

Bushland

French & Mottershead

Presented by
Arts House & Royal
Botanic Gardens
Victoria

1 – 2 Dec
50 mins

Warning: References to
themes of death, dying
and decomposition that
may not be suitable for
children.



Creative Team

Artists, Devisors & Writers

French & Mottershead

Voice

Sarah Kants

Science Adviser

Dr Carolyn Rando

Science Adviser

Prof Shari Forbes

App Development

Alex Peckham

Audio Post Production

Pascal Wyse

Artist Statement

This work was developed to connect our living selves with the story of the afterlife of our bodies and to remind us that we humans are only as relevant as our ecologies, not its rulers.

Bushland is an Australia-adapted version of *Woodland*, one of a series of *Afterlife* audio works prompted by the fear of dying alone, and wanting to share our curious interest in what happens to our bodily matter after death, in different places, over time.

It is the result of a careful process involving; a trip from the UK to bushland and parks across South Eastern Australia, to feel how the piece might synchronise with these places, their ambient noise and physical stimuli; time with an Aboriginal guide who imparted a sense of the their peoples profound connection to land, and a working knowledge of the symbolism and usage of specific flora and fauna; canvassing Botanists and Park Rangers for their take on the eco systems and annual cycle of native and non-native species in various environments; and advice from the Director of the first human 'body farm' in Australia which shifted the piece in a slightly different direction, confirming the impact of a drier, warmer climate, and other plants and animals on the body.

It is a list of interactions between the body and the environment, of internal bodily processes, of milestones in the decomposition process, gases and smells, bodily changes, external agents, and the distributed effect of the body in the bush.

At the same time it is a list of interactions going the other way, between the environment and the body, and of natural cycles that shift the body from one state into another over an epic timescale of thousands of years.

It is a list of scientific and other observations transformed into experiences that can be felt.

– Andrew Mottershead

Biographies

French & Mottershead Artists, Devisors & Writers

French & Mottershead are the UK artist duo Rebecca French and Andrew Mottershead. Spanning performance, video, photography, sound and digital installation, their work uses detailed social and forensic research to expand the viewer's relationship to site. Often working with experts as part of their process, they undertake rigorous investigations into the ways environments, architectures and public spaces connect with who we are, and define a particular context to examine the codes and conventions that underpin the flows of feeling within.

Recently their work has been commissioned by Tate Modern, The Photographers' Gallery, and for several projects internationally. They have created works for museums, forests, on boats, and in domestic spaces to intervene viscerally on the patterns, routines and images of daily life. Their work has been described as "poetic, playful and subtly subversive" always leaving open the possibility of radically altering the viewer's perception of their place in the world.

In 2018, their works have been presented at Times Museum China, Whitechapel Gallery UK, Dark Mofo, Brighton Festival UK, Wood Street Galleries, Pittsburgh USA, and CCA Derry/Londonderry UK.

Sarah Kants Voice

Sarah Kants, is an actor originally from Australia, now living in the UK. She trained at Western Australian Academy for Performing Arts and then began work with Melbourne Theatre Company. Since moving to the UK, she is known for her work on BBC Radio, and the films *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* (2008), *Ashes to Ashes* (2008) and *Sense8* (2015).

Dr Carolyn Rando Science Adviser

Dr Carolyn Rando is a Lecturer in Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology at University College London (UCL). Her research interests include: Forensic Taphonomy, focusing on patterns of human decomposition in various environments and under different conditions; New methods and approaches for Biological Profiling in Forensic Anthropology; Children's remains in archaeology and diseases of childhood; and the relationship between biology and behaviour, with special focus on the biomechanical adaptation of the human jaw. Recent fieldwork has included Laboratory supervisor at the Bioanthropology Field School on the island of Astypalaia, Greece (2011-15) where her responsibilities included supervising a group in the micro-excavation and recovery of neonatal remains from pot burials.

Prof Shari Forbes Science Adviser

Professor Shari Forbes is an Australian researcher now based at Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières as the Canada 150 Research Chair in Forensic Thanatology. From 2012-18, Professor Forbes was a professor at the University of Technology Sydney, and Director and driving force behind the establishment of the Australian Facility for Taphonomic Experimental Research (AFTER) in 2015, located in the Blue Mountains. Much of her work is focussed on the chemical processes that occur in soft tissue decomposition, and odour profiling and its application as forensic evidence. She is currently leading a project to establish Canada's first Human Taphonomy facility.

Biographies

Alex Peckham
App Developer

Alex is an artist whose practice encompasses sculpture, sound, light and moving image to produce powerful installation art. His work has been shown at Phoenix Brighton, The Royal College of Art, Goldsmiths, University of London, and many other galleries, events and institutions. Before embarking on his solo career, Alex was technical lead with internationally renowned artists' group Blast Theory, one of the most adventurous groups in digital and cross-dimensional work. Recent Blast Theory projects have included the award-winning *Karen*, an AI life coach who psychologically profiles you and adjusts her behavior to your personality.

Pascal Wyse
Audio Post Production

Pascal Wyse: has decades of experience of recording and enhancing low-volume, natural sounds, having worked extensively with Chris Watson, the BBC and currently, The Guardian newspaper.



Thank You

Catherine Ashton, John Bayliss, Asha Bee Abraham, Pollyanna Clayton-Stamm, Martyn Coutts, Jude Gunn, Emer Harrington, Sarah Rowbottam, Emily Sexton, Jo Thomas, Kara Ward, Verity Woodford, Warren Worboys, Josh Wright.

Bushland is presented by the City of Melbourne through Arts House in partnership with Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, The Bundanon Trust, and Metro Arts. *Bushland* is an adaptation of *Woodland*, one of four audio works from French & Mottershead's *Afterlife* series, which was supported by the Wellcome Trust and Arts Council England.

Arts House, as a key program of the City of Melbourne, is Melbourne's contemporary centre for performance and interactive artforms. We support new and diverse ways to make and experience art which is participatory and experiential, interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary, curated through a balance of provocation, responsiveness and collaboration with artists and audiences.

For more information, please contact us on the details below.

521 Queensberry Street
North Melbourne VIC 3051
(03) 9322 3720

artshouse@melbourne.vic.gov.au
artshouse.com.au

Bookings:
artshouse.com.au or
(03) 9322 3720

Arts House respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, the Boon Wurrung and Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) peoples of the Kulin Nation and pays respect to their Elders, past and present. For the Kulin Nation, Melbourne has always been an important meeting place for events of social, educational, sporting and cultural significance. Today we are proud to say that Melbourne is a significant gathering place for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

**ARTS
HOUSE**

**M CITY OF
MELBOURNE**

