

Teague's Debut Solo Exhibition Speech - 070923

I'm going to say a few thank you's and then talk about why "The Reclamation of Terra" is so important with everything going on in the world.

Firstly, I would like to give thanks to Pride Foundation Australia for their belief in this project and their generous support.

Secondly, I would like to thank Milly and all the conveners at Artstop. I wanted to queer my landscape photography and had a vision, but not the means. The conveners have guided me through this entire process.

Thirdly, I could not have come this far without the support and belief of Midsumma and their Pathways mentorship program. Through this program I have been mentored by outstanding award-winning photographer, Luke David. Under his tutelage, my craft has blossomed.

I would also like to thank the galleries who have hosted items from this series over the last 12 months, from my residency at Yarra Sculpture Gallery, to Climarte Gallery and everyone in between. Many thanks to Pim & Ash here at SOL Gallery for having me and for being calm against my chaos - I know I can be a lot, so I really appreciate your time.

To my friends and family who are here, who aren't here, you mean the world to me. You have always seen my potential and believed in me, even when I doubted myself.

A big thanks to Caroline for coming and speaking tonight. I've had the pleasure of hearing you speak at various events, and you always leave me inspired and wanting to do more for community. Thank you also for being the first person to purchase a painting from this series when it was in the early stages of development. You've worked with so many outstanding artists and are, yourself, an outstanding artist, so I am totally humbled by your appreciation of my work.

Then there is Bayley. You are a rare gem. You are a chaotic whirlwind of Aquarius creativity, and I am totally here for it. You constantly confuse me with your esoteric turn of phrase, but your poetry is beguiling. Your words challenge me to think better, feel more, and love harder. Your willingness to share your vulnerable humanity with me is a treasure that I adore. I admire your strengths, and your weaknesses. Your friendship is such a gift and I'm eternally grateful that not only were you able to MC tonight, but that you bless my life for knowing you.

Now, into what this series is all about. Why was it so important to me to create "The Reclamation of Terra"? Please read the Look Book, it has some insights that I'm not going to delve into tonight. I have also written an Artist Statement about the series that you can find on my website at tlwvision.au

In the words of Yoko Ono and Anohni: "I know I never said it to you, but I want to say it to you now; I Love you Earth...I love you now."

Also, I will say this:

Artists have always been at the forefront of social movements, questioning the status quo. Queer, trans, disabled, black, people of colour – minority groups whose voices society would try to muffle. We have always been here; we have always led.

Artists can be solitary creatures, especially those of us with autism, but we know from experience that we are stronger together. In this togetherness, we must include First Nations people. As the original custodians of the land, indigenous peoples across the world have known for over 65,000 years how to cultivate the land and the seas in unity with the elements. The current logging moratorium in Victoria comes with a warning from the Indigenous community that now is not the time to let nature run “feral”, we must continue to nurture and feed the land and waters, so that we can be literally and metaphorically fed for many more centuries to come. If we unite, we can make our planet sustainable for generations to come, but it is vital that every one of us learns and does the work.

I know "work" is a dirty word. The LGBTQIA+SB community are tired of working against an unjust system, of constantly appealing for change and equity, but we must work on fixing the planet, or else what good is fighting for equality if there is no food to eat, nor air to breathe? In working for global justice, we must prioritise, as a cohesive unit, the reversal of climate destruction.

With the cancellation of drag queens across many a council run story-time as a result of increased hate towards rainbow minorities, including towards myself as a queer trans man, I want to stand up and champion the community I call family.

If I can get the funding, I plan on having drag kings and queens, poets, and singers - a showcase of our amazing community - to highlight what we can achieve in unity - at my next exhibition. Follow my website blog for updates on that when I am allowed to mention more.

For now, I urge each one of you here tonight to Act Now! But first, buy my artwork, and tell your networks about what I am trying to achieve! Thank you, enjoy!