Eloquence Art Prize 2026
OUR FORESTS IN DANGER

UQ TINA AGIC

SELF-PRESENTATION

- Education: Graduate Diploma in Arts (Art History) (current);
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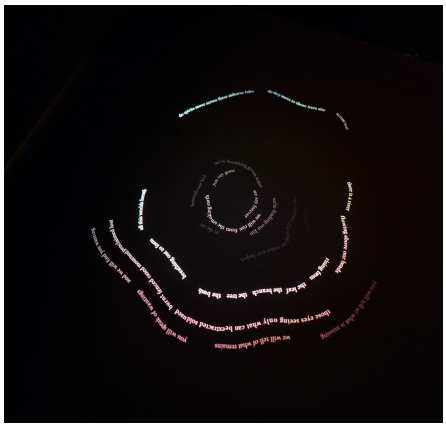
Tina Agic is an emerging arts worker based in Meanjin (Brisbane). Her interests include historiography, site-specific art, and socially-engaged practice. She is currently Studio Manager for Quandamooka artist Megan Cope and has previously held roles at the Institute of Modern Art and 4ZZZ. She has collaborated with artists and curators to realise artworks, exhibitions, and publications in Australian and international contexts. She is currently undertaking a Graduate Diploma in Arts (Art History) (2025–26) at The University of Queensland, and holds a Bachelor of Journalism and Arts (Political Science and French) (2017–21), also from The University of Queensland.

Inextricable eucalypt: native and invasive, loss and threat



Jazz Money, *Garrandarang*, 2021, projection, wood, 8 min, Installation view: *Out of the Everywhen*, Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania, 2023. Photo: Rémi Chauvin.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Two Wrapped Trees*, 1969, two eucalyptus trees, polyethylene, tarpaulin, rope, 91 x 950 x 91 cm (large tree), 91 x 518 x 45.5 cm (small tree). Photo: Art Gallery of New South Wales.

In 1788, French botanist Charles L'Héritier coined the genus "eucalyptus" to classify the over 900 native eucalypt species colonial explorers saw on the Australian continent. By the 1800s, eucalypt were at the centre of the new colonial discipline of "economic botany", which sought to turn the tree from an inextricable part of the landscape to an exploitable resource. Since colonisation, over 40% of Australia's eucalypt-dense forests have been logged, and eucalypt have been exported, taken root, and become invasive across the world.

Fast-growing eucalypt have been planted in over 100 countries, mainly cultivated for paper-making. But in many cases, this has caused detrimental environmental and social impacts: across the Americas and Europe, plantations have replaced native ecosystems and exacerbated catastrophic wildfires. Using Wiradjuri artist Jazz Money's text and light work *Garrandarang* (2021) and French-Bulgarian-American artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude's sculpture *Two Wrapped Trees* (1969), my talk will explore the eucalypt in native and non-native contexts — in the context of "loss" in Australia and "threat" across the globe.

Garrandarang — the Wiradjuri word for paper — consists of a projection of text on a hardwood surface. The sentences unfurl in a tree-ring pattern the size of an old eucalyptus trunk. Money ponders the experience of eucalypts — part of some First Nations peoples' kinship systems — which have been planted so far away: 'As Australian forests dwindle, our eucalypts spread unwelcome offshore. Do our ancestors follow them, to continue a relationship older than time?'. She reflects on the inextricable relationship between eucalypt and the land, in spite of deforestation and displacement: 'No colonial intervention can alter the truth of Country.' *Garrandarang* reminds us of how our forests have been lost, and how eucalypt continue to be exploited for economic gain.

Two Wrapped Trees consists of two native eucalyptus trees, with their leaves and roots wrapped in tarp, fabric, and rope. The trees lie horizontally on the ground, bound so they cannot move, covered so they cannot absorb light from the sun, uprooted so they cannot drink water or communicate with other trees. *Two Wrapped Trees* athropomorphises eucalypt; encouraging us imagine their suffering in an unnatural environment, far from home. It prompts reflection on the consequences of the exploitation of the eucalypt, and the grave threat the invasive species now pose to forests across the globe.

As Money asks, 'In the face of climate disaster, how can we return to listening to our trees, caring for Country?'

Sources

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