

Elliat Rich

Mythica Ignota



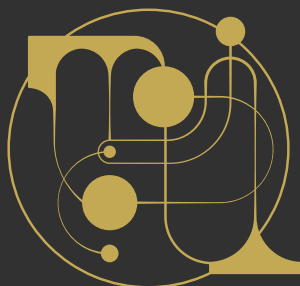
Curated by Aimee Frodsham

Canberra Glassworks is a major ACT arts centre where artists can develop and create works using the medium of glass. Established in 2007, it operates within the historic Kingston Powerhouse, Canberra's first major public building and a critical role in its early development.

Built on the land of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples who used the site as a meeting and gathering place, practising their culture on the banks of the Molonglo River for millennia, Canberra Glassworks acknowledges and respects the traditional custodians of the land on which it is located.

Over the seventeen years since its opening, the Canberra Glassworks has been pivotal in the development of the careers of artists using glass as a creative medium. The collaborative process of the creation of studio glass has built a community of artists whose work has been recognised throughout the world. It attracts visiting artists who spend time in Canberra to access the facility. A program of curated exhibitions increases the profile of studio glass artists.

Canberra Glassworks together with Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne are delighted to present this exhibition of glass and mix-media by Elliat Rich curated by Aimee Frodsham.



ELLIAT RICH

MYTHICA IGNOTA

ARTEFACTS OF THE
OSCILLOCENE & THE WARAWANA
MYTHOLOGIES

CURATED BY AIMEE FRODSHAM

Exhibition Dates:
3 October to 15 December 2024



canberra
glassworks

Elliat Rich

Elliat Rich is a designer, furniture maker and deep thinker who has created a multi-faceted creative practice led by curiosity, wonder and the possibilities of the imagination. She is based within the complex and enriching socio-bio-historical ecology of Mparntwe Alice Springs, Central Australia, where she works across a broad-spectrum of design for a diverse client base.

Drawing inspiration from mythology, art, poetry, and the living planet. Rich describes the integration of story, artefacts, and observations as *Designing Mythology* which is an ongoing experiment into making enough of a mythic scaffold to counter colonial structures, celebrate through wonder and provide an experience of belonging.



The way we see

Certain aspects of our existence defy comprehension, challenging our beliefs and value systems while pushing the boundaries of understanding. Phenomena like black holes and dark matter offer a duality of knowing and not knowing, existing within and beyond our grasp. But what about the things we can't even begin to comprehend? The complex relationships between species, matter and time go beyond human understanding. Elliat Rich dreams of what might be, she challenges our assumptions and beliefs, inviting us to embrace new perspectives.

What if the way you see the world isn't the way the world wants to be seen?

Elliat Rich is a multidisciplinary designer who relocated from Central Australia to Canberra for a year-long residency at

Canberra Glassworks. Rich's practice, deeply influenced by her experiences with the raw challenges of climate change, colonisation, and capitalism in Central Australia, seeks to navigate the crises of modernity through design.

Mythology is one of humans' oldest collective culture-making practices. Rich is building a mythology within her practice, intending to subvert scientific taxonomies and playfully critique our value systems. Set in a dream-like museum environment, it presents alternative perspectives on what we accept as fact. Where Rich is the curator of this collection of otherworldly artefacts housed within a museological framework, she chronicles an undiscovered evolution. The design objects and furniture displayed are both familiar and mystical, demonstrating her visionary approach, which reinterprets industrial functionality and pushes the boundaries of design and material culture as we know them.





The title *Mythica Ignota: artefacts of the Oscillocene & the Warawana mythologies* is multifaceted in meaning. It offers insight into Rich's life and work in Alice Springs, with its raw beauty and complex history. The term 'Warawana', a portmanteau of Waratah and Gondwana, references the resilience of Australia's unique flora and the ancient geological ties of the continent to other parts of the world, emphasising the interconnectedness of life across time and place. 'Ignota' is derived from the Latin word for unknown or unrecognised and represents themes of mystery, the unseen, or hidden knowledge.

It describes Western knowledge systems, particularly in relation to the origins of mythology, spirituality, and philosophy. Rich's use of these languages goes beyond a simple linguistic mash-up; it introduces layers of complexity in her work.

Another key element is the 'Oscillocene', which describes a conceptual era marked by

extreme fluctuations and uncertainties, especially regarding environmental and social issues. The term blends 'oscillation', referring to the shifting between states and matter, with the suffix '-cene', used to describe geological periods. Unlike the Anthropocene, which focuses on catastrophic impact on and by humans, the Oscillocene presents an era of hope and regeneration. Rich uses this title to draw our attention to a deeper exploration into the unknown, revealing connections, stories, and understandings that challenge consumer-driven contemporary life.

This approach is a form of soft power, engaging viewers through curiosity and wonder to highlight critical issues. Rather than relying on rigid arguments, Rich embraces storytelling to bridge the present with the unknown and gently guide audiences toward deeper understanding. She recognises the material world we live in and believes that through material culture she can convey stories that reveal injustices faced

by various species and places. Through encouraging a re-evaluation of how we understand and value our planet, Rich seeks a meaningful and beautiful recalibration. To do this, Rich draws on mythology to create a layered narrative that explores life beyond the self, incorporating archetypes and reimagined histories as intermediaries between the sacred and the everyday.

As this mythology unfolds through the gallery, viewers are guided by Weaver, a central figure in Warawana mythology, who exists within both mythic and earthly realms. Weaver can be seen in pollinating patterns, connecting, and supporting a vast network where a trillion life forms coexist. Each pattern builds on the other, much like a bird landing on a flower to drink nectar and, in turn, carrying pollen to the next bloom. Made from millions of fibres twisted into colourful clusters, Weaver wears the ceremonial cloak to acknowledge and celebrate every small connection.

Throughout history cloaks have serviced as symbols of profound cultural and spiritual values, often denoting status, identity, and heritage. One of the most revered cloaks is the Korowai or the Cloak of the Māori, celebrated for its materials, design, craftsmanship and cultural and spiritual significance, these cloaks bring together traditional making techniques and knowledge.

Viewing this work through a design lens, the collection previewed at Canberra Glassworks and to be launched during Melbourne Design Week 2025 with Sophie Gannon Gallery, features elements such as lighting, furniture, and sculptural mirrors. Materiality and manufacturing process is central to the designs, combining traditional techniques like glass blowing (with Tom Rowney) and brass fabrication (with Sean Booth), with contemporary methods such as computer-aided water jet cutting and digital printing. The materials are glass, mirror, stone, leather, brass, steel, aluminium,

acrylic, and found objects, that all have unique qualities, conceptual underpinnings and have been thoroughly researched and thoughtfully selected.

Throughout the residency (and her career), Rich has been a hands-on designer. She closely collaborated with teams at the Glassworks, Megalo Print Studio, ANU Makers Lab, ANCA, and several commercial suppliers for this exhibition. Supported by the Canberra Glassworks Artist in Residency Program and an Arts NT fellowship, these initiatives have facilitated valuable connections, expanded her skill set, and encouraged the exploration within this new body of works.

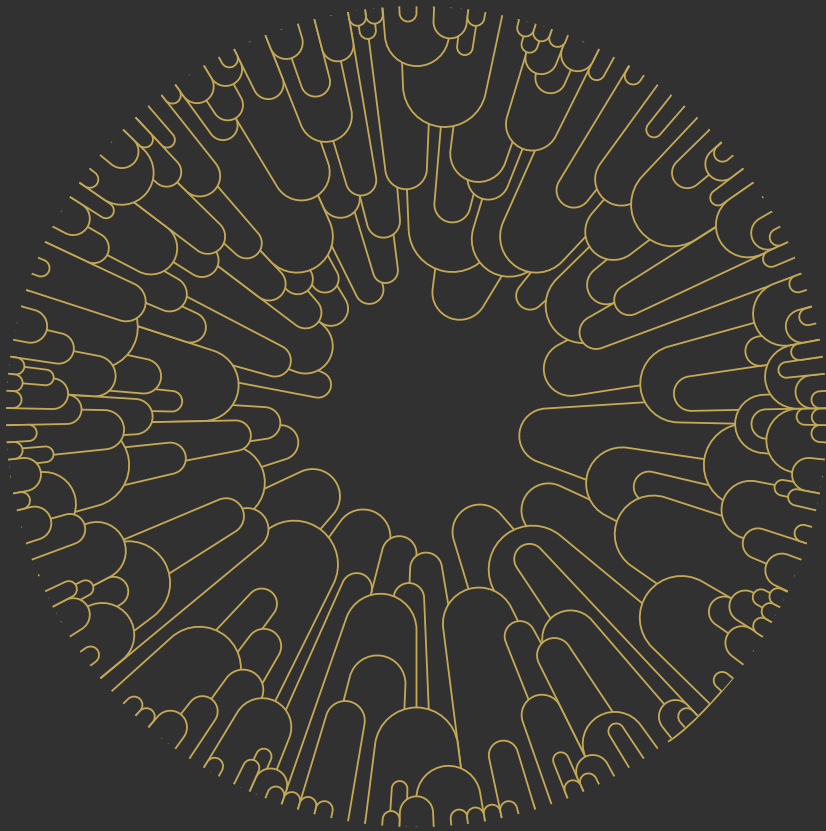
The Glassworks provided access to specialised facilities and expertise in glass, while the Arts NT fellowship has allowed Rich to work with Curator, Ineke Dante, to conceptualise the Warawana mythology. This includes developing the details and histories for each object

within the exhibition, presented as museum labels throughout the exhibition. This collaboration serves as a foundation for the materials and exhibition themes, enriching the narrative and depth of the collection.

When experiencing these works, try to imagine seeing through the eyes of the mantis shrimp, a creature who can see a far wider range of colours than humans, including ultraviolet light. In this vibrant reality, colours explode with an intensity beyond our comprehension. Here, reality is not a singular experience but a multifaceted one, where each hue enriches the narrative of existence, encouraging us to envision a world far more vibrant and complex than we can imagine.

Aimee Frodsham for Elliot Rich





For thousands of years humans have tried to understand the cosmos and our place within it. Each era, environment and people brought with them technologies, language, interpretations and stories of these beliefs and theories. As humans living in the Modern West of the 21st century, we have tools to see and measure the beginning of our universe, great underground rings that allow us to collide particles together, and webs of communication that help us share this knowledge. But while we gather information about the cosmos, from the macro to the micro, we have forgotten to keep asking (and practising) how we fit within it. While new scientific lenses on our planet reveal the unfathomable complexity, stunning uniqueness and exquisite beauty around us, we have lost the cultural practice of living and understanding it. This body of knowledge sits adjacent to how we live, how we organise, what we give value to and how we relate to each other - all 'others'. While as modern humans we dismiss and devalue the world views of 99% of our ancestors we offer no enriched cohesive narratives that have always held humans to and within their places. Mythica Ignota aspires to recalibrate the imbalance of the past era, and inspire new, generative ways of being.



Elliat RICH
Weaver's cloak
2024
fibre, mesh



Ceremonial Cloak

Weaver exists within the mythic and Earthly plains, expressed in the latter through pollinating patterns; most commonly birds and flowers.

This is a ceremonial cloak used as part of a ritual dance that honours the Weaver's formation of the world and the ongoing creation of pattern through matter.

Weaver is one of the central mythic-entities or forces of Warawana mythology.

The joining shape is the weaver, the connector. It is an action, a movement, a network.

A trillion life forms, all existing in each other's midst. Each pattern built on, with, and alongside every other.

A bird lands on a flower, hovers there, taking a drink of its nectar. The bird flies along to the

next flower, carrying a little of the first flower's pollen with it. One simple act of connection and exchange. The universe is made up of actions just like it. You and I, the bird and the flower, the ocean and the atmosphere. Material, ongoing exchange. We're made of the actions, the movements, the connections.

Extract from 'Compendium of the Oscillocene'



Elliat RICH
Shimmer cabinet
2024
brass, paint on glass, acrylic

Instrument and or display furniture
Unknown as to whether instrument or reference, the cabinet is thought to measure 'shimmer'. Shimmer is a concept articulated by Deborah Bird Rose in her essay, 'Shimmer: When All you Love is Being Trashed'. Rose describes the waves of invisible forces that surround and enable life, 'the flow of ancestral power in a collaborative, multi-species matrix'. It reminds us that every 'thing' exists only through and in relation.

Elliat RICH
Lattice vase
2024
hand blown glass

There are no edges without the spaces in between. The fine golden lines on the cabinet doors appear to shimmer when they slide over each other. This visual effect is known as 'moire', derived from the French 'watered silk' is used in other applications to measure and represent fluid flow and potential fields. Hence the cabinet may have been used to measure the 'shimmer' of objects placed within it.







Domestic vanity mirrors

Central to Warawana mythologies is the awareness of poly-temporality and unseen scales and forces present in any experience of place or person. To practise this, often reflective surfaces are distorted or disturbed, acting as a blurring of boundaries of 'self' and incorporating queer thinking into daily rituals.

Elliat RICH
Alter mirrors I-IV
2024
stone, steel, glass, silver

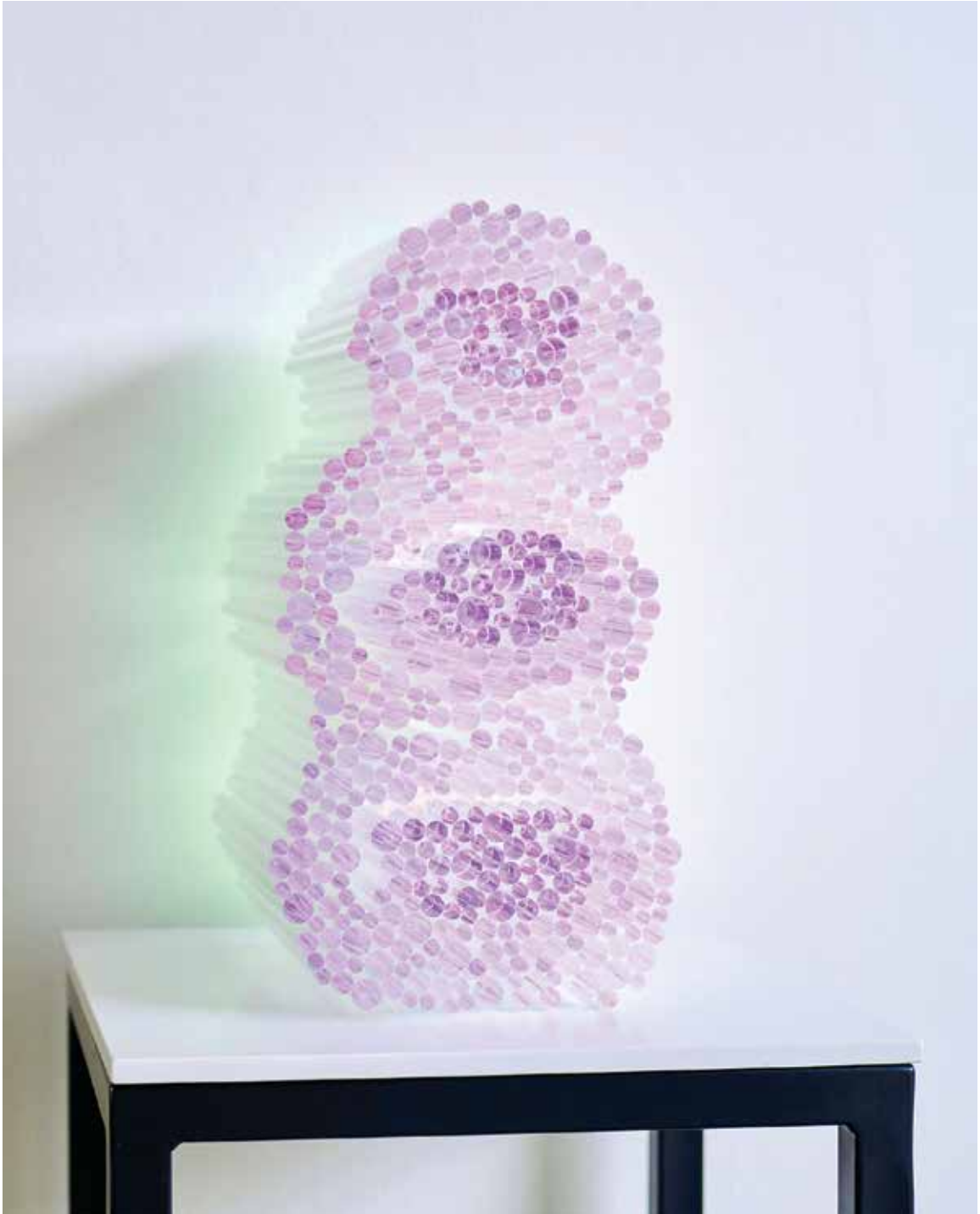


Elliat RICH
The Gradients drawers
2024
acrylic, dichroic film

Set of drawers used for storing small objects, mostly jewellery

The Gradients are a central story due to their collective and daily presence. The Gradients are giant entities that collect the colour at the end of everyday, appearing to us as sunsets. Keeping the colours of the world safe overnight (notably there is no colour spectrum in moonlight) they

release the hues and tones across Country each morning through sunrise. The scale and continuity of their presence provides an anchor to the daily ritual. Many objects, like this jewellery box, pay homage to the cycle of colour and relation to Earth as a contained cosmic body that The Gradients symbolise.





Elliat RICH
Weftle bottle collection
2024
hand-blown and found glass

These bottles are highly cherished as they are said to hold a hair from the Weaver. While their content remains unsubstantiated, there are diverse and colourful accounts of the trials undertaken to collect this hair and the transformation required to move between the invisible to Earthly plains. The passage is akin

to many of the world's mythologies, sometimes referred to as the 'Hero's Journey'. It is unknown whether the bottles and their contents are used in any specific way or just as gentle reminders of the omnipresent actions of the Weaver; the ongoing creation of all the interlocking patterns of the planet.



Elliat RICH

all matter are creating equal

2024

mirror, stone, brass, copper, leather,
timber, steel

Tenet of the Warawana mythologies
Wall-mounted mirror

If we can suspend the devaluing that happens in the sub and conscious process of othering of anything that is other-than-human we can get glimpses of a planet alive with sentience and agency. Moving well-beyond the 'us vs them' mentality we are able to recognise the 'shimmer' of this planet and slip past any hierarchy of pattern or the materials that make them. Knowing that all matter are creating equally illustrates the entanglement of planetary processes and gives all things in their current form agency to be - in relation.

These ideas are in part expressed through the philosophical lens known as New Materialism; *By considering the nonhuman's capabilities, new materialists undermine human exceptionalism and the assumption that only we*

have agency. Viewing everything as matter, and all matter as powerful, New Materialism refuses to treat humans as more than material, refuses that humans are separate from and superior to the world around us.

Vibrant Matter-A Political Ecology of Things
Jane Bennett 2010

—

The matter that we are, that makes all that we know, coalesced and began its deep time exchange 6 billion years ago. The Weaver, attuned to these conversations of matter, has listened and tended to them. Caressed, shepherded, woven them into forms known and otherwise. How do we give prominence to the agency of matter to understand the ancient kinship of everything that makes Earth?



Tenet of the Warawana mythologies
Wall-mounted mirror

... it is always the relation that allows 'beingness'. Consider how it is not the individual but the combined effort of entities; quarks, atoms, molecules, that allows for the making of matter and the shifts of scale. That it is the collaboration, or the combining, the collective that makes the world, from one nested-scale to the next. Through the action of the Weaver, it is the patterns, matter in relation that are the way the world is made.

Through the ever-weaving of matter, the world is made of relative, known and otherwise.

—

Can we be more attentive to our own porosity to know that all matter is made in relationship to its neighbour - shifting, transforming, warping, wefting in constant imperceptible exchange? These bodies we think of as 'ours' are just borrowed, a passing mist-like agreement of molecules and onwards through nested scales.

Elliat RICH

time is queer, Place is present

2024

mirror, printed aluminium

Tenet of the Warawana mythologies
Wall-mounted mirror

In any instance you occupy poly-temporal time-scales. These include time at a 'you'-scale 'this moment', time at a species-scale 'cultural practice', time at a geological-scale, time at an atomic-scale. These are only a few of the myriad layered time variants that we move within and experience either consciously or not. While our perceptions of time are mostly linear, practising belonging to other-than-human time-scales allows for the movement through time into 'past' and 'future' and 'parallel' realities of time from the perspective of other entities.

Recalibrating to the reality of polytemporal states allows us to dissolve into the queer reality that we occupy and the cellular cosmology this offers.

Meanwhile(s), Place is always present. You are always in relation to the expressions of matter that you are adjacent to, although - as the Eucalypt doesn't think of itself as not itself as its pollen travels on the nose of the pollinating bat - our edges are misty and in constant exchange, so while Place is always in relation to you its cannot be easily placed within boundaries are not clearly defined.





Floor and pendant lighting

The Waratah plays a central role in the Warawana mythologies. It symbolises the holding shape that all the matter of the planet is and has always been held within. Further to this the flower and all pollinating vessels represent the threshold between the mythic (invisible) plain and this one. Pollination is considered an important active form of the ongoing weaving of the planets' patterns.

In these lamps, that force is given presence and reverence through light, moving through the abstracted petals of the waratah and out into the world, pollinated by your gaze and imagination.

The holding shape is the waratah, the gatherer. It is a vessel, a container, a place. You and I live in this shape, so I can't tell the story from outside it. We are the waratah; we are, in this moment, the form that takes hold.

We don't just happen to be here at the same time; we exist together, in a complex interdependency, entangled with each other. It's impossible to separate any form of life from any other, since they all hold each other.

We are the waratah.

We hold and are held by this gathering-together

Extract from 'Compendium of the Oscillocene'.

Elliat RICH

Waratah lamps I-III

2024

glass, brass, silicon, lighting components

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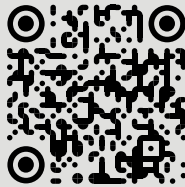
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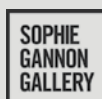
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