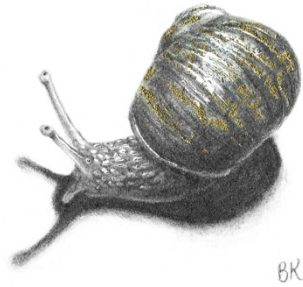


Precious Pests

The Link Exhibition Space in Ginninderry



Curated by

Ceilidh Dalton



Acknowledgments:

First I would like to acknowledge and pay my respects to the traditional caretakers and custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. I honour their ancient continuing connection to Country and believe we have a lot to learn from their culture in caring for and respecting our environment.

I would also like to thank and acknowledge the assistance of the staff at The Link in particular Tom Gray for inviting us back and his continued patience and support.

To all the artists,

Adam Fromholtz, Amber Ecclestone, Bonnie Koopmans, Cat Cotsell, Catherine Ross, Ella Fromholtz, Fenja T. Ringl, Jo Hollier, Joan McKay, Judy McClintock, Katherine Robb, Madeleine Tranter, Matilda Banks, Michelle White, Nat Thomas, Paul Dumetz, Rachael Robb, Robin Davidson, Robyn Banks, Ronia Ecclestone, Tahlia Jard, Tim Andrewartha and Zali Odlum.

This catalogue is my thank you to all of you. For sharing my enthusiasm for conservation and art and continuing on this journey with me.

Curators Statement

Precious Pests is a community exhibition by local artists who are all passionate about their love of our biodiversity.

Pest species in Australia have a huge impact on biodiversity and environmental degradation but they can also be highly valued as pets, in gardens or for food.

Precious Pests celebrates the value of certain pest species while acknowledging the damage they can cause. Artists have chosen pest species that they personally consider precious and examine the role they play in the ecosystem both good and bad, including the interaction between the precious pests and the species they threatened.

The exhibition aims to educate the public and in particular pest owners on the effect they have on biodiversity and threatened species and ways to minimise the impact.

Ceilidh Dalton 2021

The Artists

Adam Fromholtz

1. The Selfish Face of Man

Turned Radiata Pine, Pine cones and needles

This work was turned from Radiata pine, using the artists own face profile. It was stained using boiled pine needles, and sealed with bees wax. This work is made in the profile of the artists' face. Depicting the huge impact that Man has on the world around us, it is the selfish nature of Man that has made lasting impacts on the world around us, we are all responsible.

Radiata pine *pinus radiata* is planted throughout Australia as a plantation timber, in high-density plantations. It was introduced to Australia in the 1850s. It is used for its timber and is favoured for its fast growing and tolerance to soil and climate conditions. Radiata pine, when planted in dense plantations creates a "Biological Desert" the needles dropped by the pine trees are very different to native leaf litter they limit the native seeds that can germinate in the undergrowth. Very little grows in the understory because of its dense canopy and very few native animals will adapt to living there. Radiata Pine uses a lot of water and affects the water table in the local area, making for dryer conditions then usual further pushing out native flora and fauna. The needles are high in tannins and are slow to decompose, and are low in nitrogen and other nutrients. They also acidify the soil. Rapid loss of biodiversity follows soon after a pine plantation is planted. The lack of understory growth increases soil erosion, causing silting and acidification of nearby waterways. Radiata Pine quickly escapes plantations and spreads into native bushland.

Mankind. The most precious pest on planet earth, the impact of man can be seen over the entire planet. The arrogant consumption of resources has led to huge environmental impact. Mankind is responsible for: Pollution, Land degradation, Habitat loss, Species extinction, Depletion of natural resources, Cruel farming practices, Introduction of weed and pest, Introduction of disease and suffering to plant and animals, Degradation of natural waterways, Deforestation/land clearing, Climate change, War, Racism, Hatred, Poverty, Suffering.



Amber Ecclestone

2. Seat

Cow hide, Black bamboo

This seat is hand made from two pest species that are useful. Cows for their hides, meat and milk. Bamboo for its use in furniture and clothing.



3. Silver Cat

925 Sterling Silver

Cats make wonderful companions for humans and they also love to eat native birds and small marsupials. Keeping cats inside at night helps to reduce the damage they do. You are welcome to pick it up and hold it in your hand.

3. Horse

Mild steel

Horses are good for riding and for anxiety and ptsd therapy. They also have the biggest negative impact on sphagnum moss bogs in alpine regions and on frogs.

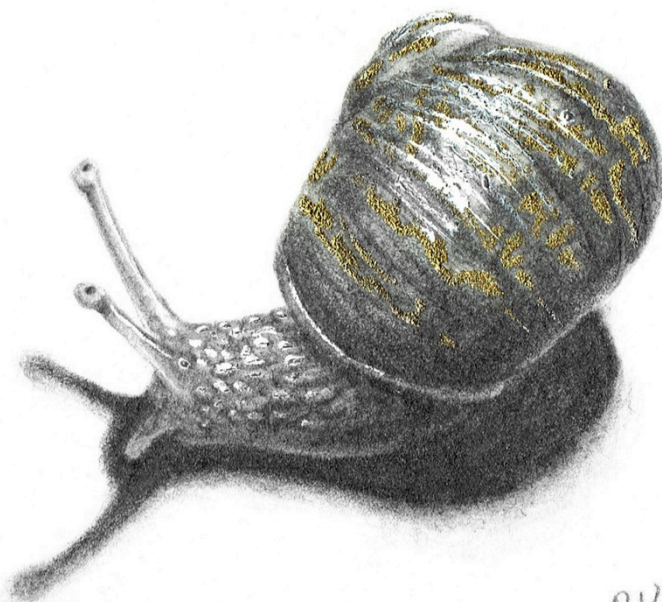


Bonnie Koopmans

5. And James was a very small snail

Graphite, ink and gouache

Snails are both loved and detested - they're endearing, personable and also ravenous - any garden keeper would be all too familiar. The Common Garden Snail, *Cornu aspersum*, originated in Europe but has since become widespread in Australia, however the generally mild winters and lack of predators in Australia allow the snail to breed prolifically.



Cat Cotsell

‘Pest’ is not a taxonomical term. What separates a pest from a non-pest is frequently a matter of interpretation and circumstance. In a way, storytelling.

These pictures explore some of the conflicting narratives we use for some common pest species. Our romanticised children’s-book nostalgia for the woodland creatures of Europe does not gel with the horrific damage we know they have caused to Australia’s native ecosystems, and the aesthetic role they play sits uneasily alongside the necessary evils of culls and poison.

The stories we tell can be read in various ways. I hope that these pictures encourage viewers to think about their feelings toward pests, native species, and the many issues which surround them.

6. Rabbits

Alcohol markers and pencils on marker paper.



7. Deer

Coloured pencil and watercolour.

8 Palm Squirrel

Coloured pencil and watercolour on mixed media paper



Catherine Ross

The spring of 2020 was a welcome relief after years of drought and the devastating black summer fires. While the landscape was in recovery, many exotic species also took advantage of the rain and the open ground left bare by the drought. Bright purple fields of Paterson's Curse (*Echium plantagineum*) covered whole hillsides and took over huge areas, growing as a monoculture and smothering the native species. I couldn't help but admire the beautiful colour variations, from deep purple through to pale blue and pure white.

9. Paterson's Landscape

Photograph

10. Paterson's Spectrum (Purple, White, Blue)

Photograph



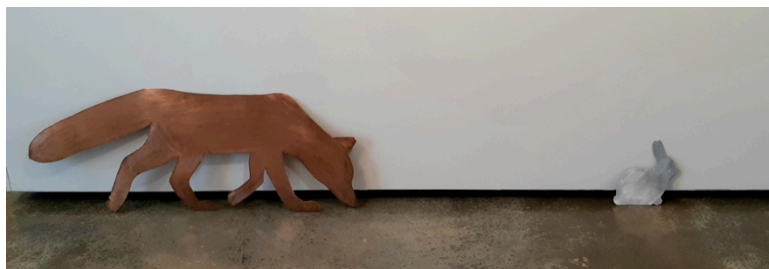


Ceilidh Dalton

11. Following the scent

Copper and aluminium

Foxes are beautiful animals that are a pest predator species that have a severe impact on small native mammals due to their hunting technique of following a scent trail. There are also useful for keeping down the rabbit population. Rabbits breed like rabbits and when overpopulated cause erosion from over grazing. They can also be valued as a source of food and are a beloved easy care pet to many children.



12. Bees – Collaborative with Rachael Robb

Drawing by Rachael, Brass bees by Ceilidh

European Bees are essential for production of so much of our fruit and vegetables. They also encroach on our native bee habitats.

Breaking through the preconception of a European bee's hexagon-shaped hive, are four types of native bees who do not live in hives. Lasioglossum bees (*Lasioglossum*) nest in ground burrows, reed bees (*Exoneura*) in pithy stems, blue banded bees (*Amegilla*) roost in groups on dry stems, and metallic green carpenter bees (*Xylocopa* (*Lestis*) burrow in soft timber.

Native reed bees are also known to nest in the stems of noxious weeds such as Lantana, blackberry and raspberry (*Rubis*) plants



Ella Fromholtz

13. Randell and his kittens

Drawn digitally then printed on a cotton t shirt

This art piece is of my original character, Randell and his kittens, Fishcake (dark grey), Mocha (brown) Licorice (black) Ramen (light grey), and Cream (off-white). Cats are a beloved and friendly companion to many people but as not many people know, they are also pests. Cats are a large threat to many native and non-native animals species, such as lizards, birds, mice, and even insects. Some feral cats may also carry diseases that can be harmful to these animals. This can lead to endangerment and even extinction of our small native animals. A plan known as “Cat Containment” has been in the works for a while and has already been introduced in some places. Cat Containment is where an owner must keep their cats contained inside the house or outside in a large enclosure to ensure that we can still keep our beloved furry friends close by while also keeping the native animals safe.



Fenja T. Ringl

14. “A Huddle of Noisy Miner Fledglings” (Ed. 1 of 10)

Copper drypoint on paper, hand coloured

Noisy miners (*Manorina melancephala*) are aggressive and territorial honeyeaters native to Australia. Since European colonisation of Australia – and subsequent landscape changes to which miners have adapted well – the species has become so abundant that it poses a major threat to other native birds. Noisy miners are one of the main contributors to the decline in other bird species such as regent honeyeaters and diamond firetails. Removal programs by land managers in past decades have yielded mixed results, so it is still unclear how best to deal with Australia’s noisy miner boom.



Jo Hollier

16. Out to pasture

Monotype

Eucalyptus polyanthemus and speargrass. The speargrass is a precious native grass but is a pest species for farmers as the seeds get into the eyes and skin of stock.

17. Honeycomb

Linoprint



Joan McKay

Sparrows were introduced into Australia to help support agriculture, as they are avid insect eaters. But, they have become a problem in several ways: defending territory from smaller native birds, and damaging fruit, vegetable and cereal crops.

17. Hoping

Original Scratchboard



18. Crops or Cafe

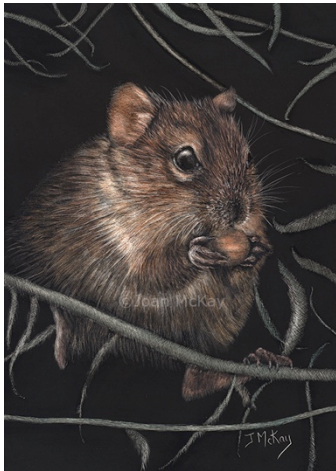
Original Scratchboard



Mice attack grain crops at 3 stages: when the seeds are first sown, in flower and when new seeds first appear. Plagues occur in an area every 7 to 10 years. They may have jumped ship as early as 1770, shouting out Land Ahoy when Australia first came into sight.

19. Grain Balance

Original Scratchboard



20. Land Ahoy

Original Scratchboard



Judy McClintock

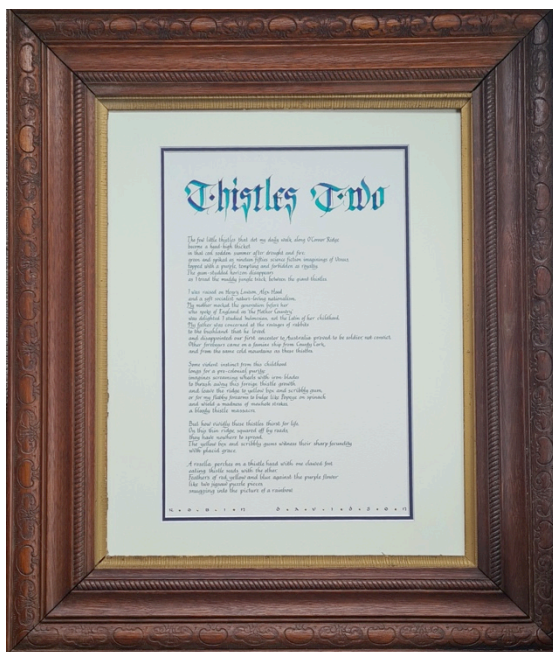
28. Thistles two – Collaborative with Robin Davidson

Poem by Robin, Calligraphy by Judy

Ink and gold leaf on paper with antique frame

I bring a jack-of-all-trades approach to my art - incorporating found and repurposed objects and working in a range of style and media. Calligraphy was my first passion and I return to it over and over again - I love that it can be used for everything from official documents through to abstract letter-based forms, from sculpture to jewellery to greeting cards.

I was delighted to be asked to interpret Robin Davidson's beautiful "Thistles Two" for this exhibition, and chose a restrained italic script to allow the words of the poem to take centre stage.

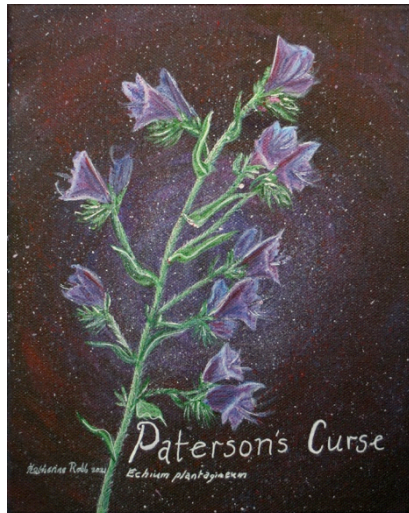
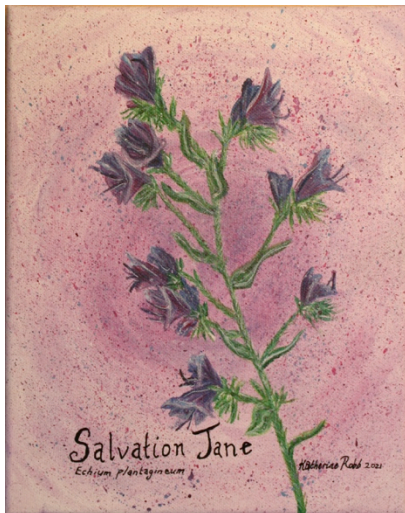


Katherine Robb

21. Salvation Curse: Salvation Jane and Patterson's Curse

Acrylic on Canvas

‘Salvation Curse’ represents the dichotomy between the same plant being perceived as both a salvation and a curse. *Echium plantagineum* was supposedly planted by Jane Paterson in her garden in 1880s NSW. It was believed to be a salvation due to its prevalence as possible fodder in times of drought. However, while cattle and sheep could eat this plant for a time, it is harmful to most livestock, particularly horses, and is very competitive and quick spreading. This pest-like nature has now earned it the more familiar moniker ‘Paterson’s Curse’.



Madeleine Tranter

Weed seeds on a road trip

Interactive Ephemeral Artwork during
opening.

(results photos will go here)

Matilda Banks

22. Goldfish

Print on calico bag

Goldfish make great easy care pets but are often released into lakes when people are bored of them. The gold fish grown into an overpopulation of carp but the worst damage comes from the exotic aquarium weeds that are released at the same time.



Michelle White

23. Feral Felines

Plaster, acrylic paint and varnish

Cats are adored by humans as pets but when wild or stray cats are present in our nature, our native birds are under future threat for extinction, as the cat loves a buffet of ground and tree dwellers. In Australia we already have 100 native species under survival threat and the cat has already caused extinction to some ground dwelling birds.

24. Bees that Thieve

Acrylic paint, pen and varnish

European Honey Bee were introduced to Australia 160 years ago for their honey and us humans love to eat it but some escaped into the wild, multiplied, stole hollows in trees and put native bees into stress as their native flower pollen gets stolen regularly by the European Honey Bee.



Nat Thomas

25. Crucifix Frogs

Painting

Frogs are one of the species affected by horses, especially in alpine regions and sphagnum moss bogs.



Paul Dumetz

26. Cat

Hand painted ceramic



Rachael Robb

12. Bees – Collaborative with Ceilidh Dalton (see #12)

Drawing by Rachael, Brass bees by Ceilidh

Watercolour and ink on paper

27. Weed seeds

Watercolour and ink on paper

A dandelion seed head is a common sight that has proliferated through media and culture to be a precious sign of whimsy, dreams and wishes. However, there is one situation where the thought of blowing on a dandelion and watching the seeds fly on the wind is one of nightmares, not dreams. Mouse-ear hawkweed (*Hieracium pilosella*) is an invasive perennial herb in the daisy family which is a serious environmental and agricultural threat in the temperate areas of south east Australia, including the Australian Alps.

Seeds have several methods of spreading, including gravity, wind, ballistic, water, and by animals. Some of the common weeds found around Canberra, pictured here, have hooks and burrs to catch in fur or clothing to travel large distances before growing.



Robin Davidson

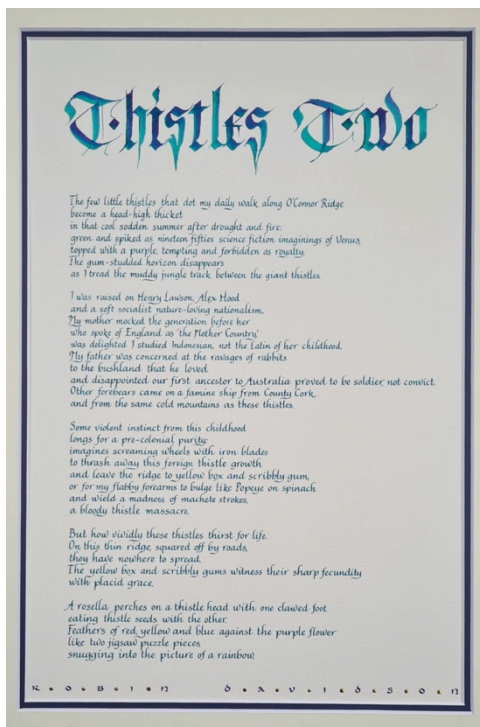
28. Thistles two – Collaborative with Judy McClintock

Poem by Robin, Calligraphy by Judy

Ink and gold leaf on paper with antique frame

I'm a clown, poet, theatre director and occasional environmental activist. I have two books of poetry published by local Canberra publisher Boris Books and have been a featured poet at numerous festivals and events. I'm currently Artistic Director of Rebus Theatre.

For a long time I consciously wrote poetry for the ear, not the eye. Now I perform poetry less and am interested in the look as well as the sound of words. I am delighted to have Judy McClintock render my poem in stunning calligraphy for this exhibition.



Robyn Banks

29. Rabbits in the blackberries

Print with chinecollee

Pests that we think are useful and cute but they are actually really invasive and wreck the environment. But they do both taste good.



Ronia Ecclestone

30. Bee on bottlebrush

Photograph

31. Sleepy bee

Photograph



32. Cat

Photograph

Xerxes is a hairless cat and kept indoors. Not only does it reduce the impact on birds, keeping a cat indoor reduces vet bills from fights with other cats, reduces disease and the chance of being lost or killed.



Tahlia Jard

33. Kangaroo

Sterling Silver

What started out as a small waxed sculpture in the palm of my hand, turned into a silver art piece with a bit of help. Kangaroo are really precious creatures as they are an Australian icon. It continued to become a bigger understanding of kangaroos when they became a pest when they are overpopulated as they overgraze. And that instead of culling, there are currently trials to use contraceptives to keep populations sustainable.



Tim Andrewartha

Opening Talk

Outfoxing the Fox

A major challenge to the reintroduction of native species in Australia is how to overcome the impact of predation by exotic species. Predation by exotic predator species, including the European red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and the feral cat (*Felis catus*), has been linked with the local extinctions of multiple native species. Advances in technology, as well as our understanding of invasive species and how they interact with their environment has created the opportunity for new tactics to be developed and tested. These techniques based in behavioural and evolutionary ecology seek to better understand the mechanisms behind predators' impacts in order to minimise them. Tim Andrewartha, a PhD candidate from the Australian National University will be talking about his research on the European red fox, as well as some of the alternative strategies being developed for the management of invasive species.



Zali Odlum

35. Under The Lily Pads

Ceramic

'Under The Lily Pads' refers to the pest species of carp fish, as seen hidden 'Under The Lily Pads'. This species has been known to harm vegetation and ecosystems at which they are found in. Carp are known for stirring up the floor of water habitats. This causes aquatic vegetation to uproot. They also dirty freshwater ways, and cause a decrease in light penetration, which then depletes the oxygen content within the water and decreases the plant material. Also associated with carp are a few outbreaks of fungi diseases. I wanted to incorporate the carp fish on my teapot, to bring more awareness to what they are actually doing to the ecosystems in Australia.



36. Deceiving

Ceramic

The European Red Fox comes across 'deceiving' due to its pretty looks of its red fur and white tipped tail, however they have a negative effect on our native species of Australia. This includes the Satin Bowerbird, which is often found in rainforests, and even parts of Canberra. As the bowerbird is a ground nesting bird, this makes for an easier target for the European Fox. I hope to portray both the beauty and the pest that these foxes are to our native environment, through my sculpture. I have captured the 'deceiving' look of my sculpture through the pleasant expression on the fox's face, to evoke my audience's attention towards the damage and effect they have caused to the natural environment here in Australia.



Precious Pests

The Link Exhibition Space in Ginninderry
22 December 2021 to 30 January 2022

Catalogue and pricelist online at facebook.com/ThePreciousFew



Artists

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Bonnie Koopmans, Cat Cotsell,
Catherine Ross, Ceilidh Dalton,
Ella Fromholtz, Fenja T. Ringl,
Jo Hollier, Joan McKay,
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