

## **Lunette 'ki'**

Junichiro Iwase

10th Mildura Palimpsest Biennale, Australia, Curated by Jonathan Kimberley

Written by Maki Iwase

Inspired by the Lunette of Mungo, the trees and energy (both meaning 'ki', in Japanese) along the Murray River, and the intercultural histories across geographies, this installation brings together ideas, materials and hybrid subjectivities that traverse time and space.

Eggshells. Fallen branches. These are things in our everyday world that are typically considered disposable, having little use or value. When we regard them as such, they have a tendency to fade and even disappear from our collective consciousness, rendering them invisible. Yet, when we bring these substances in an unlikely and incommensurable way in the form of art, a transformation occurs in our consciousness that renders such things visible by actively inviting reflection, generating insight, and opening up possibilities to imagine Other-wise. This transformative reversal is precisely what this installation attempts to accomplish.

In keeping with the theme of this year's biennale: 'Everywhere all at once... here', the intention of Junichiro's aesthetic intervention is to promote ways in which we can re-imagine everyday, taken-for-granted things that are 'everywhere all at once' and meditate on them 'here' in order to expand our horizon of understanding of who we are, how we engage with objects and Others, and what we are becoming.

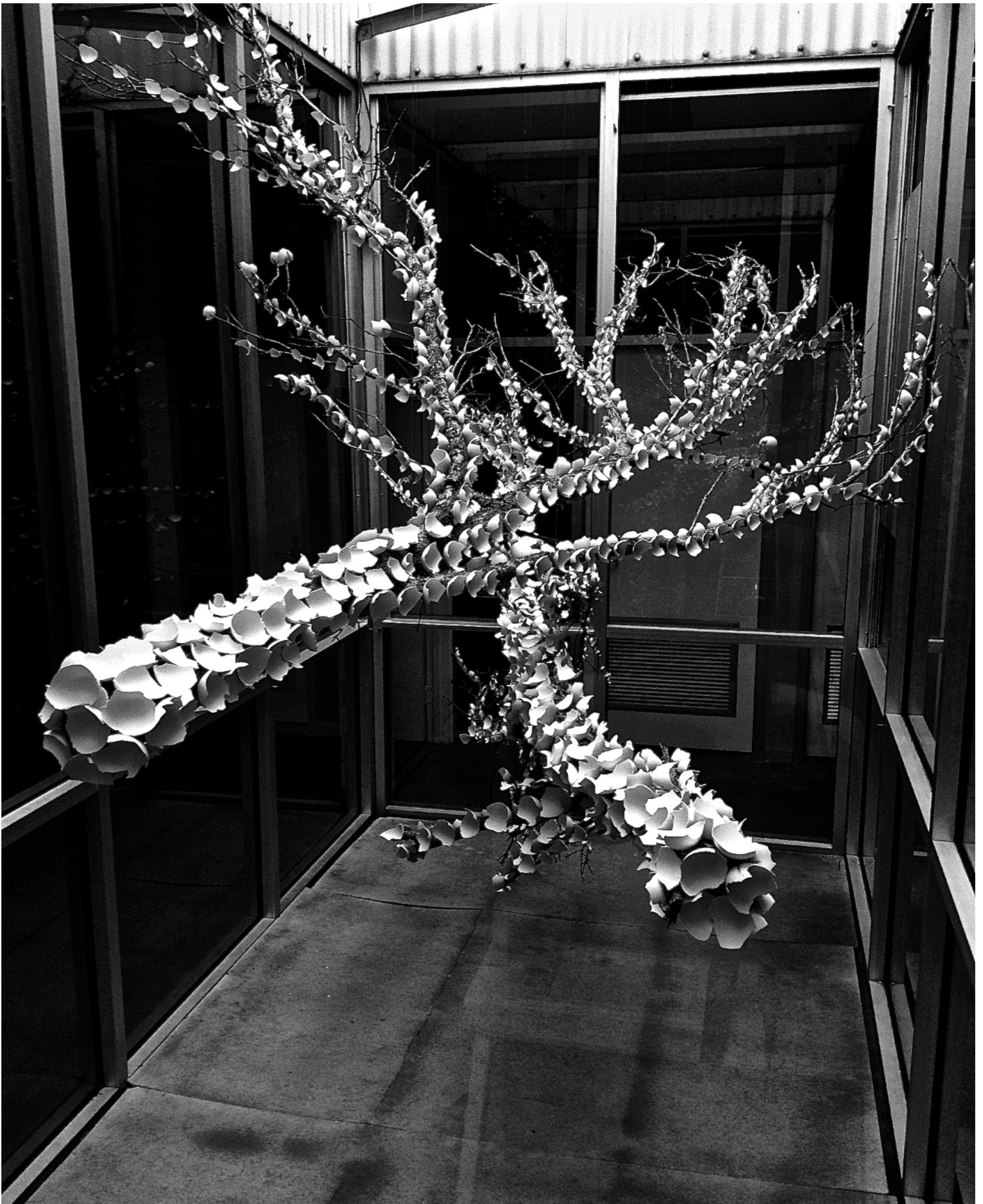
This installation is interactive in the sense that it invites self-reflexivity and opens up the possibility for multiple conversations. It calls upon the viewer on the outside looking inside to reflect upon their social location, history, culture and the broader context that inform the interpretation and significance of the artwork. Calling attention to the glass atrium, the audience is asked to conceptualize the glass as a metaphor for the ideological lens through which one views the artwork. How might our tacit assumptions and presuppositions color the way in which we make sense of the art before us? And how might this interpretation, in turn, reconfigure how we understand ourselves, our relations to objects and Others, and the broader forces that shape our shared existence?

On a much wider and abstract level, this installation seeks to blur the distinction between insider-outsider relations and examine the subtle forms of inclusionary and exclusionary practices that constitute the resonance and dissonance within intercultural spaces. The following Indigenous chant brings us closer to reconciling such tensions and open up the possibility of a shared humanity:

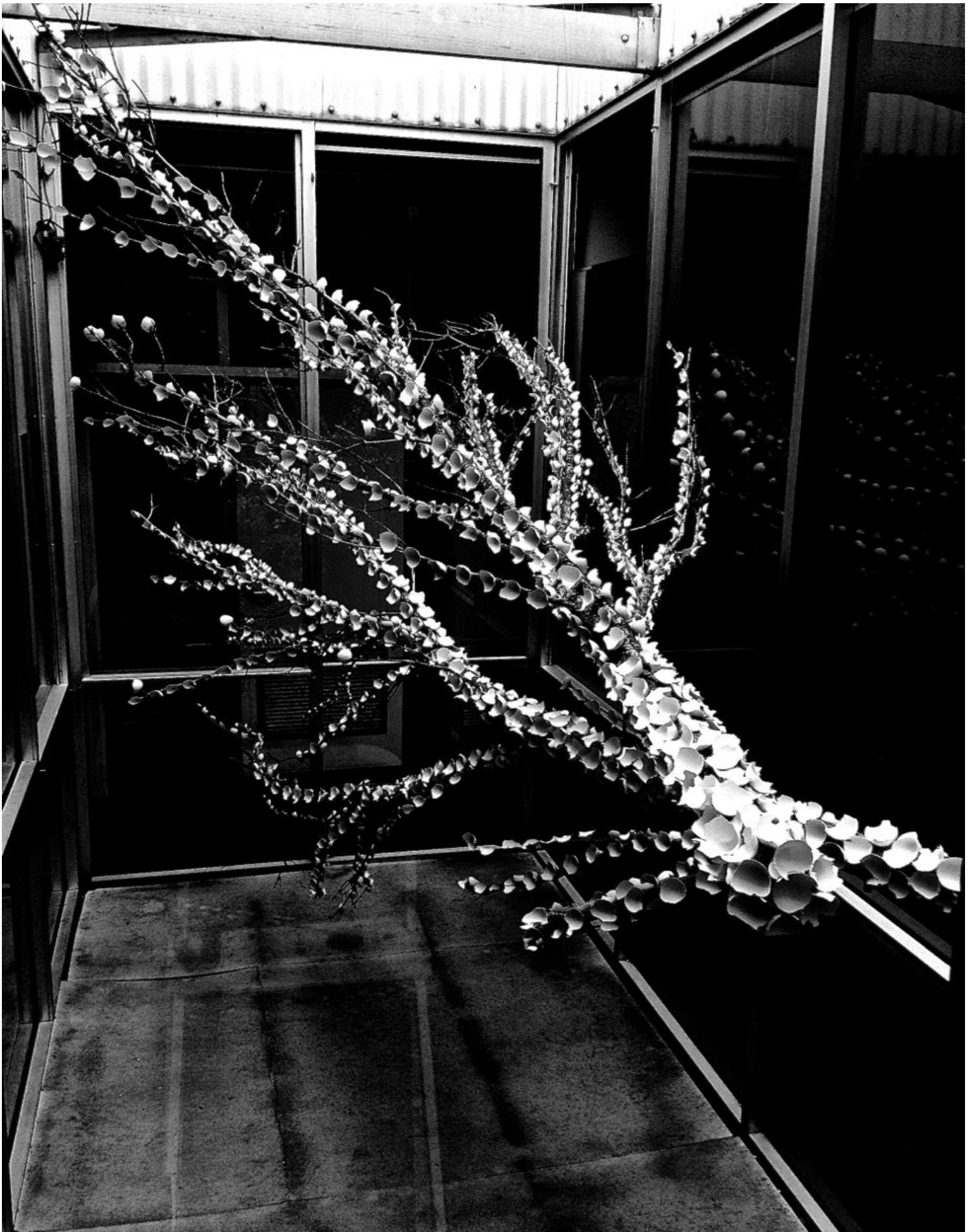
*Let us see in this Real*

*Let us see in this Real*

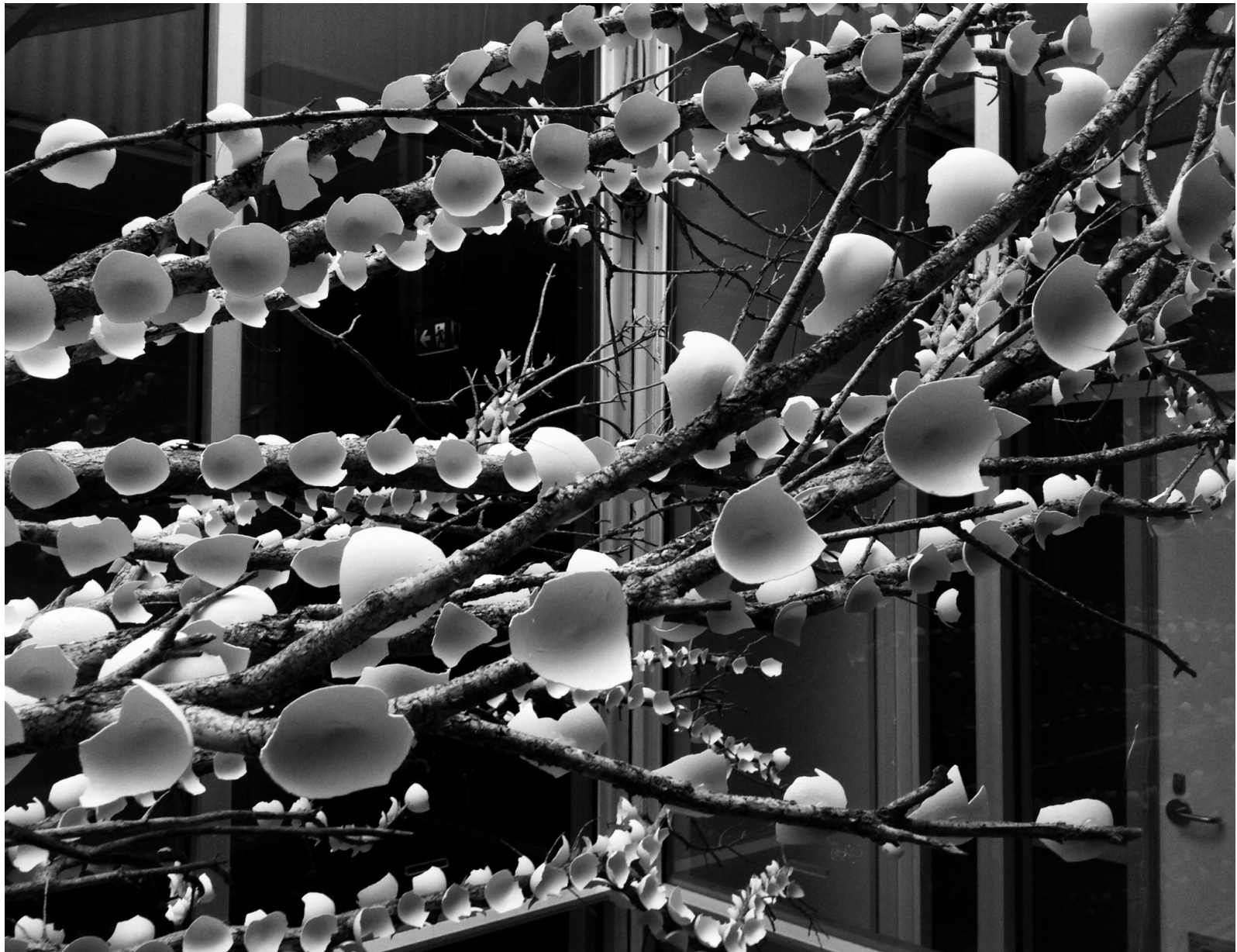
*This Life I am Living*



Installation View: Lunette 'ki', eggshell and fallen tree branches

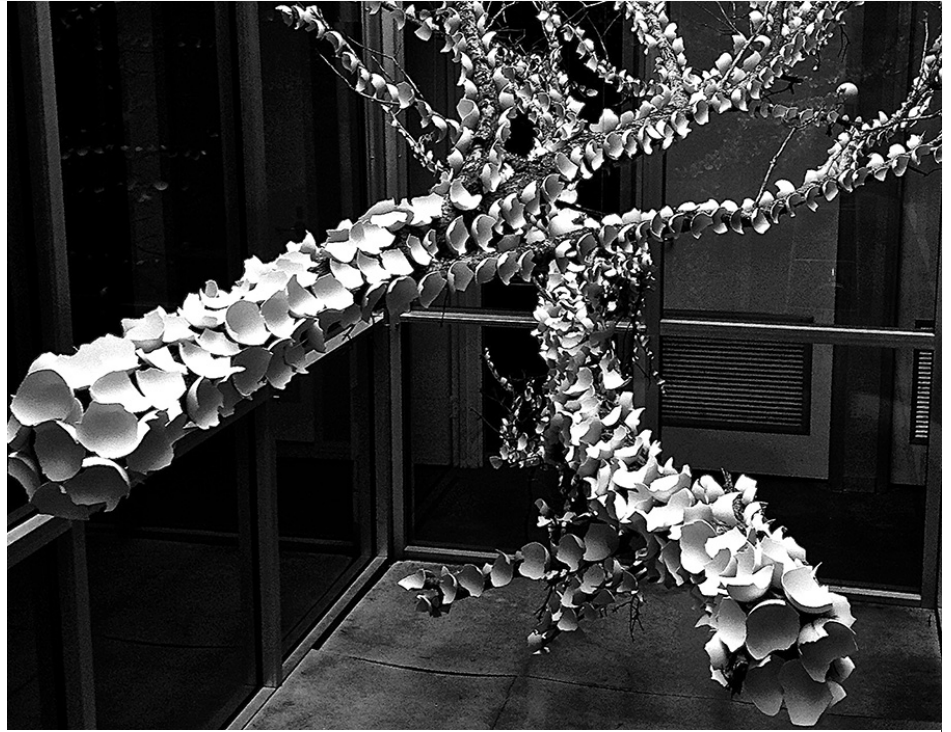


Installation View: Lunette 'ki', eggshell and fallen tree branches



(detail) Lunette-ki, eggshell on fallen tree branches

RONY GUTERRES  
KRISTIAN HÄGGBLUM & TUOMAS A.  
LAITINEN  
JELINA HAINES  
THE HENNA PROJECT  
MISHKA HENNER  
DANIELLE HOBBS  
SASHA HUBER & PETRI SAARIKKO  
JUNICHIRO IWASE  
MARCIA JANE  
SHARON JEWELL  
DESMA JULI  
RACHEL KENDRIGAN & ROHAN  
MORRIS  
JONATHAN KIMBERLEY  
MANDI KING  
YUTAKA KOBAYASHI  
ISHMAEL MARIKA  
JOHN MCBRIDE  
ANNE MCMAHON  
RICKY MITCHELL  
KUMPEI MIYATA  
VINCENT NAMATJIRA  
GLENDA NICHOLLS  
LUCI MARCUZZO & HEATHER LEE  
JILL ORR  
DARYL PAPPIN  
BRUCE PASCOE  
IZABELA PLUTA  
DEBRA RANKINE  
BRONWYN RAZEM  
STEVEN RHALL  
KOJI RYUI  
YHONNIE SCARCE  
CATHERINE SHIELDS  
NICHOLAS SMITH  
KERRY N SYLVIA  
ELLEN TREVORROW  
KYLE WALKER  
STUART WALSH  
XS COLLECTIVE  
LYOTA YAGI  
SHANNON YOUNG



Junichiro Iwase, *Lunette 'Ki'*, 2015, Tree branch and eggshells, Inland Residency Program. Photo courtesy the artist.

"Art is merely an extension of nature. I hope we can look at our weaknesses to create a bond which is relational."

In Junichiro Iwase's sculpture and paintings, the use of eggshells has been a central and enduring aspect of his work to foreground the notion of vulnerability, fragility, and uniqueness to all living things. The artist is drawn to the material's natural representation, which can offer alternate views on contemporary society.

Junichiro Iwase is a Canadian artist of Japanese ancestry whose work spans over 20 years. His work has been featured in international and local exhibitions: 10<sup>th</sup> Liverpool Biennial; Art Fair Tokyo; Korea International Art Fair: 1<sup>st</sup> Pocheon Biennial; Seoul International Print, Photo, and Edition Art Fair; Shanghai Art Fair; Nikkei National Museum. Other special projects include: digital screening for Vancouver Asian Film Festival; animated prints and paintings in Tokyo; HIV/AIDS sculpture in New York; Nikkei Fishermen's Memorial in his hometown.

Currently, Iwase lives and works in British Columbia with his family. He continues to find new approaches to his egg theme by presenting his work to audiences at local and international venues.

<http://www.junichiroiwase.com>

Represented by: Gallery 21yo-j, Art Beatus

## Confluence (inside, outside, at the same time)

A response to Junichiro Iwase's *Lunette 'ki'*

Tracy Farr

As a writer, I keep a magpie eye open for shiny things that I might stash away to fuel my writing; and I look for connections, the odder the better. Sometimes I don't have to look far, though; sometimes the shiny thing, the odd connection, seems to deliver itself, as if transmitted through the air, like electricity; or as if by magic, or chance. Or as if it's in the water: seeping, spreading, flowing downhill, filling spaces.

There's something in the water: you can drive half an hour from Mildura, across the river to Wentworth, and stand and watch the confluence, where the Murray and Darling rivers meet. During the month I spent there in July 2015, Mildura seemed to me to be a place of *confluence* in the conceptual sense: merging and crossing and mixing and meeting, the flowing together of people or cultures or ideas.

### EGG

During my writing residency in Mildura, I worked on a draft of my second novel. There were several chapters towards the end of the novel that remained to be written, one of which I'd outlined months before in a simple note – *Before the party, bake a cake* – of the action that was needed to satisfy a plot point. A week into my residency, I wrote that scene, ending it:

Marti measures sugar, whisks flour in a bowl to sift it. She separates eggs, slides the whites into a mixing bowl. Each yolk she leaves cupped in its own half shell, all six of them resting on the table, each rocking gently until it find its balance.

That evening I first met Junichiro Iwase, my housemate for the remainder of the month, who'd arrived that day from Canada to start a three-week artist's residency. Over our first meal together, Junichiro described his artistic process – how he collected, cleaned, dried and stored leftover eggshells to use as his sculptural medium. He spoke of his interest in surfaces, in outsides and insides visible at once. There I first recognised a confluence of ideas: running strongly through the novel I've been working on is a reflection on (the tension between) insides and outsides, on breaks and cracks and edges, and on the spaces in between.

I continued writing my cake-baking chapter – which I'd titled 'Inside, outside, at the same time' – the next morning:

At the sink, she carefully cleans the eggshells. She runs water over them, slides her fingers on their satin silky insides to remove membrane. The feel of them: the chalk-rough of their outside, the glide of their inside, strong and fragile all at once. The look of them: the smooth of the curve of the egg, the sharp of the broken edge; inside and outside at the same time.

When they're all clean, she wipes the halfshells dry and puts them in a line on the windowsill, where the sun – when its angle is right – will catch them, and light will shine through them. She lets the shells settle and find their balance: all on the same ground, each facing in a different direction.

There's the egg beginning of the gentle confluence of my work with Junichiro's.

## CONFLUENCE

A few days later, I drove to Wentworth to see the confluence. The sky was winter-grey, the light dull, and the rivers' meeting point – built up in my mind through a frenzy of anticipation – was underwhelming. The colour difference between the rivers' waters was absent that day, in that light. The only sign visible from the northern shore was a fine line of white foam right down the guts of the river, like a zip, or a line of pale hair on a belly. I've seen another confluence though: the confluence of the Pacific Ocean (to the east) and the Tasman Sea (to the west), viewed from Cape Reinga/Te Rerenga Wairua at the northern tip of New Zealand. There, the waters boil and peak where they meet. It's unsettling, to see those large masses of water clash; it's dramatic, dynamic and powerful.

Interesting things happen at a point of confluence. The place of meeting is a place of disruption – even that fine white line of foam on the water at the Murray–Darling confluence is an indicator of great turbulence below the surface – and of possibility, where some new form may arise. The confluence is not static or stable, but dynamic. It's a place of collision, and of recovering from collision and finding a new path.

When I think of confluence, I think too of liminality: being between two states, not quite fully one or the other. Liminality offers choice, a sense of possibility, or potential; think of standing in a doorway (*Do I go in? Do I go out?*), or reaching a fork in the river (*the Darling or the Murray?*); think of being on the brink of something. Liminality can be disorienting, ambiguous. Liminality exists in the space between states – and that may be the most creative space of all.

## WATER

My writing studio in Mildura's ADFA Building was adjacent to the atrium (a liminal space, at once outside and inside) where Junichiro Iwase worked with eggshells and fallen tree branches to create the artwork that he would name *Lunette 'ki'*. Each day for several weeks I sat at my desk and watched through the doorway as the artwork slowly took shape, as Junichiro worked inside the atrium, and outside the atrium (even, occasionally, inside and outside at the same time). I say it took shape slowly, and yet there was a day when it seemed that, after much careful preparation and assembly, the work was very suddenly and finally and perfectly complete. I hold in my mind three images of *Lunette 'ki'* from that day.

The first image: from the doorway of my studio, I looked end-on into the atrium, down through the broad tops of eggshell-studded tree branches hanging suspended in the space, to the far point of the atrium where the bases of the branches came together, close but not quite

touching. From that angle, it was like staring into the feeding maw of a huge skeletal creature, shell-covered branches the bleached jawbones of a great, ghostly whale. That underwater sense was heightened by the gentle motion of the branches as air moved in the atrium; atrium became aquarium. As I watched, I felt myself to be within the atrium/aquarium; I seemed to be inside it, underwater, though I knew I was not.

The second image: late in the day, last to leave the building, I turned off the light in my windowless studio, closed the door, and walked towards the exit. I turned at the door and looked back across the room to the atrium, now the only source of light – late afternoon light through its open roofspace – in the otherwise dark and empty building. *Lunette 'ki'* trapped the light, while everything else was dark. Like a lens – or many lenses – *Lunette 'ki'* focussed all the light that fell on it from above, and seemed to transmit light in all directions, each fragment of eggshell illuminated, and illuminating.

The third image: a breeze, some air movement; the lantern became an atrium, then became once more an aquarium, and the branches inside it shifted in scale, became smaller (or I, Alice-like, became bigger). Now I was snorkelling, peering through spit-cleared goggles; or looking through the magnifying lens of a microscope, as I have done so often in life. The eggshell fragments exactly mimicked sun-bleached discs of coralline algae, chalk-white epiphytes covering the branches of brown seaweed. I know this: I worked for many years, until recently, as a scientist, and these chalky algae – composed, like eggshells, largely of calcium carbonate – were my area of special expertise (but not only that: coralline algae were my aesthetic fetish, *jolie laide*, beautiful, strange; I have some, dried, on my windowsill as I write this).

Jawbone, seaweed, whale, light, lens, *Lunette 'ki'* was at once beautiful, strange and unsettling. Watching it, I could not shake the sense of shifting: shifting scale, whale to seaweed; shifting medium, air to water. In its atrium/aquarium, the shining shell-covered branches moved and swayed as if on moon-pulled ocean tides.

## MOON

Up's not a direction I'm normally in the habit of looking. Living on the side of a hill, as I do in Wellington (as so many of us do, in Wellington), if I want to watch the sky I can look directly ahead. From the windows of my house I look straight out over treetops and rooftops to a skyscape of clouds; I can judge the strength and direction of the wind by their movement. The sky feels close to the ground, in Wellington, contained by the hills, anchored to the cupping green land.

In Mildura I looked up often from the flat of the land to observe the distant, endless sky. I was smitten by skylscapes: clouds aligned, a bird frozen in flight; rooftops edging jagged against the sky; a leaf and a wire outlined on crisp, cold blue; the play of light and dark. I was particularly struck by the moon. I would go outside in the middle of the night and stare straight up, watching it, watching the clouds – when they were present – covering and revealing it, until the cold sent me back to bed.



My month in Mildura exactly spanned a full lunar cycle, bracketed by full moons. My last day there, at the end of July, was a blue moon by one definition of the term – the second full moon in the calendar month. On my first Mildura full moon, at the beginning of the month, I experienced a performance/artwork by Domenico de Clario. In *gift (all the gorgeous nothings)*, Domenico sat at a piano in the ADFA Building (the building in which Junichiro would, later that month, install *Lunette 'ki'*) singing 'all the songs he knows'. The performance was timed to take place from the rising of the full moon until the end of astronomical twilight more than two hours later, and it was this that first alerted me to the lunar cycle, attuned me to the blue moon timing of my residency.

In the programme notes for *gift (all the gorgeous nothings)*, Domenico referenced nineteenth century American poet Emily Dickinson, and the poems she wrote in pencil on scraps of paper and envelope flaps, 'fragments of her well-known thrift'. Of the appearance (composition) of the poems on the page, Domenico wrote:

Sometimes Dickinson's writing fills the space of the envelope like water flowing into a vessel...The page feels bigger still, as if there has been an *insertion* of space. In this way something is produced from nothing, and irrespective of its aesthetics, pleasing or not, it is gorgeous simply because it has come into existence from nothing...

So at the confluence, in a blue moon, everything merges, or at least connects. Discarded eggshells and fallen branches are fragments of Junichiro Iwase's thrift, collected, transformed, so that 'something is produced from nothing'. *Lunette 'ki'* fills the liminal space of the atrium/aquarium, until the space feels bigger than itself, 'as if there has been an *insertion* of space'; at the same time it feels smaller, pocketsized like Dickinson's paper scraps and pencil stubs. It is deeply pleasing, *jolie laide*, gorgeous.

[1900 words]

[References to be added]