

*(para)sites*

# ENTAN GLED IN THE UNDER GROUND

MICHELLE EISTRUP

a project curated by the students of The Lisbon  
Consortium, Federico Rudari, Bibiana Leufgen,  
Juliette Thouin and Laura Ferschl

## *(para)sites*

a project with Jane Jin Kaisen, Pedro Vaz,  
Michelle Eistrup, and Rita Senra

curated by the MA and PhD students of  
The Lisbon Consortium of the Universidade  
Católica Portuguesa under the artistic  
direction of Luísa Santos

*(para)sites* is the final project developed by the students of the Curatorship seminar, which is part of the International MA and PhD program in Cultural Studies, coordinated by the Lisbon Consortium and the Universidade Católica Portuguesa's Faculty of Human Sciences. Designed within the context of the *4Cs: from Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture* - a European cooperation project, co-funded by Creative Europe, Culture program of the European Union, *(para)sites* is outlined by four artistic interventions, by Jane Jin Kaisen, Pedro Vaz, Michelle Eistrup, and Rita Senra, in *Espuma Dos Dias*, a bookshop in Lisbon, in order to reflect on notions of power and hospitality.

Inspired by Michel Serres' definition of parasite (1982), the series of interventions interfere in the order of its host (the space of *Espuma dos Dias*) and generate disorder, or produce a new order. What is interesting in Serres' definition is the positive light under which he defines the parasite: a productive force from which a system is structured. The parasite — be it biological, social or informational — is what balances the systems. This idea has been adopted by various authors such as curator and researcher Janna Graham, to

whom the parasitic practices are defined as a methodology for artistic production in four dimensions: occupying; dialogic; critical/transformational; commissioned/outsourced. What these dimensions have in common is the context in which they operate: even if made for a museum or an exhibition space in order to receive financing and legitimacy as art, the consequences of their production pervade the locations of the cultural institutions into social, economic and political domains (Graham, 2012).

While the biological parasite feeds off its host organism, the series of artistic interventions appropriate its structure from its host site; while the social parasite entertains its host in exchange of food, the series offer the production of knowledge to a public accidentally drawn into an unexpected object; while the digital parasite interferes in an information network, the series interrupts the organisation of the bookshop to create a new (dis)order.

In this parasite-host relationship — which bears as much confrontation as progress, as much disruption as transformation — the *(para)sites* invite us to look at both our surroundings and our actions in their social and civic transforming potential.

# ENTANGLED IN THE UNDERGROUND

Michelle Eistrup

Curated by Federico Rudari, Bibiana Leufgen,  
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Historical narratives exist according to the voices that shape them. Over time, a succession of power relations, tensions, and systems of oppression determined a predominant perspective that contributed to designing what we acknowledge as the global contemporary's history. As a result, individual stories, collective spiritualities linked across continents take on new shapes. Similarly, these have been coerced to adapt to advantage further economic exploitation and cultural subordination. Nevertheless, colonial relations still have consequences that are profoundly rooted in today's society. Furthermore, this global history leads to a problem of unilateral representation, very present in western countries and on a smaller scale in the books collected at *Espuma dos Dias*. This history and its defined content are interrogated by including and intervening in the space with Michelle Eistrup's works.

The solo exhibition, *Entangled in the Underground* by Michelle Eistrup, focuses on her most recent works, which pivot on Australia and Denmark. The questions that arise from them can also be addressed to Portugal. Despite the massive impact of Portuguese colonial history, from West Africa to East Asia, the narrative of *o bom colonizador* (the good colonizer) was — and still is, despite the current discussions — predominant in the political discourse and mainstream media. The discussion is now expanding towards a more honest vision on the so-called Age of the Discoveries, acknowledging the role of Portugal on slavery, warfare, and deforestation, among others. Racial issues are still strongly present in the Lusophone world.

For this reason, it is necessary to show art pieces that question the depiction of historical narrative and social issues. As it stands today, the examination and reflection required on possessions, customs, and power relations are, for the most part, absent. Moreover, educational systems are slow to include a critical stance on colonial history in their curricula to process this history, while this scholarly work remains essential. In this regard, Michelle Eistrup developed her artistic practice to change the viewpoint on knowledge through a local and site collaborative frame. As they cross from photography to written publications, from audio installations to video, Eistrup's works bridge different cultural contexts and practices to question rooted legacies of colonial pasts, including ancestral memory, landscape identity, and physical security through various lenses. The co-presence of her works and traditional historical narratives creates tension to uncover buried knowledge, bringing silent testimonies to the foreground in normative and Western historical accounts.

*Entangled in the Underground* questions the multilevel dimension of relations that historically, socially, and individually shape identity and belonging in the context of postcolonial memory. Eistrup's work incorporates her transnational background (Danish, Jamaican, American) through various artistic expressions. The exhibition includes video, sound, images, and textual elements that collectively structure an unusual take on archival practices. Revisiting the previous order of the history books section present at *Espuma dos Dias*, selected pieces from the corpus of Eistrup's artistic practice taint the notion of historical narratives characterized by an impartial and document-like nature. To better react to the stimuli developed from the found coincidental bibliography, a cataloguing process was followed by a new organization of the books, according to historical and geographical criteria.

Within this new categorization, a selection of the artist's work from *Mineral Emissaries and Breathing Archives* is embedded between the books and among the bookshelves, addressing the possibility of failure in representation by giving voice to people whose stories have, systemically and systematically, not been heard. Among them, the *BAT: Bridging Art + Text*, a tri-volume book curated by Eistrup, is added to the existing bibliography and collects the artistic, historical, political, and personal accounts of more than fifty contemporary artists, scholars, curators, and writers, together with challenging the unilaterality of postcolonial memory.

Michelle Eistrup  
*Amnesia\_ a letter to Denmark* (2016)  
Sound Collage, 05:26 min.  
Text + Voice: Michelle Eistrup  
Sound and Music: Anders Juhl

In this sound piece, two seemingly androgynous and anonymous voices address the collective amnesia imposed by the colonial powers' past. The duet converses in canon to confront the Western nations' tepid response to this 'discomfort' in their history. The ongoing denial of the existence of people and their stories continues to inflate the legacy of pain and trauma that permeates through generations.



Michelle Eistrup  
*Breathing Archives* (2021)  
*Breathing Archives 1*,  
 Framed Lithograph, 105 × 117,5 cm, (2021)  
 Collection of GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig.

Collages made for photographs of flaked stones in Grassi Museum combined with archival documents of purchase of Australian artifacts and human remains.

Michelle Eistrup and Anders Juhl  
*Breathing Archives* (2016)  
 Sound Collage, 14:04 min.  
 Voice: Dr. Birgit Schepps-Sneider

The work *Breathing Archives* is a sound collage that reveals the effects of museum collection policies on communities in Australia. For example, the human remains ordered for the collection of the Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden (as well as other ethnographic collections all over Europe) led to grave robberies and regular massacres. Mentioning the transparent restitution policy of the GDR encourages reflections on current museum collections in today's decolonial context. The visual piece contains the original receipts made by the museum embossed into the paper. This work was included in the book-anthology-exhibition *Politics of Silence* (2021), edited by Luísa Santos and published by the CECC of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

Supported by: Goethe Institute Denmark; Danish Art Foundation; GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig; LIA Residency



Michelle Eistrup  
*Mineral Emissaries* (2021)  
 (Various sizes)

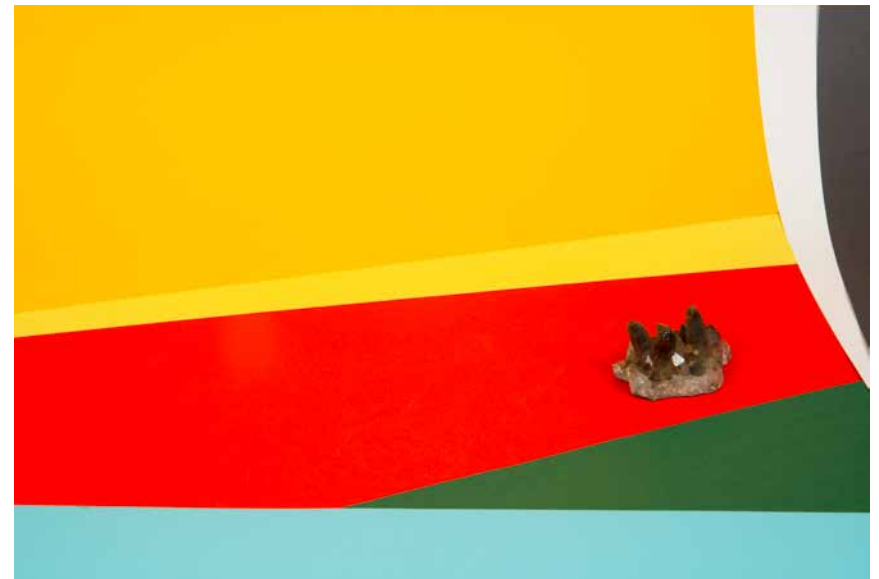
*Mineral Emissaries*, Variscite Quartz -  
 Chrysopras, Milgun Station, Western  
 Australia, Terra Mineralia, Freiberg 2020.

*Iaspis*, Grascoyne, Jurchin, Western  
 Australia. Terra Mineralia, Freiberg 2020.



*Mineral Emissaries*, Edelopal Terra Mineralia 2020.

*Mineral Emissaries*, Quartz-Rauchquartz-Sident Tasmanien,  
 Australia, Terra Mineralia 2020.

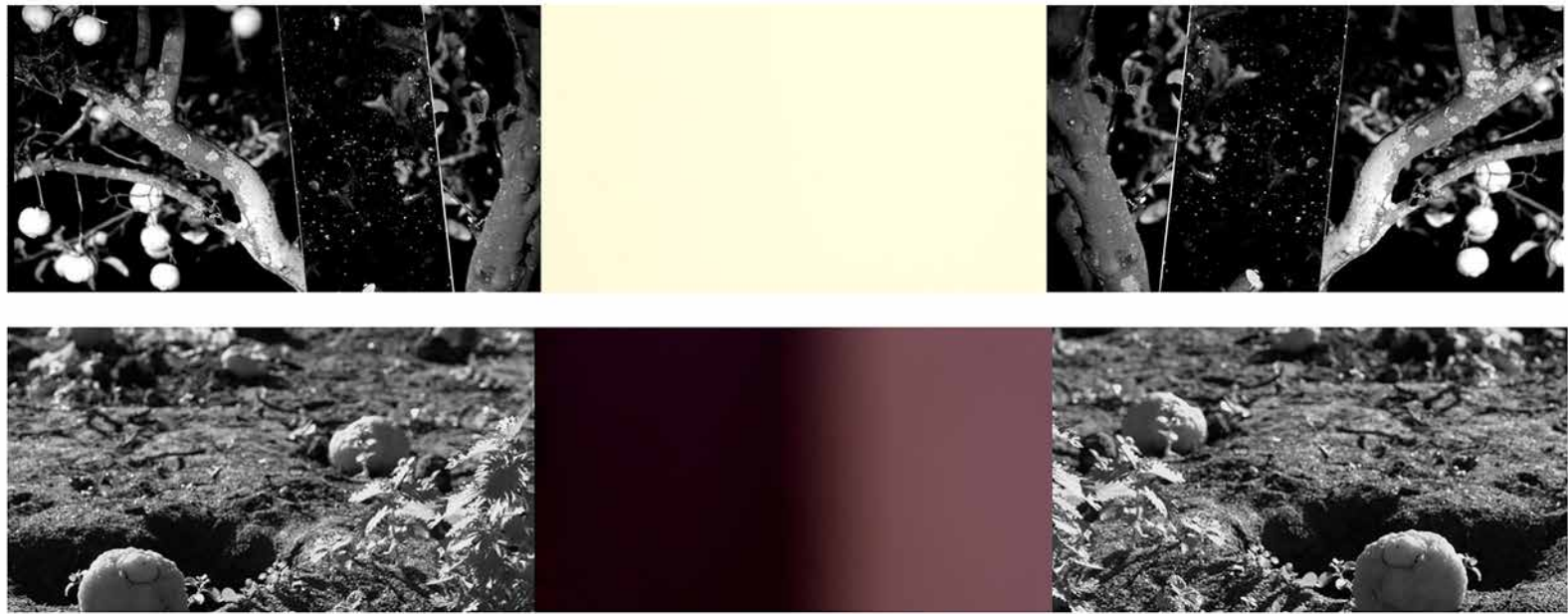


*Mineral Emissaries* is a series of photographs in which a collection of Western Australian minerals and flaked stones are captured in front of colorful and geometric backdrops. In collaboration with scientists from the University of Freiberg and the Terra Mineralia Collection, Eistrup confronts us to reflect on the painful and enduring process of colonial recovery and reparation, as opposed to the time constraints imposed by the urgency of facing the current ecological crisis. The artist photographed Australian minerals and conducted interviews with researchers at the same time, preoccupied with the paradigm shift according to which subsoil and caves go from being sacred places of deep reflection and momentary escape, closely linked to life and death, to scenes of material predation and an increasingly intense European hunt for precious metals and stones. The proposed imaginary, working with the contrast between mineral and stones and colorful backgrounds, aims to bridge science and culture in the pursuit of erased knowledge, through the multiple collected experiences (scientists, Noongara and ethnologist, among others). Selected images from *Mineral Emissaries* can be viewed in the publication *Politics of Silence* (2021).

Supported by Billedhugger Viggo Jarls Legat granted by the Den Frie Udstilling; Goethe Institute Denmark; Danish Art Foundation; Terra Mineralia; Bergakademie Freiberg; GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig; LIA Residency; Danish Visual Art Workshops.

Michelle Eistrup  
*In the Deep Underground and Up Above* (2018)  
 Experimental three-channel documentary, 33 min.  
 Videography: Joe Jones and Michelle Eistrup  
 Sound and Music: Anders Juhl  
 Visual Editing, Interview Recordings and First Narrator  
 Text: Michelle Eistrup  
 Text Editing: Anders Juhl and Michelle Eistrup  
 Voices in Order of Appearance: Michael Omoke, Rebecca Walker, Mitchella Hutchins, Tessa Grimshaw  
 Research Assistance: Celia Clare  
 Transcriptions: Anita Smith, Alice McAuliffe

In the three-channel documentary *In the Deep Underground and Up Above*, Michelle Eistrup investigates the multiple levels that characterize Australia's deep-rooted colonial history. Challenging the question "What is seen and not seen, what is said and not said?" the complementary screens bridge the unseen, the Deep Under, by showing footage of underground caves used as burial sites by the indigenous people, with selected lived areas above the ground, representing the seen Up Above. The assembled footage structures the personal testimonies of Rebecca, Mitchella, and Tessa, forging a narrative portrait on experiential memories to the over-ground panorama and challenging the cultural contrasts and ethical conflicts between history, landscape, and natural resources in Western Australia.



*In the Deep Underground and Up Above*, video stills, 2018.





Photograph: Daniel Simm.

## BRIDGING ART + TEXT





*BAT: BRIDGING ART + TEXT* (2017)

Curated by Michelle Eistrup

Edited by Michelle Eistrup & Annemari Brogaard Clausen

Produced by Anders Juhl

Design: Michelle Eistrup and Studio Daniel Siim

Published by Hurricane Publishing

With: Bárbaro Martínez-Ruiz, C. Daniel Dawson, Carlos Moore,

Christopher Cozier, Dudley Joseph Thompson, Ebony G. Patterson,

Ery Cámara, James Muriuki, Joseph Adandé, Kenneth Dossar, Nicholas

Laughlin, Robert Farris Thompson et al.

*BAT: Bridging Art + Text* investigates complex historical and current connections across the globe, presenting more than 50 contemporary artists, scholars, curators, and writers, born or based in the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and the US, creating an insight into aesthetics not often represented in Scandinavia. The works refer to five intentional principles around which the publication is structured:

*Bridging:* We wish to bridge the artworks and their historical, political, and personal contexts. These narratives not only influence the works but transform through their aesthetics.

*Art:* Photography, installations, sculptures, paintings, and stills from performances and video works.

*+*: The extract presents works inspired by spirituality, Jamaican dancehall culture, racial segregation in Cuba, and a woman of black ancestry and parentage living in Nordic culture.

*Text:* Fiction, poetry, song lyrics, personal narratives, academic accounts, and political discussions. The texts look into historical accounts of slavery, colonialism, racism, and the transfer of cultural and spiritual knowledge and resistance across the Atlantic. In addition, the politics of blackness are discussed in texts on Negritude and Pan-Africanism, black identity, and ethno-aesthetics.

*Layout:* Built-up around the idea of the hidden and revealed foldouts, the design creates an intimate and tactile relation to the visuals. Courteous attention and detail are given to the artworks, as their stories and production envelop the book's heart.

*BAT* refers to the archival memory of displacement and the politics of recognition of African diaspora; the book pushes visitors to question individual responsibility and challenge their awareness of the biased histories they encounter. Moreover, the exhibition includes selected elements from the photographic series *Mineral Emissaries*, from the Terra Mineralia Collection, Freiberg and Grassi Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig. These images are captured in front of colourful and geometric backdrops to contrast the enduring and painful process of colonial reparation against the time constraints imposed by the present ecological crisis. Resulting from a combined photographic work and interviews conducted with scientists, the Noongaars and Bardi people, and ethnologists, the stones take on the role of the ancestral storytelling to testify on the paradigm shift of these caves, going from sacred places of deep reflection to scenes of material predation and European pillaging.

Visitors can listen to two sound pieces, *Breathing Archives* and *Amnesia*. Concerning the role of institutionalized culture in the diasporic discussion, these works question the effects of museum collection policies and their impact on local Australian communities while addressing the burden of imposed silence leading to isolationism, denial of colonial powers' pasts, and collective amnesia. Available to be accessed through QR codes on personal devices, the sound works are meant to complete the visual dialogue between books and artworks, pervading the visitors' experience on different sensorial spheres.

Finally, *Entangled in the Underground* is completed by the screening of *The Deep Underground and Up Above*, a three-channel documentary investigating the many layers that characterize Australia's deeply-rooted colonial history. Building upon the politics of recognition, the artist challenges what is not seen nor heard, *In the Deep Underground and the Up Above*, uncovering the existing mismatch in meaning and representation between indigenous communities and settlers. The assembled footage structures personal testimonies from Rebecca, Mitchell, Tessa, Bardi, and Noongar communities, forging a narrative portrait of their experiential memories, attesting to the systems of repressions present along with generations of European settlers and the Aboriginal families. Hosted as a single screening, *The Deep Underground and Up Above* pushes the viewer to question cultural contrasts and ethical conflicts between history, landscape, and natural resources.

Part of the *(para)sites* exhibition series in the frame of the 4Cs: from Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture project, Eistrup's works invite visitors to question representational balance in traditional historical narrative. In particular, the sound pieces, part of the variety of artistic means included in *Entangled in the Underground*, challenge both literally and figuratively the silence present in the bookshop and the louder one that characterizes postcolonial legacy, completing the visual and textual elements that contaminate the physical exhibition space. Multiple relations are called into account: personal, spatial, historical, and colonial. Following the parasitic nature of this exhibition series, the books that have been vindicated and challenged through Eistrup's work present within themselves a new answer to questions that we have to ask ourselves about our past, and they won't get back to the previous status quo. For this reason, we invite anyone among the public who is interested in buying one of the hacked books to keep the narrative fragment embedded in it.

In February 2022, Michelle Eistrup will start an artistic residency at PADA Studios in Barreiro with *Charging Change's* work title. The residency focuses on the Diaspora of African descent living in Portugal. It explores their connection with the spaces they inhabit now, answering questions that may have emerged in *Entangled in the Underground*. Michelle Eistrup's work *Charging Change* originates from and is an extension of *Mineral Emissaries*, 2021 and *In the Deep Underground and Up Above*, 2018.

## colophon

### Artists

Jane Jin Kaisen; Pedro Vaz;  
Michelle Eistrup; Rita Senra

### Curators / MA and PhD Students in Culture Studies of The Lisbon Consortium, Faculdade de Ciências Humanas and Universidade Católica Portuguesa

Galane David; Dora Fernandes;  
Laura Ferschl; Francisco Gomes;  
Viktoria Lohner; Rodrigo Marcondes;  
Dela Mießen; Emma Legaye;  
Federico Rudari; Bibiana Leufgen;  
Juliette Thouin; María Gabriela Sinclair;  
Megha Shekhawat; Teresa Pinheiro;  
Valerie Rath.

### Curatorship Seminar / Artistic Direction

Professor Luísa Santos  
(FCH-UCP, CECC)

### Design

vivóeusébio

Jane Jin Kaisen is the first artist in residency (2021) of the Arts Lab of the CECC (Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Cultura) and the Campus Cultura of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

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