

A long line (currents)

A Long Line is the first of a series of readers generated by Public Platform, a research community currently connected through Platform Arts (Wadawurrung Country, Australia). Public Platform works through expanded modes of publishing to intervene, speculate and connect; creating new publics amidst its growing community of artists and multiplying in the invisible collisions of its as yet, unknown readership.

A Long Line was published by Public Platform to coincide with the opening of the *Currents* exhibition, co-curated by Amber Smith and Ilana Russell at Platform Arts, February 2024.

Public PLATFORM acknowledges that we live, learn and work on the stolen land of the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin nation. Indigenous sovereignty has never been ceded.

The lands of Djilang have been home to the very first makers, storytellers, and inventors for thousands of years. Herein we acknowledge the longest continuing lines of care and advocacy for oceans and waters.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.

This is the casting of *A long line* that hopes to entangle a selection of oceanic works and practices via a collation of fragments. These fragments by contributors Aarti Sunder, Fiona Hillary, Maria Mercedes Salgado, Seokwoo Lee & Lowell Bautista, Ben Burtenshaw and Georgia Nowak are here not only to direct us back to the complex beginnings from which they are quoted, but also to be read down the line—as if caught against one another along a vector of space-time that attends to a collision of ideas, here, now and into our collective future.

These collisions describe the work of Public Platform, whose work is publishing. Specifically, publishing-*as-process*; an intensification of commonalities that makes public, to make publics. Publishing-*as-process* is an aesthetic experiment that creates its present, brings its context into existence and is therefore constitutive of the public that receives it, and that it receives in turn. Experimental forms are always tentative, circular and in progress. They ask the reader for trust and intuition, a widening of perception and possibility, and a willingness toward always being on the way.

Publishing sets in motion the productive relations that occur equally in disruption, intrusion, mutual agitation, happy collision or collusion, a sharing of bitter circumstances, a celebration of contingency, a misunderstanding or a miscommunication. Any contrasting between multiple states opens the possibility for the productive forces of reading/writing in what Joan Retallack describes as the *wager* of *complex realist conversation*.

The nature of the wager is nothing other than complex realist conversation. But conversation—in too many of the greatest hits of Western thought—mutates into polemics. Conversation demands holding an image of the other in one's mind long enough to notice the difference between one's own point of view and possible alternatives.¹

Public Platform owes much to the work of Joan Retallack, specifically “The Poethical Wager” published in 2003. Retallack reminds us that as far as we might venture into aesthetic abstraction, we remain *in* the world. As readers and as writers *I/One / We / Us* have a responsibility to redirect *geometries of attention*, inhabit *reciprocal alterity* and to risk *unintelligibility*. It is here that we rearrange the real and contingent present towards the future.

Coinciding with *Currents* at Platform Arts, djilang/Geelong—an exhibition of vital works exploring our relationship to water, A long line nets a collection of text works together to think through the mereological possibilities—both real and metaphorical—of oceans. Like the current it can be read as a collecting of intensities within the very real bounds of objects of experience.

...it is only the know ledge that situates one for the possibility of reciprocal alterity as *know* breaks off from *ledge* and leaves a column of cold blue air suspended in cold blue air. Gale force of utter contingency...²

Allow the Ocean to be the extensive continuum of spacetime and the text-fragment to locate you as the horizon would in the possibility of infinite reorientation, as a tide that comes in and goes out.

...to know holds out the possibility of that ledge. The seductive radiant edge of legibility. Singing the radiant blue edge of invention I count on forms of possibility whose probability is statistically insignificant. Here we are again, swerving across dim blue coordinates of blue desert.³

Trace *A long line* that threads interdisciplinary intersections worthy of attention.

This is what geometries do—they organise the vectors of our attention, establish relations between abstract directionalities, insides and outsides, enabling us to notice certain things we could not otherwise.⁴

Drift unanchored to read out of the bounds of the purely intelligible. Currents move in multiple directions; the challenge is not to race toward the trawl of total understanding but to engage in the wager of *real* reading.

“To read” means to live with the text over the real time of everyday life so that it can enter into conversation with other life projects.⁵

Julieta Aranda, Chus Martínez and Markus Reymann, for e-flux Journal issue #112 (in collaboration with TBA21-Academy) “focused on the ocean as a living entity, an intersectional and intrinsically interconnected ecosystem of systems for coalitional imagination and collaborative inquiries.” Responding to the isolated and disconnecting human experience of the global pandemic, Aranda et al. invoke the ocean as an entirety within which we are both partial and intrinsically part. A Long Line casts into the same ocean (tracking yet another wave of the pandemic) and because texts, like waves, spatialise in a reader’s present, and are always and again a part of an expansive ocean. We can take up Aranda, Martinez and Reymann’s call:

...as our current forms of relation and isolation unravel, let’s keep this in mind: the entirety of the ocean. Not as a memory, but, like the mystic poets, let’s allow our senses to become ocean, so as to regain together a sense of all that is fundamental for our near times. It may be that oceanic feeling, and by extension the image of the ocean, are the best places to start rethinking the differentiation and order of hierarchies between human and nonhuman environments, and to elucidate to what point this differentiation is real, and to what point it is a construct.⁶

Thin blue air in the exhilaration of “I know”—of course always in a context, on a ledge, on a scaffold, always with something at stake. That rare moment of “I know,” always precarious. The scaffold always shaky. The too there is the sinister assertion.⁷

Thank you Aarti, Fiona, Ben, Maria, Georgia, Seekwoo & Lowell (Brill) and William (Wikisource).

The world of twentieth-century thought involves a huge companionship. I have tried to put together some pieces of that companionship here.⁸

Sarah Jones

¹ Joan Retallack, *The Poethical Wager* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 6.

² Ibid. 70.

³ Ibid. 66.

⁴ Ibid. 177.

⁵ Ibid. 48.

⁶ E-flux journal Issue 112. October 2020. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/112/355601/editorial-the-ocean/> accessed 1.11.2023.

Joan Retallack, *The Poethical Wager* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 64.

⁷ Robin Blaser, *The Fire: Collected Essayd of Robin Blaser*, Ed. Miriam Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) https://writing.upenn.edu/library/Blaser-Robin_The-Violets.html

**PLAT
FORM
ARTS**