

FRIDAY 11 OCTOBER TO FRIDAY 29 NOVEMBER
PRESENTED BY SAMSTAG MUSEUM OF ART
WITH THE 2024 ADELAIDE FILM FESTIVAL
SUSAN NORRIE / MATTHEW THORNE / EMMALINE ZANELLI

Expand

ADELAIDE FILM FESTIVAL/SAMSTAG

—— EXPAND MOVING IMAGE COMMISSION

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Expand Moving Image Commission **Essay by Anna Zagala**

The history of the planet is a story of the earth—rock containing silicon, iron, magnesium and aluminium, among other rich, vital metals and minerals—alongside the evolution of animal species, ourselves included.

The earliest example of stone tools, which were found at the Lomekwi archaeology site in Kenya, date back 3.3 million years. These flint axes were fashioned by *genus homo*, ancestors to *homo sapiens* by some 1.1 million years.

Our survival has relied on the ingenious, inventive ways that we have put what has been on hand and underfoot to use. Across the span of these millions of years, our now-extinct ancestors evolved to form groups, shaped over time into societies with cultures, infrastructure and institutions. As of 2024, the number of humans on the planet is estimated to have grown to 8.2 billion. Every single development—electricity, technology, housing, transport—has been dependent on the metals and minerals extracted from underground.

The scale as well as the economic and environmental impacts of global resource extraction that have enabled this development are staggering. The quantity of natural resources that humans consume over the course of their lifetime is difficult to grasp. On some fundamental level, the vastness of mining eludes comprehension.

Consider that Australia is the fourth-largest mining country in the world. South Australia alone has more than two dozen mines that extract, process, transport and produce more than \$5 billion worth of gold, silver, copper, uranium, graphite, iron ore and zircon each year. This state contains 68% of Australia's copper resources, 79% of its uranium, 25% of its gold, 66% of its graphite, 5% of its iron ore and 7% of Australia's zircon.

Olympic Dam—situated on the traditional lands of the Kokatha, Dieri and Arabana people, 560 kilometres north of Adelaide—is the state's largest mine, processing copper, uranium, gold and silver. Comprising underground and surface operations, some 700 km of underground roads and tunnels traverse the massive site.

For the inaugural AFF/Samstag Expand Moving Image Commission, Susan Norrie, Matthew Thorne and Emmaline Zanelli set out to explore the subject of mining in South Australia in a series of docu-fiction works. In three distinct chapters, they focus on kids growing up in a mining town, mining's environmental impacts, and First Nation custodians complex relationship to the land on which resource extraction takes place.

Despite the three artists making repeated approaches to the mine's owner, BHP, requesting permission to visit and film on-site, access was denied. Prevented from engaging in the most direct way possible with their subject, the artists recalibrated. The resulting work grapples with the shadow cast by this powerful mining giant, considering how mining has shaped and marked the people, Country, land and culture of those living in its proximity.

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The town of Roxby Downs was founded and purpose-built to support the Olympic Dam mine site in 1986. Of a total population of 4000 people, 3,500 are employed by the mine—and they work hard: on average, the residents of Roxby Downs work significantly longer hours than the general population.

Shortly after being awarded the Expand Moving Image Commission, Zanelli, Thorne and Norrie travelled to the town on a reconnaissance trip.

Over the course of a year and a half, Zanelli would undertake six further visits to Roxby Downs to create her two-channel video work *I take care of what's mine*, a portrait of the town's young people, many of whom have one if not both parents working at Olympic Dam.

An interdisciplinary artist working across photography, performance, installation and film, Zanelli has been co-director of South Australian artist collective The Bait Fridge since 2016. Harnessing experimental music, performance, sculpture and digital media, the collective is renowned for its innovative engagement with young people nationally living in remote and regional communities.

Zanelli worked with Roxby Downs community organisations to present creative and skills-based workshops. From plasticine play with pre-schoolers at a kindergarten to creative writing and media workshops for tweens and teens through the youth centre, Zanelli sought to establish relationships through creative engagement, curious and open as to where the process might lead. Underlying Zanelli's methodology has been the ethics of representation, arriving at a participatory subject-led model that in the finished work has incorporated not only the perspectives but also the material created by her subjects. Zanelli's participants shared footage filmed on camcorders supplied by the artist. In addition, her collaborators developed texts directly in response to the outcome of the creative writing workshops.

I take care of what's mine opens with a car travelling by night towards the flickering lights of Roxby Downs on the horizon. What follows is a form of collaborative world-building that lightly draws on the fantasy role-playing storytelling game Dungeons & Dragons, popular with the kids who live there. Zanelli and her subjects capture their domestic environments, in particular the singular realm of the t(w)eenage bedroom, a private realm of projection, fandom and deep-cut hobbies. Across two screens, the work juxtaposes colour, texture and pattern—irrepressible, energetic motion with moments of stasis. It presents the slipstream of teenage lives, a passage suspended between childhood and adulthood defined largely by hanging out.

Reflecting Zanelli's complex aesthetic sensibility of playful DIY invention alongside slick commercialism, *I take care of what's mine* is imbued with a kinetic surreality. Knitting the disparate tableaux and sequences together is the quiet but palpable presence of the mine—the invisible backdrop for the working lives of the town's families, and the fulcrum around which everything circles.

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To make *Extraction*, filmmaker and photographer Matthew Thorne departed from Adelaide and drove north, “boundary riding” the edge of the Olympic Dam mine site, the largest multi-ore body mine in the world. Thorne’s journey crossed thousands of square kilometres of remote South Australia, including several smaller mines presently in the process of being acquired and absorbed by BHP (Arcoona and Carrapeteena), the mining townships of Roxby Downs and Andamooka, the inland Salt Lakes—notably Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre and Lake Torrens—, the painted hills of Coober Pedy, and the dried-out wetland aquifers north of Andamooka on the way to William Creek.

Though by no means his only subject, Thorne has an abiding interest in Australia, and in Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples’ relationship to place. Two recent projects include the short narrative films *The Sand That Ate the Sea*, which documents the mining town of Andamooka, and *Marungka tjalatjunu* (Dipped in Black), made in collaboration with Yankunytjatjara man Derik Lynch, which traces Lynch’s return to Anangu Country following a crisis.

Remote settings and forgotten suburbs are locations that dominate Thorne’s works. In these settings, the contradictions between national myths and the gritty struggle for survival are most vividly laid bare. Travel expresses a longing for meaningful connection to people and place—and what it might mean to experience healing or peace. *Extraction* is similarly imbued with the experience of mediated movement across Country, shaped by the permissions negotiated by his collaborators, detailing with narrative restraint the physical imprint and psycho-social impact of settler colonialism.

In the process of researching *Extraction*, Thorne collaborated with Kuyani woman Donna Waters, whom he had met while undertaking *The Sand That Ate the Sea* years earlier. *Extraction* is framed by Waters’ voiceover, which hovers over the long takes and slow pans of the unfolding landscape—flat horizons, vast skies, small towns, and gentle, undulating hills. Shot through with palpable fury, Waters grieves the loss of culture by curtailed access to Country. As a lone voice, set against the land, her narration asserts its presence as a quiet but powerful act of resistance.

Except for a handful of aerial perspectives, Thorne’s camera is set low to the ground. From this vantage point, it unobtrusively takes in the granular shifts and changes as day turns to night, documenting the passage of time in calm and composed shots and sequences. These formal decisions place value on observation. Thorne says of his work, “[i]t’s an invitation to look and look and look and look, and maybe, just maybe, see something of what we’re not seeing as people who are guests in this place. It’s a mediation on that. On what we don’t see. What I don’t see—but want to be able to see.”

In an art practice that spans 40 years, Susan Norrie’s work has detailed environmental, geological and socio-political realities across the globe. In the late 1990s, Norrie’s work shifted to focus on the moving image and installation. Significant projects have included *Undertow* (2002), *Havoc* (2007), *SHOT* (2009), *Rules of Play* (2009-2014), *Dissent* (2012-2014), *aftermath* (2016) and *Spheres of Influence* (2016-2019). Norrie’s numerous projects have investigated the impact of human endeavour and the far-reaching and unintended consequences of technological development. The subject of resource exploitation features prominently. Charting the devastating environmental effects of various forms of mining in the Asia-Pacific region, she returns to the same disaster zone in moving image commissions, documenting human adaptation and survival amidst destructive natural and man-made events.

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Typically, in Norrie's work, the camera is left to run in a natural setting to observe in an unaffected way. This technique captures the nuance of human behaviour, a certain sharply defined sense of place that is both poetic and unadorned. This sense of unaffectedness is central to *FALLOUT*. In Norrie's chapter on mining in South Australia, the artist connected with Kokatha Custodian Andrew Starkey and Elder Sue Coleman-Haseldine, who have spent more than four decades fighting to protect Kokatha heritage sites across South Australia's Western Desert region.

Centring her subjects in frame, *FALLOUT* is composed solely of direct-to-camera address. Norrie cuts between Starkey and Aunty Sue on Kokatha Country, filmed on location at Lake Hart North at Woomera Prohibited Area, the uninhabitable and radioactive Community Sports Building at Ceduna, and a mining site at Mount Gunston. Flanked by the dusty red earth that stretches between Port Augusta and Woomera and the endless sky, *FALLOUT*'s two subjects occupy the composition like stable anchors.

Over the course of 30:51 minutes, we watch Starkey and Aunty Sue speak with the fluency and shorthand that accompanies extensive knowledge and experience. In fragmentary monologues, Norrie captures their testimony, which ranges between factual description of key events, anecdote, analysis and speculation. The span of topics is deep and wide, encompassing everything from the site's history and politics—atomic testing in Maralinga Emu Fields; the destruction of Juukan Gorge and the resulting Senate Committee inquiry; the 1982 Indenture Ratification Act; the dispossession and family discord created by Native Title—to environmental and physical impacts—uranium waste; contaminated soil; environmental degradation; and the prevalence of cancer and thyroid dysfunction.

Gaining the trust and participation of Starkey and Aunty Sue, Norrie presents the perspective of two dogged activists' unwavering struggle to achieve recognition for past wrongs, as well as their efforts to secure protection from future development. While tallying losses and betrayals, *FALLOUT* centres its subjects' enduring relationship to oral traditions and culture, which defines customary behaviour, understanding and knowledge of Country. As such, it is a study of persistence and strength. Norrie has described the work as "intentionally provocative". It is unapologetic in its intention to bring about political and social change.

"We need to protect the animals and birds. They have no voice. They can't speak for themselves. Humans must take responsibility."

"I am a survivor of Maralinga Emu Fields atomic testing. But you know what? So is every other Australian black, white or brindle."—Sue Coleman-Haseldine

Anna Zagala

Anna Zagala is Associate Curator at Samstag Museum of Art. Her writing on art and the moving image has been published in *Senses of Cinema*, *Metro Magazine*, *Art Monthly Australasia* and *Art link*. In 2023, she edited and contributed to *Outside the Frame: Art and the Moving Image* (Perimeter Press x ACMI x Samstag Museum of Art).

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Susan NORRIE, *FALLOUT* (Expand Moving Image Commission), 2024. Still from video, single channel video with sound, 30 min 51 sec. Commissioned by Samstag and the Adelaide Film Festival. Still courtesy the artist.

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Matthew THORNE, *Extraction* (Expand Moving Image Commission), 2024. Still from video, single channel video with sound, 61 min. Commissioned by Samstag and the Adelaide Film Festival. Still courtesy the artist.

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Emmaline ZANELLI, *I take care of what's mine* (Expand Moving Image Commission), 2024. Installation view at Samstag Museum of Art, University of South Australia. Photography Sia Duff.

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The inaugural Expand Moving Image Commission is a series of experimental docu-fiction moving image works by artists Susan Norrie (NSW), Matthew Thorne (SA) and Emmaline Zanelli (SA). In three chapters, they follow the narrative threads of mining in Australia, focusing on fly-in-fly-out workers, their families, environmental impacts and the complex relationship experienced by First Nation custodians of the land on which resource extraction takes place. Together they offer counter perspectives to frequently clichéd assumptions, excavating a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of this underrepresented but critical sector of contemporary Australia.

This project originates from the 2022 Adelaide Film Festival (AFF) EXPAND Lab, a development initiative bringing together filmmakers, artists and screen-based practitioners to develop collaborative approaches to making moving images. The AFF EXPAND Lab was initiated by Adelaide Film Festival and delivered in partnership with Samstag Museum of Art, Illuminate Adelaide, Art Gallery of South Australia and The Balnaves Foundation, with support from Arts South Australia.

Samstag Museum of Art, October, 2024

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The inaugural Expand Moving Image Commission was commissioned by Samstag Museum of Art, University of South Australia and Adelaide Film Festival. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body.

This project originates from the 2022 AFF EXPAND Lab, a collaborative initiative by the Adelaide Film Festival, and delivered in partnership with Samstag Museum of Art, Illuminate Adelaide, Art Gallery of South Australia and The Balnaves Foundation, with support from Arts South Australia.

Susan NORRIE

FALLOUT, 2024

single channel video with sound

30 minutes 51 seconds

CREDITS

Camera: Susan Norrie

Editing: Wayne Love

Acknowledgements: Andrew Starkey and Sue Coleman-Haseldine

Matthew THORNE

Extraction, 2024

single channel video with sound

61 minutes

CREDITS

Voice: Donna Waters

Producer, Director, and Cinematographer: Matthew Thorne

Editor: Nicola Powell

Cultural Advisor: Derik Lynch

Aerial Unit Producer: Chris Luscri

Aerial Unit Cinematographer: Andrew Gough

Sound Recordist: Jed Silver

Sound Design and Mix: Marlon Beatt

Colour Grade and Mastering: Daniel Stonehouse

Coloured and Mastered at Crayon, Melbourne

Data Wrangler: Allison Chhorn

With thanks to the community of Andamooka and Roxby Downs, Ian Thompson, Angela Thompson, Lara Lukich, Katlin Wilby, John Wilby, Stacey Dadleh, Barry Dadleh, Trevor Wright & Wrights Air, and all those who we met along the way.

The artists give their respect to the Kuyani, Kokatha, Barngarla, Kurna, Nukunu, Andyamathanha, Arabana, and Yankunytjatjara people, traditional owners of the lands on which this work was made.

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Emmaline ZANELLI

I take care of what's mine, 2024

two channel video artwork with sound

25 minutes 45 seconds

CREDITS

Director: Emmaline Zanelli

Cinematography: Liam Somerville, Katrina Penning

Editing: Liam Somerville

Text: Thomas McCammon & Autumn Royal

Music: Mat Morison (Behringer 2600), Nicole Hobson (soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophone), Zeno Kordov (drums).

Music mix: Mat Morison

YOUTH WORKSHOP CREW

Videography (featured in final cut): Caleb Crompton, Evangeline Crompton, Tayla Arbon, Alys Williamson, Leon Buie, Cristine Jesalva, Jake Penhall, Bianca Fernando

Writing & concept development workshop team: Bianca Fernando, Lylah Penhall, Karman Chapel, Cristine Jesalva, Kyle Elmore

Performers/sitters: Charlie Barnes, Jake Penhall, Leon Buie, Cristine Jesalva, Niecy Sagun, Kylah Barnes, Max Jarmyn, Karman Chapel, Kyle Elmore, Bianca Fernando, Evangeline Crompton, Evelyn Crompton, Caleb Crompton

General film workshop crew: Alys Williamson, Henry Ellbourn, William-Beau (Bill) Fraser, Tully Hersey, Chelsea Biar, Alyssa Biar, Alex Lovelock, Cooper Renshaw, Tilly Matilda Aitchison, Shayla Crompton, Max Jarmyn, Rhys Matter, students at Roxby Downs Area School and children at Roxby Downs kindergarten.

Workshop facilitators: Emmaline Zanelli, Liam Somerville, Thomas McCammon, Autumn Royal, Benen Hamon, Eloise Fuss, Katrina Penning

Mentor: Lara Thoms.

THANKYOU to Tayla Voy for her work coordinating youth workshops and being a true support to all young people involved. Thankyou Amber Archdale for coordinating youth workshops at the Roxby Downs Area School. Thankyou Lara Thomas for mentoring me. Thankyou Teresa for supporting me and Louie for helping me.

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Cover image: Matthew THORNE, *Extraction* (Expand Moving Image Commission), 2024. Still from video, single channel video with sound, 61 min. Commissioned by Samstag and the Adelaide Film Festival. Still courtesy the artist.

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SAMSTAG WIRLTUTI SEASON

Adelaide Film Festival/Samstag Expand Moving Image Commission is a Samstag Museum of Art and Adelaide Film Festival commission for the 2024 Adelaide Film Festival. 11 October — 29 November 2024

Commissioners: Erica Green, Director, Samstag Museum of Art and Mathew Kesting, CEO/Creative Director, Adelaide Film Festival
Catalogue Author: Anna Zagala

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