

SESSION 1 17 July – 9 pm	SESSION 2 18 July – 9 pm	SESSION 3 19 July – 9 pm	SESSION 4 17 December – 7.30 pm
<i>Ultimate Substance</i> (2012, 34') Anja Kirschner & David Panos (DE/ GR-US)	<i>Subconscious Society,</i> <i>Feature</i> (2014, 39') Rosa Barba (DE / US)	<i>The Second Journey</i> <i>(To Uluru)</i> (1981, 74') Arthur and Corinne Cantrill (AUS)	<i>Lettres du Voyant</i> (2013, 40') Louis Henderson (UK)
<i>Europium</i> (2014, 21') Lisa Rave (DE)	<i>Uranium Hex</i> (1987, 11') Sandra Lahire (UK)	<i>The Song of Stone</i> (1963, 24'30") Toshio Matsumoto (JP)	<i>The Mermaids, or</i> <i>Aiden in Wonderland</i> (2018, 26'29") Karrabing Film Collective (AUS)
<i>Faux Départ</i> (2015, 22'43") Yto Barrada (MA)	<i>Nauru – Notes from</i> <i>a Cretaceous World</i> (2010, 14'55") Nicholas Mangan (AUS)	<i>Hand Held Day</i> (1975, 6') 16mm film projection by Gary Beydler (US)	<i>No Shooting Stars</i> (2016, 14'25") Basim Magdy (EGY)
	<i>Subatlantic</i> (2015, 11'24") Ursula Biemann (SWZ)		

# UNDER THE GROUND

## ARTISTS FILM AND EXPERIMENTAL FILM CYCLE

17, 18 and 19 July 2020 | 9 pm

Quadrum Gallery Gardens

17 December | 7.30 pm

Cinema São Jorge

### CURATED BY

Sara Castelo Branco  
Hugo de Almeida Pinho

### FILMS BY

Anja Kirschner & David Panos; Arthur & Corinne Cantrill; Basim Magdy; Gary Beydler; Karrabing Film Collective; Lisa Rave; Louis Henderson; Nicholas Mangan; Rosa Barba; Sandra Lahire; Toshio Matsumoto; Ursula Biemann; Yto Barrada

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Through an understanding of the world separated from the linearity of historical time, the concept of “deep time” was formulated in the 18th century by James Hutton, who posited that the temporality of the earth was not configured through sequential progression, but as a *dynamic cycle* of stratified flows in various temporalities. Excavations into the interior of the earth thus constitute both a kind of temporal journey into the past and a way of predicting future changes on the planet. These geological scales have therefore become essential in understanding concepts such as *anthropocene* or *technocene* – which refer to terrestrial periods in which human activities have a global impact on the functioning of the planet’s ecosystems, and in which deep geological time is corrupted by the temporality of human convenience. In this context, Jean-Luc Nancy has pointed to a contemporary process of “supplementation” and “supplantation”, in which technology integrates the raw

material of nature into its devices, while at the same time transforming and depleting natural resources for its own benefit. In this way, geological matter has become relevant not only to understanding our technological circumstance, but also to making certain labour, social and ecological costs implicit in these supposedly virtual and immaterial practices visible.

*Under the Ground* presents a set of works of different temporalities, images and geographies, ranging from Ghana, the Pacific Islands, Greece, Japan, Antarctica, North America to the Sahara Desert. Divided into three sessions, these works seek to raise central questions in order to promote a broader understanding of the deep temporality of the earth and of its critical relationship with the contemporary economy and technology. The first session presents a set of films which reflect on the connection between the history of the planet and history as created by humanity, dealing with themes such as the materiality of technology, ecology, mineralogy and indigenous spiritism. The second session presents a set of films that invoke a dystopian dimension related to the consequences of land exploitation, projecting an apocalyptic future temporality through perspectives as varied as those relating to eco-feminism and female labour, body and landscape transformation and indigenous cosmologies. Finally, the third session proposes a set of films that explore telluric, ancestral and sensorial tensions, using the technical capacities of film to enter into dialogue with the deep geological time of the Earth. *Under the Ground* presents a set of works that, without epistemic hierarchies, summon a perspective of the past or future in order to understand the present – *excavation* in order to understand the urgencies of contemporaneity and to create a more beneficial archaeology for the future.

memory, place, and ancestry by freely jumping in time and place, *Karrabing* exposes and intervenes into the longstanding facets of colonial violence that impact members directly, such as environmental devastation, land restrictions, and economic exploitation.

Language: English, Aboriginal English; Format: ?; Version: Original language version; color; mono.

### ***No Shooting Stars (2016, 14'25"')***

Basim Magdy (EGY)

A muted voice travels from deep beneath the surface like an eruption. It speaks of its might and our disillusioned reality. It speaks of its ancestors, their ghosts and the cosplay games they play while conversing about the unreachable islands on an alien abducted moon.

This is the place where sunsets look like frozen fireworks trapped inside a magic lamp. This is the endless road paved with turquoise humility.

This is my enigmatic lover whose fate is forever intertwined with mine.

Format: Super 16 mm and GIF animations transferred to full HD; color; silent, co-commissioned by Jeu de Paume, Paris, Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques and CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux).

only an illusion, even if a stubborn one.'

Language: English; Format: DCP; Version: Original language version; b&w and color; mono.

### ***The Song of Stone (1963, 24'30")***

Toshio Matsumoto (JP)

Ernest Satow (reporter of US Magazine "LIFE") shoots photographs of Masayuki Nagare (sculptor) and masons in Aji-village. This film is a documentary made for television programs and composed of photographs as materials. Music is made from the sound of stones. Good quality stone is excavated in the Aji-village. Masons live with stone and say, "stones are living things".

Language: Japanese, with English subtitles; Format: Prores 1920x1080 data-file; Version: Original language version; b&w; sound.

### ***Hand Held Day (1974, 6')***

16mm film projection

Gary Beydler (US)

This film consists of a single 14-hour time-lapse take, shot on an Arizona road from dawn to dusk. Facing west, Beydler holds in his right hand a small mirror that is framed by the camera, which faces east. A controller was used to trigger an exposure every six seconds. The entire take was ended when it got dark.

Format: Format: 16 mm; color; silent, 24 ips; distributed by Lightcone.

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## **SESSION 4 | 17 December | 7.30 pm**

### ***Lettres du Voyant (2013, 40')***

Louis Henderson (UK)

"To take back the gold that was stolen from us – this is the object of our actions."

*Lettres du Voyant* is a documentary-fiction about spiritism and technology in contemporary Ghana

that attempts to uncover some truths about a mysterious practice called "Sakawa" - internet scams mixed with voodoo magic. Tracing back the scammers' stories to the times of Ghanaian independence, the film proposes Sakawa as a form of anti-neocolonial resistance.

The film takes the form of a voyage through a network of digitised mine shafts that lead the viewer to each of the film's locations ; a gold mine, an e-waste dump, a voodoo ritual or a discotheque for example. A character recounts a story through reading a series of letters that he has written to the film's author – letters that speak about the colonial history of Ghana, of gold, of technology.

Format: HD, Dolby 5.1; English; Version: Original language version; color; stereo; courtesy of the artist and Le Fresnoy – studio national des arts contemporains.

### ***The Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland (2018, 26'29")***

Karrabing Film Collective (AUS)

In the near future, the Earth is dead and Europeans can no longer survive outdoors for long periods of time. A young Indigenous man, Aiden, taken away when he was just a baby to be part of a medical experiment to save the white race, is released into the world of his family. As he travels with his father and brother across the landscape he confronts two possible futures and pasts. The Karrabing Film Collective, an indigenous media group based in Australia's Northern Territories that uses filmmaking and installation as a form of grassroots resistance and self-organization. The collective includes approximately 30 members who together create films using an "improvisational realism" that opens a space beyond binaries of the fictional and the documentary, the past and the present. Meaning "low tide" in the Emmyengal language, *karrabing* refers to a form of collectivity outside of government-imposed strictures of clanship or land ownership. Composing webs of nonlinear narratives that touch on cultural

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## **SESSION 1 | 17 July | 9 pm**

### ***Ultimate Substance (2012, 34')***

Anja Kirschner & David Panos

(DE/GR-US)

Drawing on references from archaeology, philosophy, mathematics and ritual, *Ultimate Substance* departs from the hypothesis that the introduction of coinage in the ancient Greek world effected a profound cognitive shift that was key to the emergence of western philosophic, scientific and dramatic traditions. The work was made during a year in Greece and filmed in and around the Numismatic Museum, Athens and Lavreotiki, a nearby mining district, which provided the silver that constituted the material base on which the edifice of the classical Athenian city-state was founded. In contradistinction to the popular image of the acropolis, the vast mining galleries propose an inverse image of antiquity. Abandoned in Roman times, the mines were re-discovered in the 19th Century making Lavrio the first factory town of the modern Greek state. In the 1970s the local mining industry was again dismantled. Today the factory ruins house an educational museum on mining history. The film's fragmented structure explores how these different temporal strands have become compounded in time, and the impact of this subterranean history on our present understanding of the division between sensual and abstract forms of knowledge and experience.

Format: HD Digital file; English; color; stereo; distributed by LUX.

### ***Europium (2014, 21')***

Lisa Rave (DE)

Using various levels of imagery, the essay

film *Europium* draws connections between Papua New Guinea's colonial past and the planned excavation of raw materials from the Bismarck Sea. The film weaves a narrative around the rare earth element Europium; named after the European continent, the material is planned to being culled from the ocean floor to ensure brilliant color images on smartphone displays and other flat screens, and for its fluorescent property, which is used to guarantee the authenticity of euro bank notes. The film describes this seemingly mundane fact as a return and repetition of history, pointing in the process not only to the complexity of human culture, its economies and systems of exchange, but also exposing the invisible ghosts of the past as they appear in the modern objects of our lives.

Format: HD film; Version: Original language version; color; sound.

### ***Faux Départ (2015, 22'43")***

Yto Barrada (MA)

Once the floor of a prehistoric ocean, the now-arid region between the Atlas Mountains and the Sahara Desert has lately become an El Dorado for new fossil discoveries and exploitation – from major dinosaurs to trilobites. The remains of the spaceship-shaped trilobite, 250 to 500 million years old, are perhaps the world's most collected fossils. This gold rush gave birth to a pyramid-shaped industry of motivated professionals, from the autodidact fossil hunter parsing the rocks on a mountainside; to the "preparators" who bring the ancient specimens to light, starting out with dental tools; to the rock-shop operators, wholesalers, auction houses, decorators and internationally-trained paleontologists. The preparators practice a spectrum of wildly creative savoir-faire that spans from unearthing and embellishing intact specimens from the rock, to the grafting of broken creatures together. The most talented include those who don't shy away from the notion of fake: they assemble different

species into a hybrid new creature, or simply create limited-edition duplicates, using nature's originals and moldmaking principles, modern hardware store compounds, and techniques of their own invention.

Format: 16mm, digital video; Version: Original language version; color; sound. Commissioned by The Abraaj Group Art Prize 2015. Courtesy Pace Gallery.

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## SESSION 2 | 18 July | 9 pm

### ***Subconscious Society, a Feature (2014, 40')***

Rosa Barba (DE / US)

In "Subconscious Society", sequences of abandoned industrial sites, such as the science-fiction-like Maunsell Forts in Kent are montaged with interior scenes of characters engaging in ceremonial activities, which take place in Manchester's Albert Hall. The protagonists have been chosen from area residents of different age groups who had known the hall through its various uses. They comment on it in voice-overs often inconsistent with their motionless expressions. The dialogue is fragmented and abstract and insinuates a sub-conscious chain of associations. At times the theatrically dressed society members engage in the motions of an auction, although it remains unclear on exactly what they are bidding. For they seem trapped in the eternal present of their environment and only able to travel mentally, by means of images of industrial landscapes, which fade in as projections into the space of the hall and expand into new sequences. The Maunsell Forts from World War II are metal bunkers set on stilts rising out of the water. Scenes focus on emblems of technology, such solar panels in the desert, and effects of the mechanical age on the environment, such as in close-ups of a dismal estuary littered with boating relics. These environments suggest a nostalgia for industrial progress. "Subconscious Society"

suggests that material technologies exist as memories and have been superseded by a culture of immaterial communication. Travel no longer occurs physically in this society, but through strong mental images. The sounds, techno sounds, merged together with a murmuring of indistinguishable voices, create a sense of an unknown and unmet expectation of a dramatic occurrence associated with the sites visualized. Analogous to ceremonial actions in the film, the spectator thus becomes a kind of ceremonial protagonist in the visible projection machinery behind the illusion. "Subconscious Society" has transformed since its initial conception in 2012. Previous, evolving versions of the film have been exhibited in Manchester, and Margate, England, and at Performa New York in a performative event, each screening featuring different elements.

Format: 35mm, Blu-ray; Version: Original language version; color; optical sound. Commissioned and co-produced by Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art. With the support of Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg; Cornerhouse, Manchester; Turner Contemporary, Margate.

### ***Uranium Hex (1987, 11')***

Sandra Lahire (UK)

"Uranium Hex by Sandra Lahire deals with uranium mining in Canada focussing particularly on the woman's work and the destruction of the environment; the film uses a kaleidoscopic array of experimental techniques such as superimposition, re-filming, changes of speed, pace and an elaborate layering of sounds where 'atmos' recording mixes with voices, music – Michael Maziere, Independent Media, March 1988.

Format: HD Digital file; English; color; stereo; distributed by LUX.

### ***Nauru – Notes from a Cretaceous World (2010, 14'50")***

Nicholas Mangan (AUS)

*Nauru – Notes from a Cretaceous World* is a video

essay and installation that contrasts the ancient geological history of the Pacific island nation of Nauru with the country's more recent political and economic situation. Historically, Nauru's coral limestone rocky landscape has been rich in phosphate – a valuable mineral which, in Nauru, is the product of a mixture of decomposed marine life and guano deposits compressed over millions of years. In the 1920s, the British Phosphate Commission initiated industrial strip-mining of Nauru's ancient coral landscape, selling the phosphate mineral off to Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand where it was processed into a superphosphate fertiliser used to enrich agricultural soil. Over the coming decades the Nauruan government allowed mining to occur at such an intensity that by 1977, the tiny island nation of Nauru had become the second-richest nation per capita after Saudi Arabia. That year, as a sign of its wealth, Nauru built the then-tallest sky scraper in Melbourne at 80 Collins Street. Called Nauru House, it was crudely dubbed 'Bird Shit Tower' by many Australians. By the turn of the millennium, as phosphate levels became depleted, the Nauruan government began to default on numerous major international loans and declared bankruptcy. At this time, the Australian government initiated its so-called 'Pacific Solution' (2001-07) policy, and later 'Operation Sovereign Borders' (2013-ongoing), in which it paid the financially desperate Nauru to house asylum seekers attempting to arrive in Australia by boat. Of the video essay, *Nauru – Notes from a Cretaceous World*, the artist has said: 'I wanted to look at this moment in human history within a much longer period of time. I wanted to place human agency within the contours of a deeper time frame and an evolving ecosystem that doesn't place humans as the primary organism.'

Format: HD video; Version: Original language version; color; sound.

Courtesy the artist; Sutton Gallery, Melbourne; Hopkinson Mossman, Auckland; and LABOR, Mexico City, D.F.

### ***Subatlantic (2015, 11'24")***

Ursula Biemann (SWZ)

Appealing concurrently in this video essay to various meanings of the term "Subatlantic" — a climatic phase beginning 2,500 years ago, as well as the submerged regions of the Atlantic — Biemann immerses her camera deep in oceanic waters to ponder upon the entanglements of geological time with that of human history. As the voice-over speaks the accounts of a she-scientist traversing the pan-generational timescales of the Subatlantic, we navigate between the palpable evidence of the dramatic human-induced ecological alterations to the world and those that are simply beyond our comprehension.

Format: HD Digital file; English; color; stereo; distributed by VDB

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## SESSION 3 | 19 July | 9 pm

### ***The Second Journey (To Uluru) (1981, 74')***

Arthur e Corinne Cantrill (AUS)

Arthur and Corinne Cantrill, in *The Second Journey (To Uluru)*, bring scientific precision to their observation of the physical and luminous qualities of the surface of Uluru, a rocky formation in Australia's central desert. The details of its minerals, stones, dust, plants, trees and flowers are contemplated at different times of day, presenting variations in their forms. They also filmed cave paintings inside the monolith and other vestiges, adding a dimension of loss to the film: that of the flight of the aborigines from a territory transformed by the tourism industry. The timelessness of the monolith questions human perception of time and space, as well as of colour and sounds. As Einstein said: 'The distinction between past, present and future is