

Culture Art & design Art

I fell in love with the tip: ode to a wasteland



By [Kerrie O'Brien](#)

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It's not every day you're asked to put on a gold suit and dance around a tip with a perfect stranger. That's precisely what Eugenia Lim's latest work involves, raising ideas about the environment, sustainability and life.



Eugenia Lim, Jennifer Anderson and Steve Boulter at the local tip. TIM HILLIER

When asked to make a work for this week's Kyneton Contemporary Art Triennial, Lim wanted to make a piece about the ecology of the town. After a site visit, she “sort of fell in love with the tip” and wanted to centre it rather than have it on the periphery.

Just as we've had to rethink our consumption and how much rubbish we create, we need to be aware of where whatever is produced ends up, she says. “It's actually somewhere each

household is connected to, it's where they drop off their whitegoods that don't work any more or where they pick up their mulch."



Eugenia Lim's work, *Shelters for Kyneton*. TIM HILLIER

Lim was struck by the masses of birds, bright red poppies growing up through the rubbish, plants and weeds, "things that had made their life there". Even inanimate objects tell a story of a previous life: a battered pink kid's bike, a cuckoo clock, plastic flowers, a crucifix, whitegoods standing like sentries.

Lim approached tip worker Steve Boulter and Macedon Ranges Shire mayor Jennifer Anderson to participate in the piece, which she devised based on conversations about their work. "Steve can do these burnouts in the bulldozer and manage this heavy machinery, he's got these inherent knowledges that have taken years to build up ... Jennifer is out there in the community and actively working on committees around waste and regeneration.



The material used in the gold suits is also known as mylar, used for emergency or space blankets. TIM HILLIER

“It wasn’t an accident that I reached out to those people, who are usually at different levels of social hierarchy,” Lim says. “That’s an interesting thing about art, it can dissolve those boundaries.”

“I was conscious, too, of being an outsider, someone who is not from the town. We were all coming to this work with some degree of unfamiliarity.”

The eight-minute film *Shelters for Kyneton* involves the three “lo-fi dancing, this everyday dance”, sweeping and walking. They ultimately come together via one-metre-long tubes that connect to their suits, “to look like this triangular creature”.

The three are wearing what look like gold lamé onesies but which are made from Mylar, a material used in the blankets given to refugees rescued from the ocean, or for hiking in extreme conditions. Lim uses it a lot in her work: “It’s quite a loaded material.”

The material conjures gold in this supposed wasteland: the precious metal is an ongoing thread in her practice, referring back to Chinese immigration to Australia, the gold rush and the formation of post-settler Australia through mining and extraction. It stands out “but it also reflects back”, says Lim, amid the old rusty machinery and metal sheets.

Environmental issues, especially climate change, underpin all Lim’s work.

“To really look closely at things that have been discarded, landscapes that are not pristine or thought of as beautiful in a conventional sense ... my work was looking to honour what’s already there, things we don’t tend to value.”

“Every project I do now is to grapple with these things, when the most sustainable thing to do is probably to *not* make art. Where you choose to film, how you choose to film, instead of making big sets or big stuff that would potentially end up back at this tip.”

This year’s Kyneton Triennial is called *Holding the Circle* . Taungurung man Steven Rhall’s work in the historic schoolhouse explores the pressures and responsibilities of making ‘Aboriginal art’ as a cultural leader, while along the river, Polly Christie and members of two local youth choirs come together for an all-ages singalong. Themed storyteller nights, artists’ talks, live music and performances will be staged across seven days.

The Kyneton Contemporary Art Triennial runs from March 19 to 27.

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