

**TANYA CHALY**



**UNRAVEL**





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March 6th - April 2nd 2017  
The Cluster Gallery, New York

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Tanya Chaly

Curated by Matthew Garrison



Tanya Chaly makes visible the invisible forces of nature through interventions into her analytical drawings on paper of animals and the ecosystems they inhabit. Her work balances order with disorder, meticulously combining renderings in graphite and charcoal with indications of impending microscopic threats. Often, they take the form of thousands of pinholes depicting the molecular structures and toxins that impact species, and the delicate systems in nature that support them. While some of the most vulnerable of animals might adapt to these environmental pressures, others will mutate or succumb to them. The tension in Chaly's work is apparent in the beauty of her drawing and the innate beauty of the creatures she's drawn, while, simultaneously, acknowledging the possibility of their extinction. Her work and installations are layered with clues to understanding complex issues in science and life. In the process, poignant questions arise surrounding resilience, survival and loss.

In the spirit of scientific inquiry, Chaly's work is grounded in observation and detail. The isolated animals are composed and presented for investigation, hovering in perpetuity, absent of landscape, surrounded solely by the punctured traces of their origins. Unflinchingly observed and refined, the accuracy of Chaly's work is rooted in both art and science, recalling a time before photography when proficiency in drawing was essential to recording the scientific method. Chaly's collaborations with an entomologist in Mozambique and a molecular biologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering coalesce into artwork, merging the world of endangered species with the microscopic realms of cellular information. Chaly utilizes the data she uncovers to connect species from around the world to threats of environmental encroachment and cellular disruption in their anatomy, bringing to light a collective survival instinct among those facing increasingly hostile aggressors.

But Chaly locates her investigations squarely in the realm of art through her realization of concepts with graphite and pastel, and her delicate puncturing and scratching of the paper's surface with pins and an electric Dremel. Paper, the material of textbooks and journals, serves as both a means of presentation and a framework for drawings and ideas. For instance, Chaly's series of forty endangered frogs individually rendered and presented in heavy wooden frames under convex glass and domes, initially appear to stem from direct analysis and a

Victorian aesthetic, but closer inspection reveals the delicacy of her marks and a subtle range of hues and values. Her approach to drawing with a Dremel, by lightly scraping and sanding the surface while applying graphite and pastel, transforms the delicate paper in this piece into a kind of membrane, at times the domed glass recalling a bullfrog's vocal sac. Yet, all the while, science remains central to Chaly's investigations. She explains that amphibians use their skin to absorb moisture and to breathe, making them bio indicators because of their sensitivity to environmental changes; also, how a fungus is currently decimating frog populations by thickening their skin and interfering with a life sustaining ability to absorb moisture and essential salts and electrolytes. Chaly further emphasizes the fragility of the frogs' ecosystems by referencing lungs in the layout of the installation, and indicating with pinhole evidence the difficult conditions under which they subsist.

Chaly's queries are evidenced through the traces of research punctured into the surface of the paper, recalling braille or scarification, while referencing an ongoing visual vocabulary. However, the beauty of these punctured constellations shifts after learning of the invisible threats they represent in conjunction with the depicted nutrients essential to survival. This tug of war between imperceptible forces is at the heart of Chaly's work. Behind its beauty is the uncomfortable reminder that over the past seven years scientists have discovered approximately a thousand new viruses in rain forests that coexist in their ecosystems with little impact on people and animals. But as ecosystems shrink due to deforestation, and animals are removed to become exotic pets in homes and private zoos - or through poaching, the possibility of viruses like Ebola and SARS spreading to untested populations increases. Chaly's drawings embody both a respect for ecology and a warning that the delicate balance between nature and civilization is unraveling.

Her atmospheric pastel of the Arctic Death Spiral, a scientific chart describing the rapid loss of melting sea ice from 1979 to 2016, connects Chaly's concepts to lands around the globe and exemplifies the urgency in her work. Below the pinhole death spiral, she has scratched into the paper with fluorescent orange ink words from the Roman Philosopher, Cicero, "Non audimus ea qua ab natura monemur."

Already, in the first century AD Cicero cautioned, "We do not notice the things that nature warns us about." Chaly's drawings confirm Cicero's observation: in the name of profit, progress and power, warning signs received from the natural universe continue to be discounted, and the potential impact on our planet ignored when a species and its habitat cease to exist.

Matthew Garrison



Installation View, "Unravel", The Cluster Gallery, New York, March 2017





Installation View, The Cluster Gallery, New York, March 2017



*Realm of the Cave Dwellers - Keepers of the Nest IV, 2017*

Pastel, graphite, coloured pencil and punctured drawing on paper 30 x 22 inches



*Realm of the Cave Dwellers - Keepers of the Nest I*, 2017

Pastel, graphite, coloured pencil and punctured drawing on paper 30 x 22 inches



*Realm of the Cave Dwellers - Keepers of the Nest III, 2017*

Pastel, graphite, coloured pencil and punctured drawing on paper 30 x 22 inches



*Fever*, 2017,

Suite of 20 drawings: pastel, coloured pencil and punctured drawing on paper under museum glass and plexi glass domes, 59 x 98 inches overall

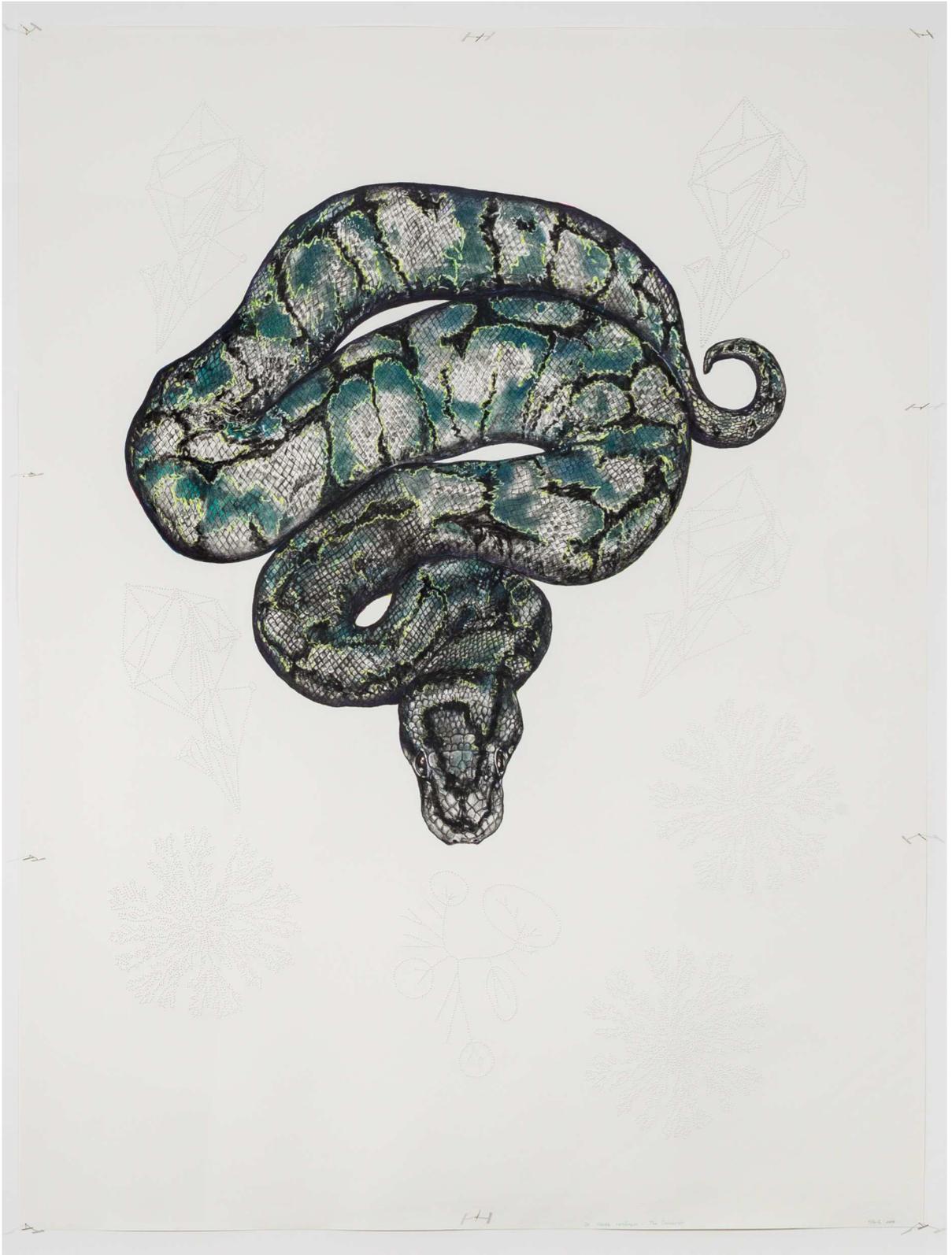


*Fever, (detail) Arctic Starfish, 2017,*  
Pastel on paper, 10 x 13 inches



Image left: *Summoning the Serpent Swallower*, 2017

Image Right: *In cauda venenum - The Devourer*, 2016



*In cauda venenum - The Devourer*, 2016,  
Charcoal, graphite, metallic pigment, coloured pencil and punctured drawing on paper, dissection pins, 50 x 38 inches



*Cascade - Index*, 2017,

Graphite, metallic pigment, coloured pencil and punctured drawing on parchment under convex glass and plexi domes, linen book binding thread, dissection pins, 80 x 120 inches overall



*Cascade - Index, (detail), 2017,*

Graphite, metallic pigment, coloured pencil and punctured drawing on parchment under convex glass and plexi domes, linen book binding thread, dissection pins, 5 x 7 inches each



Installation View, The Cluster Gallery, New York, March 2017



*Shiver and Say The Words of Every Lie You've Heard*, 2017

Museum Specimen, graphite, coloured pencil and punctured drawing on parchment, dissection pins, glass bell jar,  
8 x 8 x 10 inches



*A Dark and Gathering Sameness, 2017*

Graphite, coloured pencil and punctured drawing on parchment under convex glass, 36 x 39 inches overall



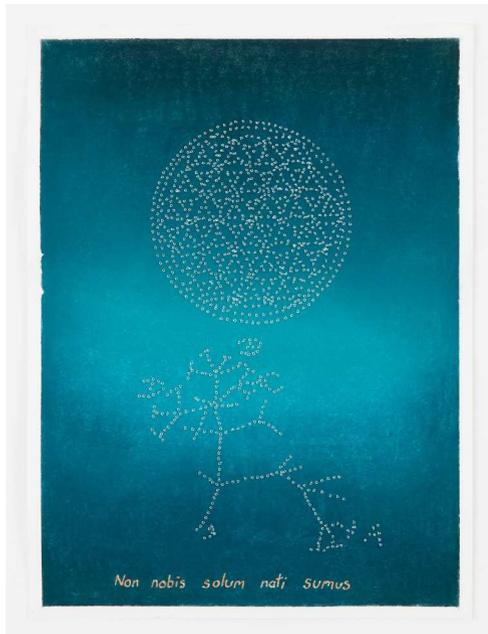
View of studio, Brooklyn Art Cluster, New York, 2017



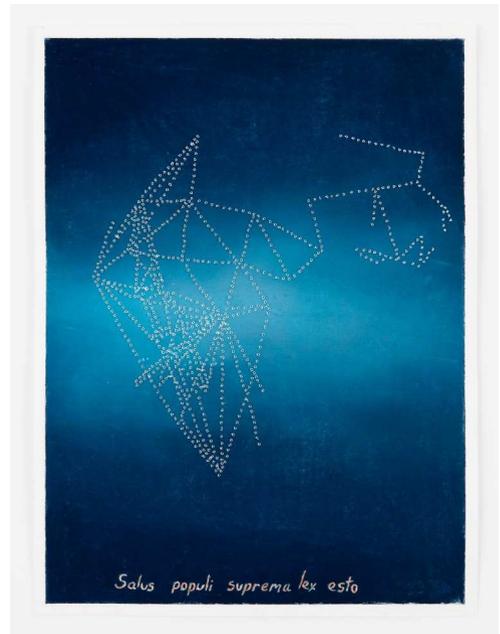
*The Orator 3 - Non audimus ea quae ab natura monemur, 2017*

(We do not notice the things that nature warns us about)

Pastel, coloured pencil and punctured drawing on paper, linen book binding thread 11 x 9 inches



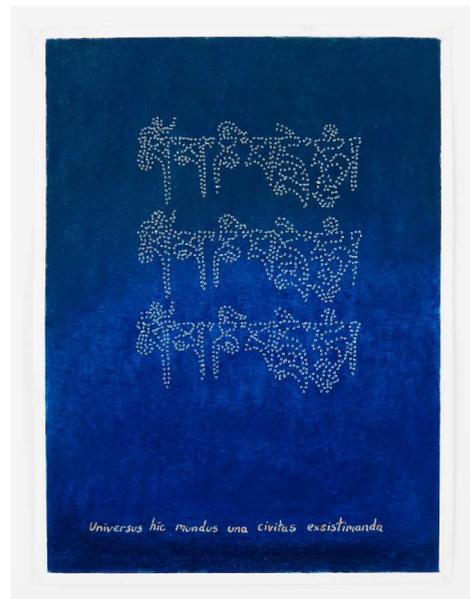
*The Orator 2 - Non nobis solum nati sumus, 2017*  
(We are not born for ourselves)



*The Orator 1- Salus populi suprema lex esto, 2017*  
(The safety of the people shall be the highest law)

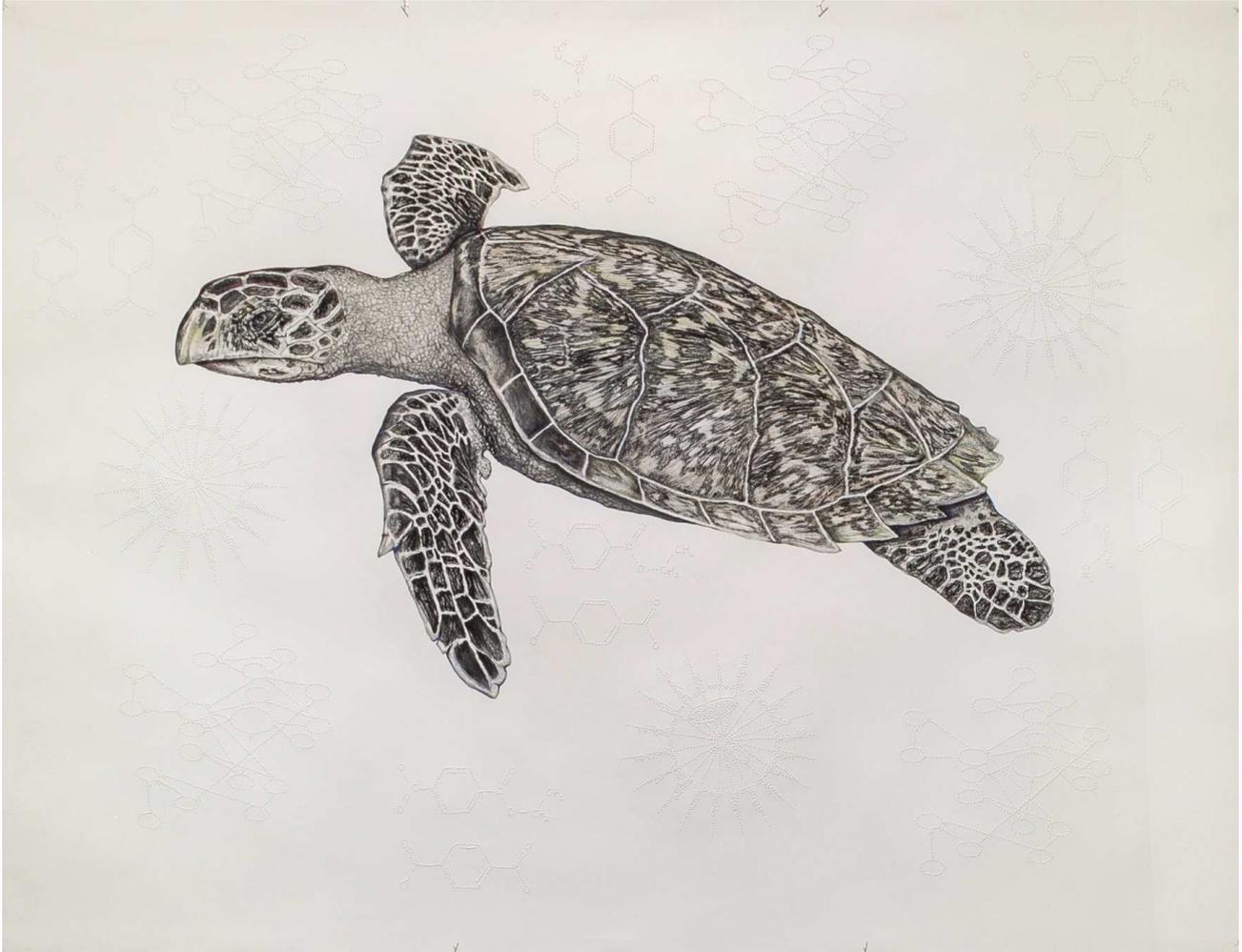


*The Orator 6 - O dulce nomen liberatis,  
o ius eximium nostrae civitatis, 2017*  
(O Sweet the name of freedom, our right of  
eminent civility)



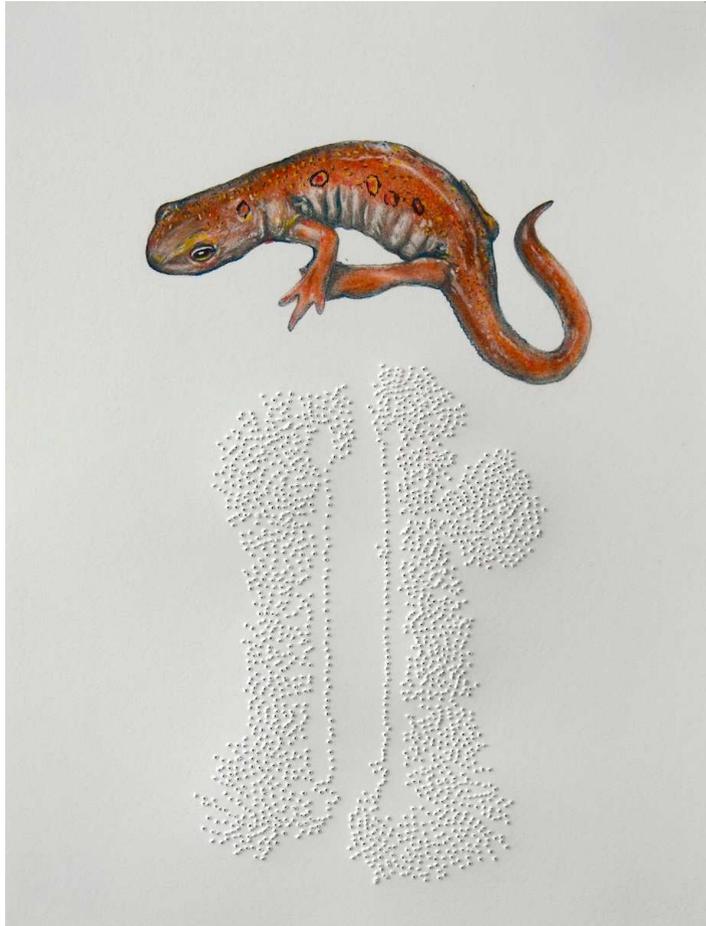
*The Orator 7 - Universus hic mundus una  
civets existimanda, 2017*  
(The world at large has to be considered as  
one urban community)

Pastel, coloured pencil and punctured drawing, linen book binding thread, 11 x 9 inches each



*The Guardian - Keya, 2017*

Charcoal, graphite, coloured pencil, punctured drawing on paper and dissection pins, 38 x 50 inches



*Unnatural Divergence Suite, 2014*

*Paradigms and Harbingers - Red Eft with Bacteria Spores,*

Charcoal, graphite, pastel and punctured drawing on paper 11 x 9 inches







Studio research wall, Brooklyn Art Cluster, March 2017



Studio Brooklyn Art Cluster, 2017

" We've arranged a global civilization in which most crucial elements profoundly depend on science and technology. We have also arranged things so that almost no one understands science and technology. This is a prescription for disaster. We might get away with it for a while, but sooner or later this combustible mixture of ignorance and power is going to blow up in our faces..... as the millennium edges nearer, pseudo-science and superstition will seem year by year more tempting, the siren song of unreason

more sonorous and attractive. Whenever our ethnic or national prejudices are aroused, in times of scarcity, during challenges to national self-esteem or nerve, when we agonize about our diminished cosmic place and purpose, or when fanaticism is bubbling up around us - then habits of thought familiar from ages past reach for the controls.

The candle flame gutters. Its little pool of light trembles. Darkness gathers. The demons begin to stir. "

CARL SAGAN - The Demon Haunted World  
1996

## **Chronology**

Born Sydney, Australia

Lives and works in New York City, USA

## **Education and Teaching**

2005-06 Lecturer at Ecole Media Art, Beaux Arts, Chalon-sur-Saone, Macon, France

2002 Enrolled Bachelor of Art History, Universite d'Bourgogne, Dijon, France

1992 Post Graduate Diploma of Visual Arts, College of Fine Arts, UNSW, Australia

1990 Bachelor of Fine Arts, (Painting Major), COFA, University of New South Wales, Australia

## **Selected Solo Exhibitions**

2018 *"Earthbound"*, Hudson Beach Glass Gallery, Beacon, NY

2017 *"Unravel"*, Curator Matthew Garrison, The Cluster Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

2016 *"Complex Contingencies"*, McCarthy Art Gallery, St Michael's College, VT

2016 *"Cu Bwerera- The Return"*, LaGuardia Galleries of Fine Art, CUNY, NY

2016 *"Into the Realm of Nature"*, Miller Gallery, Alvernia University, PA

2015 *"Gorongosa in Restoration-Cu baliwa cutswa"*, The Explorer's Club, New York, NY

2015 *"This Earthly Paradise"*, University of Connecticut Art Gallery, UConn, Stamford, CT, USA

2011 *"Recent Work"*, LIC Open Arts Festival, Reis Studios, Long Island City, NY

2006 *"Mesmerise"*, The Gunnery Artspace, Sydney, NSW, Australia

2001 *"Lies, Dreams, Visions"*, A-SPACE Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Australia

1999 *"Shadows and Seasons"*, Access Contemporary Art Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Australia

1998 *"Silent Passage"*, Access Contemporary Art Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Australia

1996 *"Encounters"*, Access Contemporary Art Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Australia

## **Selected Group Exhibitions**

2018 *"AviFauna-Birds + Habitat"*, Glyndor Gallery, Wave Hill, NY

2016 *"The Measure of All Things: Rethinking Humanism through Art"*, Department of Art Gallery, University at Buffalo, NY

*"The Art of Science-The Ligo Project"*, Littlefield, Brooklyn, NY

Rick Amor Drawing Prize, Art Gallery of Ballarat, Victoria, Australia

*"Water Ecologies"*, Transition Gallery, Idaho State University, I

*"Nature Gone Wrong"*, Drive-By-Projects, Watertown, MA

2015 Moreton Bay Region Art Awards, Pine Rivers Gallery, Queensland, Australia

*"Balance/Unbalance"*, Night Gallery, Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ

Gold Coast Art Prize, Gold Coast City Gallery, Queensland, Australia

2014 *"Made at Saltonstall-Art from the Residency"*, CAP Artspace, Ithaca, NY

*"Garden"*, (Curator Beth Kantrowitz) BK Projects, Boston, MA

*"The Year of the Salamander"*, ArtScience Gallery, Austin, TX

*"In and Of the Land"*, Five Points Gallery, Torrington, CT

- 2012 *"Flora and Fauna- Narrative Through Iconography"*, SUNY Lockhart Gallery, Geneseo, NY  
*"NYC Works on Paper"*, Jeffrey Leder Gallery, Long Island City, NY  
*"Rara Avis"*, One Mile Gallery, Kingston, NY  
*"Treasured: Honoring Precious and Vanishing Worlds"*, Annmarie Sculpture Garden and Art Center, MD  
*49th Juried Exhibition* (selector Liza Simone), Masur Museum of Art, LA  
*23rd National Drawing and Print Exhibition*, (selector Sue Spaid), Gormley Gallery, Notre Dame University of Maryland, MD
- 2011 *"FoolsGold Sanctuary NYC"*, Sasha Noe Presents, Soho, NY
- 2007 *"Mirror Mirror"*, open studio, Juvenal Reis Studio, Long Island City, NY  
*"Naughty"*, Sheffer Gallery Sydney, NSW, Australia
- 2006 *"Shelf Life"*, Trinity Delmar Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- 2001 *"Mysterious Terrain"*, Nick Mitzevich Gallery, (curator Victoria Hynes), Newcastle, NSW  
*"Exploring Contemporary Landscape"*, A-Space Gallery, Sydney Australia
- 2000 Australian Contemporary Art Fair, •5, Melbourne, VIC, Australia.
- 1999 Cheltenham Open Drawing Exhibition, Cheltenham School of Fine Art, Cheltenham, UK
- 1999 Sint-Lucas Gallerij, Bruxelles, Belgium  
 EICH University of Humberside Gallery, Hull, United Kingdom  
 The Blake Prize, The Gallery, Darling Park, Sydney, NSW, Australia  
 The Blake Prize Touring Exhibition, Wollongong City Gallery, NSW, Australia
- 1998 *"Animal Tales and Pet Confessions"*, Leicester City Gallery, Leicester, United Kingdom  
*"The Discerning Eye"*, Mall Galleries, (selected by Richard Kendall), London, UK  
 Bathurst Art Purchase, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, NSW, Australia
- 1997 Conrad Jupiters Art Prize, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Queensland, Australia  
 Fishers Ghost Art Exhibition, Campbelltown City Art Gallery, NSW, Australia  
 Muswellbrook Open Art Prize, Muswellbrook Regional Art Gallery, NSW, Australia
- 1996 Stanthorpe Arts Festival, Stanthorpe Gallery, Queensland, Australia  
*"Ecstatic & Grotesque"*, (Curator Bruce James), Eva Breuer Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Australia  
 Australian Contemporary Art Fair •4 Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- 1996 Blacktown City Council's Inaugural Acquisitive Art Exhibition, Blacktown, NSW, Australia
- 1995 *"Six New Faces"*, Crawford Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Australia  
 Fishers Ghost Art Exhibition, Campbelltown City Art Gallery, NSW, Australia
- 1993 Bathurst Art Purchase, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, NSW, Australia  
*"Face of Time"*, Balmain Watch-house, Sydney, Australia
- 1992 *"Issue of Choice"*, LA Contemporary Exhibition Center, Los Angeles, CA  
 Portia Geach Memorial Award, SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Australia

### **Residencies and Fellowships**

- 2018 Artayana Artist Research Residency, Ottawa, CA
- 2017 Zeta Orionis Fellowship, Vermont Studio Center, VT
- 2016 6 month Studio Residency, Brooklyn Art Cluster, NY, USA
- 2016 Art of Science Residency, Ligo Project, New York, NY, USA
- 2014 Fellowship Residency, Constance Saltonstall Arts Colony, NY, USA
- 2013 Studio Residency, Vermont Studio Center, VT, USA
- 2006 NSW Ministry for the Arts, Gunnery Studio Residency, Sydney, NSW, Australia

### **Awards and Prizes**

- 2014 The Explorer's Club Artist-in-Exploration Award (underwritten by Rolex Watch USA)
- 2012 Prizewinner Masur Museum of Art, LA, USA
- 1997 Willoughby City Art Prize, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- 1997 Musswellbrook Open Art Prize, Musswellbrook, NSW, Australia
- 1996 Acquisitive Painting Prize, Stanthorpe Arts Festival, QLD, Australia
- 1994 Hunters Hill Art Prize, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- 1993 Cash Chapman Memorial Award (Acquisitive), Bathurst Art Purchase, Bathurst Regional Gallery, NSW, Australia
- 1993 Bathurst Regional Gallery, NSW, Australia
- 1991 Youth Art Award, Hunters Hill Annual Art Exhibition, Sydney, NSW, Australia

### **Talks/Panel discussions/Presentations**

- 2017 Artist talk, "*Art Science Collaborations*", The Space In Between, The New School, NY
- 2016 Panel discussion, "*Artists in the Field*", The Explorers Club, New York, NY
- 2016 Artist talk, "*Complex Contingencies*", McCarthy Art Gallery, St Michael's College, VT
- 2016 Artist talk, "*Into the Realm of Nature*", Alvernia University, Reading, PA
- 2015 Artist-In-Exploration Lecture, "*Gorongosa in Restoration*", The Explorer's Club, New York, NY
- 2015 Artist talk "*This Earthly Paradise*", UConn Gallery, Stamford CT
- 2014 Panel discussion "*In and Of The Land*", Five Points Gallery, Torrington CT
- 2006 Lecture "*Australian Gothic*", Ecole Media D'Art, Chalon-sur-Saone, France
- 1999 Artist talk "*Shadows and Seasons*", Access Contemporary Art Gallery, Australia.

## Bibliography

- 2018 Meier, Allison, "*Artist's Responding to Birds and Their Habitat at One of New York's Great Natural Escapes*", *Hyperallergic*, May 29th
- 2018 Tiffany Moustakas, "*Flights of Fancy*", The Riverdale Press, May 25th
- 2017 Hynes, Victoria, "*On the World Stage*", *Australian Art Collector*, Issue 79
- 2016 Kelley, J. Kevin, "*Species Interruptus*", *Seven Days VT*, November 23
- 2016 Van Tran Nguyen, "*The Measure of All Things: Rethinking Humanism Through Art*", Catalogue, University at Buffalo, Department of Art.
- 2015 Reproduction, Gold Coast City Art Prize Catalogue.
- 2014 Whitman, Arthur, "*Urban Colour Spectrum: Brooklyn Abstractionist Shines in CAP's Saltonstall Exhibit*", *Ithaca Times*, July 16
- 2012 Rafferty, Rebecca, *Art Feature*, City Newspaper, Rochester, February 7
- 2011 Xie, Ellen, *NYC Arts*, West Harlem Arts Fund Blog  
<http://nycartours.wordpress.com/2011/06/27/tanya-chaly/>
- 2007 Fortescue, Elizabeth, "*First Steps*", *Australian Art Review*, June 7
- 2007 Hillier, Rose-Marie, "*Mark His Words*", reproduction, *Australian House and Garden Magazine*
- 2001 Hynes, Victoria, catalogue essay, "*Mysterious Terrain*" Nick Mitzevich Gallery
- 2001 McKinnon Kidd, Marrion, "*Galleries with Marrion McKinnon Kidd*", *Newcastle Star*, Australia, March 13
- 2000 Hynes, Victoria, "*Quiet Achievers*", *Art and Australia*, vol 37, no. 4
- 1999 James, Bruce, "*Sacred sights in search of a site*", review *Sydney Morning Herald*, Jan 9
- 1998 Knott, Helen, "*Pet Subjects Go On Show*", *Leicester Mercury*, July 24
- 1998 *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Arts Review*, December 15
- 1998 "*Animal Passions*", *Arts and Crafts*, July
- 1998 "*Getting in the Animal Habit*", *Face UK*, August
- 1997 "A Glimpse of What You Can Expect", Reproduction, *The Melbourne Age*, May 27
- 1997 Reproduction, Conrad Jupiters Art Prize catalogue
- 1996 James, Bruce, "*Ecstatic and Grotesque*" catalogue essay, Eva Breuer Art Dealer
- 1995 Thatcher, Jean, "*The Chariot-linking time*", review, *Western Times*, Bathurst, March 16

## Selected Collections

The Explorer's Club, New York, NY, USA  
Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst, NSW Australia,  
Stanthorpe Regional Gallery, Queensland, Australia  
Nortel Australia, Melbourne, VIC, Australia  
Crown Casino, Melbourne, VIC, Australia  
Private and Corporate Collections in the UK, Australia and the USA







