detention camps in Nauru, Manus Island, Christmas Island and on the mainland.

A death in custody occurs every three and a half days in this country.

Solitary confinement, especially with the context of racialised hyper incarceration, is all about collective punishment, expulsion, abandonment, isolation and a living death. All of these are foundational to the infrastructures and cultures of the Australian penal colony. They are all founded on and give institutional expression to the institutions of white supremacy and genocidal anti-Aboriginal blackness.

The work of prison abolition and the abolition of solitary confinement are intertwined with the work of ending the Australian penal colony; nothing less. Abolition is about taking apart the institutions of white supremacy and anti-Aboriginal blackness and building institutions and cultures that are embedded in social and other forms of justice and community safety. Abolition seeks to address and put an end to all violence, including the institutional violence, exclusion and expendability of prisons, borders and solitary confinement.

JV: Can you give an overview of where the International human rights commission and the Australian human rights commission stand in relation to Solitary Confinement?

CS: International human rights are very clear in relation to solitary. The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez, has stated that solitary should be banned as a form of punishment and should never be used against children or people who are mentally ill. Indefinite solitary confinement must end and the longest period that anyone should be subject to any form of solitary is 14 days at most.

Australia has no effective regime of human rights protections that operate to prevent torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment that is intrinsic to solitary confinement, nor to hold the institutional perpetrators of solitary to account. This perpetuates the institutional impunity that is central to solitary confinement. The Australian Human Rights Commission has no enforceable powers to prevent or address solitary confinement and the Courts have rarely intervened to end or modify it. However, everyday, solitary confinement is challenged and resisted as it is endured. Whether it is by children as young as 13; by Aboriginal people held in systems and cultures of racist incarceration that are barely different to those imposed in 1788; by people in immigration detention prisons fighting for their lives and freedom; by jailhouse lawyers and advocates; by people fighting to remain human. Resistance is continuous.

Resources

<http://solitarywatch.com/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-08/solitary-confinement-mental-health/5789062>

<http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20140514-how-extreme-isolation-warps-minds>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2014/dec/12/three-asylum-seekers-a-week-are-locked-in-solitary-confinement-on-manus-island>

<https://www.wipan.net.au/>

<http://www.flatout.org.au/>

<http://www.sistersinside.com.au>

<http://riserefugee.org>

<http://www.deathsincustody.org.au>

<http://researchersagainstpacificblacksites.org>

<http://acallfromherman.nfb.ca/#/intro>



Bibliography

Robert Ayers, *The knife is real, the blood is real, and the emotions are real*, Robert Ayers in conversation with Marina Abramović, 10 March 2010

JM Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Penguin, 1982.

Lena Constante, *Silent Escape: three thousand days in Romanian Prisons*, trans. By Franklin Philip, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995

Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle [1967]*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith, New York, Zone Books, 1994

NPR Staff, *The hidden cost of the drone program*, 5 May 2013
<http://www.npr.org/2013/05/05/181403067/the-hidden-cost-of-the-drone-program>

Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: the Making and Unmaking of the World*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1985.

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Penguin Books, London and New York, 2003.

RIMA: reaching for a word that does not exist is an independent publication by SQUIDSILO

Acknowledgements

Ashley Scott and Julie Vulcan would like to thank and extend their deep gratitude to the three contributors to this artist booklet Anna Gibbs, Theron Schmidt and Charandeve Singh. They have each generously made time to respond to RIMA and its context. In addition we would like to thank Jackie Johnston and Arts House for their support in its creation.

This booklet would not exist without the opportunities to develop and present the work in its various iterations. To this end we would like to thank all that have helped in the realisation of RIMA this far.

Jill Bennett, Sue Blackburn, Roderick Coover, Toby Gilbert, Dara Gill, Blair Hart, Joe Holloway, Belinda Howden, Lance Johnson, Jackie Johnston, Rachael Kiang, Tessa Leong, Luke McKinnon, Tony MacDonald, Nicola Morton, Anna Munster, John Murray, Courtney Novak, Scott Rettberg, Leisa Shelton, Jessi England Sideris, Ben Starick, Mei Szetu, Angharad Wynne-Jones

Project support and presentation

RIMA was developed with the support of Artist in Residence programs at The Lock-Up Contemporary Art Space Newcastle and Bundanon Trust NSW 2013. RIMA was first presented as an installation at The Lock-Up Contemporary Art Space 2015. The National Institute of Experimental Arts UNSW Art & Design hosted a subsequent iteration in 2015 for remote presentation at the End(s) of Electronic Literature conference Bergen, Norway.

Arts House Melbourne VIC present RIMA as a 23-hour work July 2016.

All text copyright of the authors © 2016