

The 9th Arm

**UTAS student and alumni exhibition
in response to OktoLab19**

As a reflection of this institution's recognition of the deep history and culture of this island, the University of Tasmania wishes to acknowledge the muwinina and palawa peoples, the traditional owners and custodians of the land upon which this campus was built; and pay respect to elders past, present and emerging.

Exhibiting artists: Courtney Simpson, Jade Irvine, George Kennedy, Tanya McLachlan-Troup, Mark Pearson, Anna Brooks, Amelia Digney, Deb Malor, Raymond Wittenberg, Tim Davies, Lisa De Boer, Stan Barnes, Catherine Phillips, Travis Bell, Benjamin Barwick

Curation: Courtney Simpson and Amelia Digney

Catalogue: Yasmin Dennis Rich

Foreword: Jess Tyler

Opening event:

Friday 13 Dec, 5.00 – 7:00 pm

Exhibition dates:

Sat 14 Dec 2019 – Sat 25 Jan 2020

*Entrepot open by appointment
for some of this period*

The 9th Arm features insights across cultures and disciplines, evoking responses from Shamanic tales to deep reflections on the mysterious octopus biology and its intelligent and curious character.

Such are the expressions of responses to incredible octopus capabilities, The 9th Arm arouses contemplations of alien life forms in the rich aquatic environment that is alien to humans, while at the same time it evokes a soulful mediation on the intense journey of reproduction and references to the very human nuances of motherly sacrifice for the success of the progeny, with the twin drivers of tenderness and ferocity that we share with all living beings.

Key in the installations is a constant reference to the ability of octopuses to morph, change, sense and explore their world with startling variety of biological mechanisms, embodied in a flowing, freeform body with seemingly limitless channels of communication and interaction with their surroundings and each other.

The 9th Arm asks us to meditate on the natural world with a sense of awe and wonder, the cycle of octopus life resonating strongly with our own human imperatives and sophisticated outward expressions of our essential nature.

Jessica Tyler

December 2019

1.

Deborah Malor

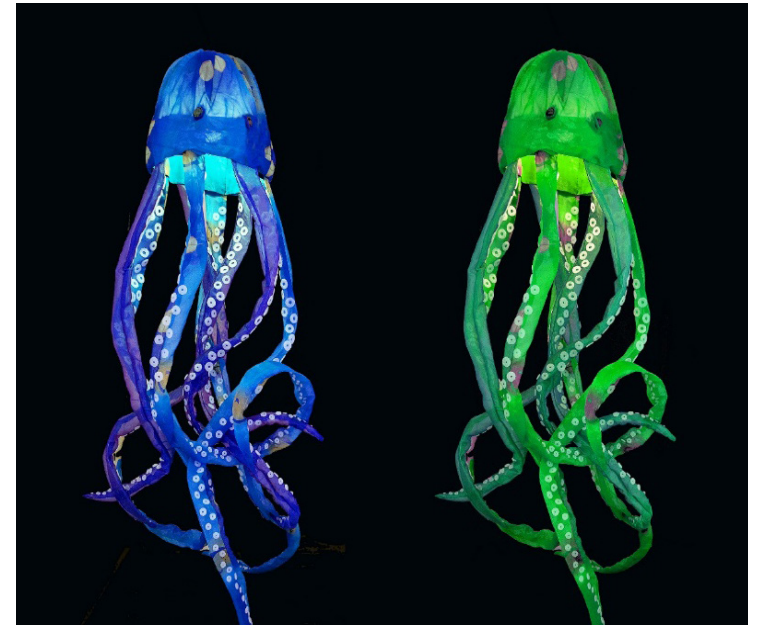
Between retina and lens (A, B), 2019

Watercolour, pigment pen, graphite, copy transfer on Arches paper

59.4 x 42 cm

Price: \$120 (unframed)

The octopus' eye is, in and as a sense, its ninth arm. The skin and the eye cannot be separated, structurally or functionally, existing in light-sensing hyper-awareness of their own ecological web. In this exploratory contemplation of the octopus' eye it is only the human eye's blind spot that can be clearly comprehended.



2.

Anna Brooks

Colour-changing octopus, 2019

Fabric, wire, plastic, Tarzan's grip glue, polyester thread, electric cord, light socket, colour-changing 'smart' light globe.

190 x 80 x 80cm.

Price: \$80 (does not include electric cord, socket or light globe).

Octopus skin is a marvellous thing. It can change colour. It can change opacity, reflectivity and texture. These skin changes provide effective camouflage for hunting prey or hiding from predators. Colour changes may also serve to communicate with other octopuses. These abilities inspired me to make a playful creature which changes colour constantly. Inside the body/head is a 'smart' light bulb programmed to continuously change colours.

3.

Tanya McLachlan-Troup, Mark Pearson

Brood No.1, 2019

Kinetic sculpture: prophylactics, fluorescent silicone lures, polyvinyl acrylate polymer gel, aluminium, Perspex, motors, electronics.

Varied dimensions

Price: \$1500

To be an octopus mother is to die before your children are born into the world. After a great eruption of mass egg laying, the mother octopus cares for them tenderly, guarding them fiercely, and wafts oxygen rich seawater over them. Then, as they begin to hatch, she dies. This is the curse of seme parity, a 'big bang' reproductive strategy, putting all reproductive efforts into one epic event. Semelparous species do not expect to live past one mating season, so the female invests everything in them, including life itself. This work, with a nod to biotechnology and defiance against evolutionary imperatives, explores ideas around motherhood, sacrifice, and contraception. How richly would a mother octopus's life story differ if she were to leave her offspring in the gentle care of a machine as she went off to explore the ocean's murky depths on her own, unencumbered by her fatal brood.



4.

Tanya McLachlan-Troup

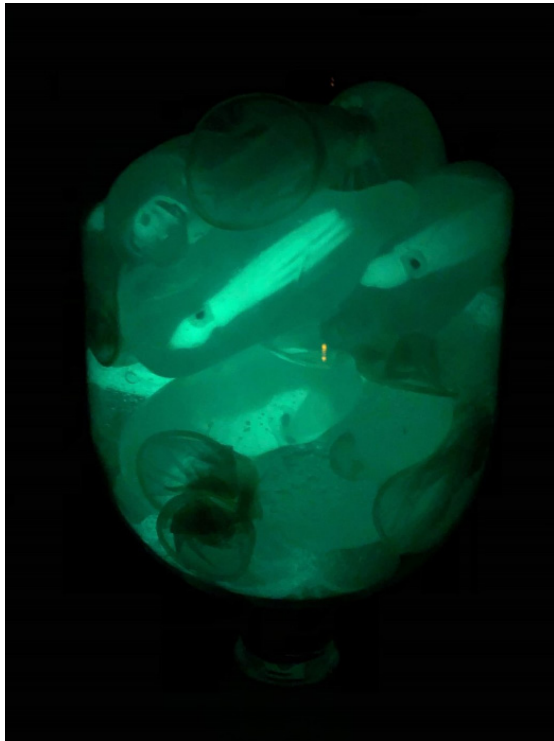
Brood No.2, 2019

Prophylactics, fluorescent silicone lures, polyvinyl acrylate polymer gel, UV lamp, glass vase.

Varied Dimensions

Price: Enquire with artist

Each of her multitudinous eggs are precious to an octopus mother as she fans and oxygenates them all while she slowly dies a strange and lonely death. After her eggs are laid, she does not feed nor leave the den except in defence of her brood while cascades of hormones flood through her flesh and tear her cells apart. Motherhood is lethal.



*Please feel free
to gently and
tenderly caress
these eggs as a
mother octopus
might as she
slowly senesces
and dies her
lonely death.*

5.

Stan Barnes

Opsins in the Human Skin: A DIY Experiment, 2019

Mixed media and projection. Excerpt from 'Day of the Tentacle' computer game. LucasArts, 1993.

Varied Dimensions

Price: \$60 (projection only, USB)

It has been discovered that an octopus can perceive colour through its skin. This happens at a molecular scale through light activated receptors called Opsins. Opsins have now been found to be in human skin. Is it possible that humans may be able to perceive colour through their skin? History has seen countless frauds claiming to have 'Extraretinal Vision', most of whom were caught cheating in controlled test environments, peeking out from under their blindfolds. Possibly the most famous swindler of them all was 'The Boy with the X-Ray Eyes.'



*Join the
experiment,
but no peeking.*



6. **Tim Davies**

Husband to Devilfish's Daughter, 2019
Ink, watercolour and charcoal on paper
42cm x 59cm
Price: \$300

This work is based on an old North American Haida legend. The tale tells of a Shaman who, with his family, sets off to kill the devilfish (the ancient name for the octopus). In a strange turn of events he is captured and seduced by the daughter of the chief of all the Devilfish. After Years living in the ocean, he is given permission to return to his home on land, however he pines for his new wife and their home beneath the ocean. He finally chooses to return to her and is magically transformed into a beautiful octopus.

7.

Tim Davies

The Shaman, 2019
21 x 29.7 cm
Charcoal and Watercolour on paper
Price: \$100

In the Haida legend The Shaman, upon realising his love for the Devilfish's daughter, transforms himself from his human shape to that of the octopus, enabling him to return to his newfound life.



8.

Raymond Wittenberg

Eden, 2019

Woodcut print on Hahnemuhle paper

45 x 38 cm (with frame)

Price: \$400



As a migrant and in my art, I often express new beginnings, and like with the Biblical Genesis I often start with a garden with the accompanying cast of characters of trees and animals. Octo-Lab is the first time it occurred to me the garden could be underwater among the corals at the bottom of the sea and the God might be the most accomplished of all creators with many arms, an astounding colour palette and its' brain and three hearts and ability to morph into many forms can inspire us to renew and create.



9. Anna Brooks

Octopus 1. Octopus 2. Octopus 3, 2019

Monotype prints on Japanese paper.

Printed area 25 x 20cm, frame area 53 x 43 cm

Price: \$80 (each)

In these black and white prints, I have emphasised the flowing forms of the octopus with its constantly changing shapes and fluid movements. Each print is unique.

10. Travis Bell

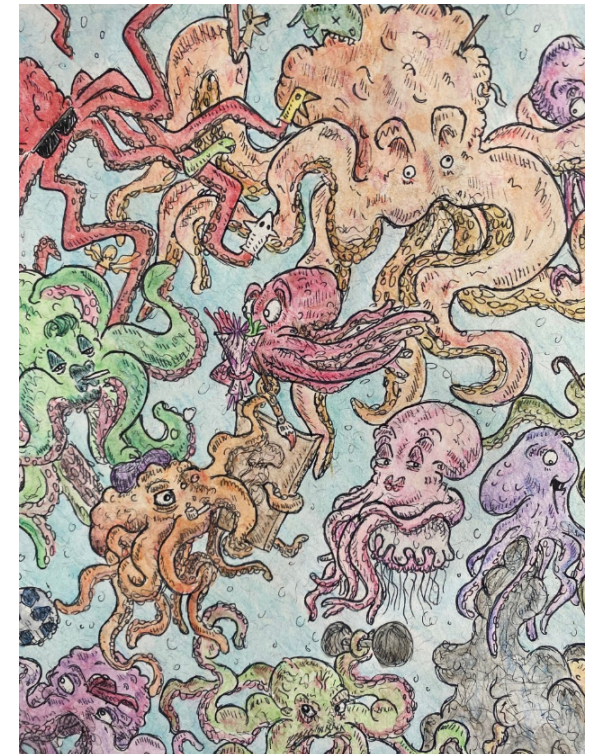
Ubiquitous Octopodes, 2019

(unframed)

Watercolour and ink on paper

Price: Enquire with artist

“An illustrative exploration into the adventures of some very humanised octopodes. Using both the objects and actions of homo-sapiens to both make feature of, and to put forth the amazing aspects of the octopus. As well as enjoyably pushing the human aesthetic upon the marvellously fascinating octopus, seeing what can be found.”



(image: detail only)

11. Amelia Digney

Ocean Florapod, 2019

Watercolours on Saunders paper

84.1 x 59.4cm

Price: Enquire with artist

The Gloomy octopus (*Octopus tetricus*) has been an ever-increasing sight around the Rocky reefs and sand habitats of Tasmania's shallow waters. Previously known specifically to the subtropical climate of eastern Australia and northern New Zealand, the presence of this warmwater lover in the South reveals strong ties to climate change and species' struggling with adaptation. Stumbling across one bathing in the sun-warmed water near Bluestone Bay was quite a surprise. It appeared at one with the bull kelp and seaweeds about it, as if the Tasmanian sea flora had somehow become an extension of its already lengthy body. It watched its viewer quizzically as they gawked in admiration. It's a memory to be held onto and cherished.



12.

**Courtney Simpson,
George Kennedy,
Jade Irvine**

9 Brains – A Collaboration,
2019

Ink and Charcoal and
Graphite on Fabriano
300gsm Watercolour Paper

9 @ 42 x 59.4cm

Price: Enquire with artists
(to be sold individually)



(image: detail only)

The ocean is mysterious. The creatures within are enigmatic, alien... In the 700 million years since we diverged from the same genus as the octopus, we have embarked on a very different evolutionary voyage.

Instinctual processes encouraged a fluid transformation of mark making and interaction with the picture plane. Gestural applications of pigment have become obscured by violent splatters and clusters of organic forms. Sepia bleeds through the surface. Each panel representing one of the 9 brains of the octopus, a sophisticated complex neural network below the ocean. Intense obfuscation in charcoal reveal a deep, contrasting black.

13.

Benjamin Barwick

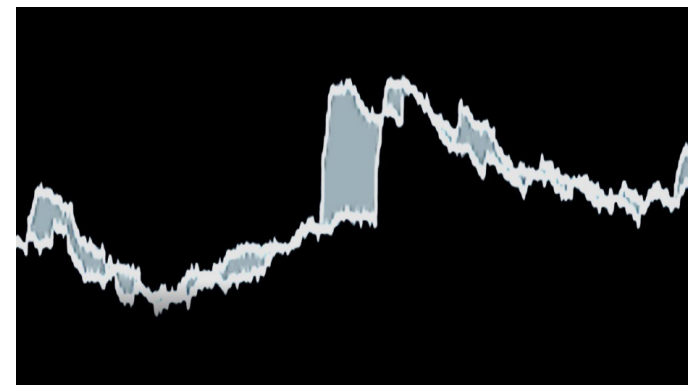
Exp1mk4: Cephalopod (2019)

Video with sound, 3mins

Varied Dimensions

Price: Enquire with artist

This video gives insight into the mind of a being having a panic attack. In this situation, I have used my study in the visualization of sound to represent the mind of a cephalopod as it is being captured and killed for the purpose of being used in an educational display. Octopi are curious beings; in that they exhibit signs of vast intelligence; it is not unlikely that they can feel and experience pain and suffering as humans do. I hope to portray this and alert the viewer's moral compass in consideration of educational displays.



(image: still from video, Exp1mk4: cephalopod)

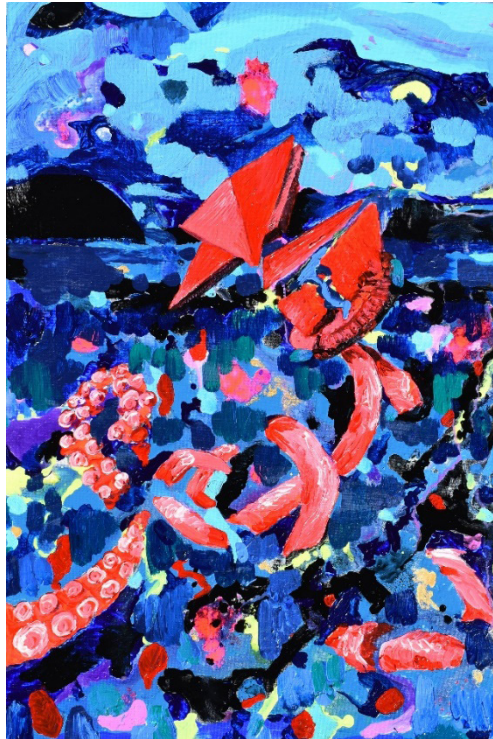
14.

Catherine Phillips

Alien Encounters, 2019
Acrylic, enamel and ink
on canvas

70cm x 50cm

Price: Enquire with artist



The work Alien Encounters responds to research by Steele et al, published last year in a peer reviewed journal, that the octopus and other cephalopods may have originated from organic compounds, or fertilized eggs brought to the planet via meteors. The authors suggest that the octopus' genome is too complex to have evolved naturally on earth. Despite widespread ridicule of the concept by the scientific community the theory serves to highlight the rapid evolution of remarkable octopus features, such as the ability to change colour and shape, its intelligence and sophisticated functioning, with the complex octopus genome consisting of 33000 protein-coding genes "more than is present in homo sapiens"(Albertin et al, 2015)

15.

Tanya McLachlan-Troup

Submerged, 2018

Oil on poplar panel

30 x 24cm

Price: \$300



She drifts, just below the surface, taking one last breath before she shares her dream of the deep with her octopus' companion. Is the octopus helping or hindering her salvation? Its gelid yet intelligent otherness means we can never fully know an octopus's mind and its true intent.

16. Lisa Jane de Boer

Ocean Synergy, 2019

Porcelain

Varied Dimensions

Price: Enquire with artist



Ocean Synergy is a body of sculptural work comprising of multiple small-scale porcelain forms that imbue complex marine life environments for cephalopods and other marine phenomena. Investigating aquatic motion, embodying elements of contrast and duality with light, dark, shadows, above, below, and incorporating influences from coastal fragments including, life in and out of the water, shells, corals, kelp, pods, sponges, algae and seaweeds. Fused in this work are responses to natural processes of replication, growth, eruption, spawning, birthing, movement and evolution. Ocean Synergy is raw, organic and natural, an integral synthesis of being inspired by, connecting and belonging to the ocean landscape. It connects and flows, displays a rapport with cycles, rhythms and biology, retaining an authenticity to the natural environment that resonates with ocean energy.