

## Cover Art—Artist’s Statement *Teacher, 2021*, by Jordan Wood

Jordan Wood

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*Teacher, 2021*, is collage on a found silver gelatin print. Collage takes the form of a healing modality, restructuring experiences to present multiple understandings and propositional connections. Learning as an infinite, collaborative assemblage. The photograph was found at a thrift store near Richmond Gaol, Lutruwita. I visited the gaol with my mother, attempting to trace a family member believed to have been held there.

It is partnered with a piece titled *Eva*, bookending this Image and Text piece. Together, they speak to both revolutionary sculptor Eva Hesse and Eva Rosslyn Johnsson, my maternal grandmother. Their shared feminist approach guides the assembling shapes, forms, and motions from various sites towards a discussion around collective memories and inherited experiences.

Accompanying the artworks is an interview conducted by Jordan with Indigenous Australian artist Yhonnie Scarce in which they reflect on shared themes across their work, the significance of the oyster image in *Teacher*, personal and collective histories, and the haunted places that inform their art.

Wood, Jordan, and Yhonnie Scarce. 2025. "Artist’s Statement" and "Cover Artist Jordan Wood in Conversation with Indigenous Australian Artist Yhonnie Scarce: On History, Haunted Places, and Fractured Identities." *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 11 (2): 1–8.

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Figure 1. Jordan Wood, *Teacher*, 2021 (collage on found silver gelatin print).

## Cover Artist Jordan Wood in Conversation with Indigenous Australian Artist Yhonnie Scarce: On History, Haunted Places, and Fractured Identities

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Yhonnie Scarce

**Yhonnie Scarce (YS):** Hi, Jordan. I thought we could reflect on how long we've known each other. I remember meeting you a good fifteen years ago actually. We've known each other for quite a while. We worked together during that period of time too. I'm really interested in talking to you about the work that you made for the cover of the journal, if you could tell me a little bit more about it.

**Jordan Wood (JW):** The work for the cover of the magazine was originally exhibited at a show at MARS [Melbourne Art Rooms] Gallery in 2022, I think. It was from a series where I was collaging directly on photographs that I would find in antique stores or boxes in opportunity [second hand] shops. These particular ones were interesting photographs. They came from a town just outside of Hobart, where there is quite a significant prison, and I've had family members that had been in it. My mom has always spent quite a lot of time trying to trace back her convict settler history in Tasmanian. It's always brought with traces, but nothing very solid because there won't be a grave and the records weren't kept. At the same time, it diverts from that too. By having this form that's suggestive of a teaching figure trying to nurture the oyster. It nurtures, supports, and teaches questioning about how we perceive history in forming ourselves, which, I feel, is more important than what my mom's doing, than actually finding this perceived truth or family.

**YS:** So the prison that you're talking about, is that one of the female factories as well? There was one in Hobart and then there's one further north. Yeah, I know a little bit about those female factories as well because I've spent quite a lot of time in Tasmania. I've visited the one in Hobart with a plan to visit the one further north, but I haven't gotten around to it. I've been told the factory in the northern part of Tasmania is a lot creepier.

**JW:** It's exceptionally haunting. You can feel it...

**YS:** In your bones, really. I think even the Cascades Female Factory in Hobart, you can tell that it was built for the utmost suffering of the female inmates there. No sun. Sorry, I cut you off.

**JW:** No, no. I also found it really interesting the lens in which the ways these places are presented. It seems to be, I don't know, there's so many ways to show this. It isn't in a horror sense. There is almost a pride in this history, which I find an unexpected part of the experience of being there.

**YS:** Yeah, for Tasmania in general, it was a really horrible penal colony. The history of that place, not just their treatment of the Aboriginal people during the Black Wars, but also, in terms of the oppression of women in general. Regardless of whether they were Black or white. With pregnancies happening, children dying, and their babies dying. The women were not allowed any sunlight. I like that you've mentioned the haunting or, that it feels haunted. I think it is and I think with many historical prisons in Australia, there are remnants. Like you said, there's pride in it. Why would you be proud of these places? Are you proud that people suffered?

**JW:** Even anecdotally, growing up, within some of my family, there was a pride that we came from convicts as opposed to immigrants, which is a very complex part of that fractured identity in a land built on massacres. I don't even know where to go with that. It's confused me since I was a child.

**YS:** Well, I guess it sounds like you're retracing history or trying to understand it. That's what we all do as artists.

**JW:** It is, and that connection between the desecration of the environment in Tasmania particularly, how active and ongoing that is, looking at the salmon farming and how that's an absolute environmental disaster. Then the beaches we've lost to the invasion of oysters. It is a tension, it's a current that divides the whole island, as many people's livings depends on them.

**YS:** Yeah, that's true and I think when you talk about the invasion of the Pacific oyster, it's very similar to the invasion of Australia. It brought disease. You and I were talking about it the other day. The indigenous oyster in Australia was desecrated, which was a food staple for First Nations people. Particularly along the coast in the southern part of Australia but also the east coast as well. I love eating oysters. I think they're amazing, but historically you know that they were brought to Australia or introduced to Australia as another food staple. It's like when they brought plants, birds, or other foreign fauna that were not from Australia. It's another form of invasion.

**JW:** Another reason they were brought in was for making lime and for the buildings.

**YS:** Yeah, and that's how a lot of the Angasi oysters were desecrated. It wasn't just the introduction of Pacific oysters, but also because they ground down their shells to build mortar for the buildings. There's a lot embedded in that one particular visual representation of the oyster in your work.

**JW:** It repeats. It has such strong representation from luxury to oysters being a poor person's food. There's so many contradictions within the oyster. It's also sexualization, seduction, and those readings. Where it's placed culturally and where it's consumed, changes what it is.

**YS:** Yeah, exactly, it's like when you think of the class system. People can't always afford something that was originally for the working class. Now, some people can't even afford half a dozen oysters. Like what you said, it's a luxury item. Yeah, it's an interesting but sad concept, I think. Often you hear that an oyster is seen as the vagina. It smells supposedly like a vagina. That speculation also degrades the female or the woman. It's one small object that was a staple food item once upon a time. Now, that society of the patriarchy uses it as a way to degrade and refer to women in a way that is disrespectful at the end of the day. It's interesting because I really love collage. I love [Lorna Simpson's](#) work; it's photography as well, how one image can be so powerful.

**JW:** Just by sorting images that are not vast, but were maybe printed a 150 years apart from one another. Combining them just speaks to their nonlinear history. Rather than being quite specific about where the publication, the print, and the thing overall comes from, it's a bit more about the correlation and the relationships between the context of them.

**YS:** Through that, you're creating your own image. You're bringing in different pages from different images.

**JW:** Also, you're leaving it open enough so that hopefully there's space for people to bring their own readings to it. As opposed to making a direct statement which is important in art.

**YS:** Exactly, that's how art can be powerful in telling and retelling stories and educating people through the power of image.

**JW:** Both of us work so well in traditionally craft-based methods as well. You with glass, ceramics, collage, and using sourced materials.

**YS:** Yeah, and found objects. Yeah, and using them as tools. I call them tools because they've had a previous life and you're using them to recreate another story.

**JW:** They're heavy, the materials I'm thinking of that you use. Laboratory equipment has that strong, immediate familiarity that quickly gets muddled.

**YS:** Yeah, but I like the haunting.

**JW:** I love it, me too. It's a huge amount of the process. Even that table for the work in the ceramics.

**YS:** Yeah, the [art award](#) [Shepparton Art Museum Indigenous ceramic award]. We are talking about femininity at the moment. That [work](#) that you and I worked together on when you made the teacups in porcelain. It was about servants or as I would call them slaves, as well. The indentured labor in Australia with the Aboriginal women. Finding those objects or that table of what you just mentioned, the dining table. Those Aboriginal women would've never been allowed to sit at it. They cleaned it but they wouldn't have been allowed to eat off that table.

**JW:** They could clean those objects, those cups. That was the work of servant and slave. You had to maintain them.

**YS:** That was quite a while ago. I think unfortunately history repeats itself. There's other forms of subjugating women in a way. I think personally, as a woman, I feel a lot stronger than my ancestors, but I wouldn't be in this position if it wasn't for them as well.

**JW:** Sorry, I just get very excited about this acknowledging the strength of the women that came before you, but there is still so much further to go. I think about your niece and seeing her grow up over the years and your closeness. Within her generation, she has a vivaciousness and boldness that I could never have imagined at her age and that's so inspiring.

**YS:** Yeah, me too, same here. I didn't have the same amount of confidence at her age. I always say, in the last few years, thinking back about those women, I come from a long line of strong women. I think about them for that pride in my family history. I think about your history as well, especially with your mom trying to go back and look for ancestral information about Tasmania and those prisons. I think there's a real power in that practice.

**JW:** Yeah, and it has a lot to do with her mother being an incredibly strong community leader who was very independent. She was also an artist. She did have children as a teenager and she was forced into marriage. She left that and started her own businesses and farms, but for her time, to be divorced with two children—it was not the norm. She was incredible, but there were so many compromises she had to make. So much judgment in order to live a life that was honest for herself.

**YS:** We've reached twenty minutes.

**JW:** We can wrap up, we could just talk all day otherwise.

**YS:** Yeah, I was just thinking, this is good. I think maybe we should start a podcast.

**JW:** Yeah! Then we could go to Tasmania. I want to go to Queenstown because that is an exceptionally haunted place.

**YS:** Yeah, I've heard about that too.

**JW:** I've had ancestors that worked in the copper mine there and yeah, it's a completely desecrated moonscape.

**YS:** Well, that's your reason to go to Tasmania next year, to hang around after or even have a really good research trip. I feel bad, but we did have a time limit.

**JW:** Thank you so much for this.

## Author Bios

**Jordan Wood** is an artist living and working on Dja Dja Wurrung Country. Over the past fifteen years, she has exhibited across Australia and internationally. Drawing upon personal histories and collective experiences, her work collages movements and responses as caught in the body, traversing the spaces between histories and fictions, artifacts and debris, questioning what we conceal and allow exposed. Visit [www.jordanlwood.com](http://www.jordanlwood.com) for more details.

**Yhonnie Scarce** was born in Woomera, South Australia, and belongs to the Kokatha and Nukunu peoples. Scarce's interdisciplinary practice explores the political nature and aesthetic qualities of glass and photography. Her work often references the ongoing effects of colonisation on Aboriginal people; in particular, her research has explored the impact of the removal and relocation of Aboriginal people from their homelands and the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their families. Family history is central to Scarce's work, drawing on the strength of her ancestors, she offers herself as a conduit, sharing their significant stories from the past. Visit <https://artistprofile.com.au/yhonnie-scarce> or <https://thisisnofantasy.com/artist/yhonnie-scarce> for more details.



Figure 2. Jordan Wood, *Eva* (collage on found silver gelatin print), 2021.