**REFUGE 2018 EVALUATION:**
Pandemic

In Association

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Cover image Jen Rae, *Apitherapy Quarantine (Zone III detail),* 2018
Photo: Byrony Jackson

# 1.
# REFUGE OVERVIEW

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There is a prescient paragraph in the book *Rules for Radicals* (1971) in which the author Saul Alinsky summarises a basic premise of his work advocating for community action in overcoming the failings he observed in society:

> '[People] cannot be denied the elementary right to participate fully in the solutions to their own problems. Self-respect arises only out of people who play an active role in solving their own crises and who are not helpless, passive, puppet-like recipients of private or public services. To give people help, while denying them a significant part in the action, contributes nothing to the development of the individual. In the deepest sense it is not giving but taking – taking their dignity.' (Alinksy, 1971, 123)

While Alinsky was writing with the particular socio-economic concerns of disadvantaged, twentieth-century Americans in mind, the relevance of his ideas extends beyond the sphere of 1970s grassroots activism and into the very anatomy of modern, policy driven societies in the West. If we grant the premise that people need to be active participants in their recuperation or advancement in order to satisfy their roles as social and intelligent beings, we might then ask:

- *To what extent should we all be given the opportunity to aid ourselves in times of crisis and emergency, rather than relying solely on public services?*
- *And can we also be valuable participants in processes of mass, collective recovery?*

These questions are investigated and, to a large extent, answered in the ongoing program of cultural and community-oriented events taking place under the banner of *Refuge* at Arts House in North Melbourne. With issues of climate change, disaster preparedness and equity at its core, *Refuge* engages contemporary art practice to explore how communities and their diverse members can be effective operatives in their own survival and recovery. The focus on creative practice in the program also foregrounds the ways in which artists can offer unique, imaginative insights into some of the most pressing issues in our contemporary lives; and, in turn, propose potential solutions. In 2016 and 2017, the public program of *Refuge* centred on 24-hour relief centre simulations encompassing art installations – alongside community and emergency services displays and presentations – designed to involve members of the public in proscribed disaster scenarios. In 2016, the scenario was a major urban flood and, in 2017, a catastrophic heatwave. In 2018, the format of *Refuge* was redesigned to incorporate a series of creative events held across three days, with the proscribed theme being 'Pandemic'.

The annual cycle of *Refuge* is multipart with an emphasis on knowledge exchange at various levels and through many avenues, including: the Lab, a preparatory workshop involving artists and stakeholders held some months before the public events, with the aim of facilitating a critical exchange of ideas on questions related to the conceptual underpinnings and format of the year's emergency scenario;



*Image: Lorna Hannan, Ruth Crow Corner, 2018*
*Pictured: Uncle Larry Walsh sharing The Breath of the Mindye*
*Photo: Byrony Jackson*

the public events of *Refuge*, which welcome local community and city-wide attendees to participate in art, cultural displays and emergency services demonstrations based around the designated emergency scenario; and the Evaluation Day, where artists and stakeholders are invited to make presentations on their experiences and learnings from the current year and consider, between themselves, what they hope to achieve from the project in the future.

*Refuge*, which began in 2016 and will continue until 2021, is supported by federal, state and local institutions, public sector representatives and community leaders, brought together in this project through a shared recognition of the need for alternative models for managing public crises. This collective drive for change signals a contemporary shift away from established systems of top-down, centralised disaster management towards emerging models which encourage communities to assume greater responsibility for not only alleviating systemic crises like climate change, but also managing sudden emergencies in their neighbourhoods, such as floods and heatwaves. Partner organisations in the program are City of Melbourne, Emergency Management Victoria, Red Cross Australia, State Emergency Services, Resilient Melbourne, among others.

As part of their involvement in *Refuge*, the University of Melbourne has been tasked with undertaking annual evaluations of the events in the five-year program, with the goal of contextualising findings within the broader perspective of arts and humanities scholarship. *Refuge 2018 Evaluation: Pandemic* draws on evidence gathered through detailed observation during key events, interviews with artists and stakeholders, as well as notes taken during presentations as part of the *Refuge* Lab and Evaluation Day in 2018.

A primary aim in the evaluation process is to track critical areas of change and growth in the program across each of its annual iterations. The evaluation is also designed to assess whether changes to the framework of *Refuge* which occur between the program's yearly cycles deliver outcomes that are beneficial to the requirements and experiences of both project stakeholders and public participants. It is hoped that, at the conclusion of the five-year program, the suite of *Refuge Evaluations* produced by the University of Melbourne will provide evidence of the wide-ranging experimentations and investigations undertaken by the team at Arts House across the program and the ready involvement of emergency service institutions, artists and the North Melbourne community. Moreover the evaluations may serve as vital resources for other communities and cities, both national and international, who might wish to institute similar, arts-driven investigations in their public programming in the pursuit of greater, collective resilience.

This report begins by offering an introduction to *Refuge: Pandemic*, followed by an executive summary of the 2018 findings and an overview of the purpose and design of the current evaluation, before isolating and discussing key themes foregrounded in the evaluation using methodologies and recent scholarship in the fields of the arts and humanities. Where applicable, this report will highlight areas of change or transition in the format of *Refuge* between the inaugural cycle in 2016 and the following years' iterations. It will then conclude by proposing select recommendations that might be trialed in the cycles to come, while linking these recommendations to the specified targets and growing accumulation of learnings produced by the program's stakeholders and participants across the ongoing *Refuge* program.



*Image: Lorna Hannan, Ruth Crow Corner, 2018*
*Photo: Byrony Jackson*

# 2.
# INTRODUCTION: PANDEMIC

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**Pandemic**
**From Greek** *pandēmos: pan* **'all'** + *dēmos* **'people'**

The rate and spread of any given infectious disease can be generally categorized into one of three definitions. Endemic diseases are those that exists permanently and at a static level within a given region or population, such as malaria. An epidemic describes a rapid outbreak that affects a large number of many people, but within a defined community or region, such as the Ebola outbreak of 2014. A pandemic meanwhile is when an epidemic spreads beyond a contained geographic region to infect populations on a global scale, such as 2002-2003 SARS outbreak which spread from China to 26 other countries.

For most of human history, infectious diseases have been a persistent threat to life and civilisation. The most deadly pandemic in human history was the result of the bacterium *Yersinia pestis* - commonly known as the Black Death.[1] While the exact origins of the plague are unknown, it's believed the bacteria first emerged around 1330 on the arid steppes of Central Asia. Travelling aboard an army of rats, the infected fleas first travelled east through China, only to be swept up by westbound trade ships and Silk Road merchants who spread the plague across Asia, south to India and the Middle East and North Africa, leaving decimated populations in its wake. By 1347, the Black Death made landfall in Greece and Italy aboard trade ships. From there it surged northwest through the densely populated cities of France, Spain, Portugal and England, only to turn north and east in 1348 to advance through Germany, Scotland and Scandinavia. The plague stormed across Europe with such voracity that a third of the continent's population had perished before physicians or governments had time to react. In all, an estimated 75 million to 200 million people are thought to have died worldwide.[2]

Until recent times, pandemics killed millions and erased entire civilizations.[3] At the mercy of these mysterious harbingers of death, pre-enlightenment medicine fought back with a range of remedies such as bloodletting, trepanning, leeches and magical charms. To explain the indiscriminate cruelty of disease it was common to blame God, witches, foul air, the nobility or Jews. Starting in the late 18th century, however, a new theory of germs and disease emerged. Closely tied to the development of vaccinations, science began to loosen disease's grip over humanity. In the following decades, hygienic practices such as hand washing, public sanitation and chlorinated tap water would come to save billions of lives.[4]

As we enter the third decade of the twenty-first century, we have successfully managed to eradicate smallpox, a disease which in the previous century alone killed some 300 million people.[5] Even malaria, the deadliest disease known to humans - which has killed billions throughout history and continues in developing nations to kill a million people each year - is being rapidly eradicated. The WHO's 2019 World Malaria Report announced that the global mortality rate for malaria between 2000 and 2015 fell by 60%. The WHO aims to achieve a further 90% reduction between 2015 and 2030 while aiming for global eradication by 2040.[6]

With a warming planet, however, it is not certain which old or new diseases will emerge or reemerge to threaten humans populations. Warmer global temperatures will extend tropical climates beyond the equator, the conditions in which mosquitos carrying malaria, yellow fever and zika thrive. In contrast to the WHO, the World Bank offers a more pessimistic prediction estimating that malaria will infect 3.6 billion people by 2030 - one third as a direct result of climate change.[7] Over the course of this century, increasing numbers of the world's population will be living under the shadow of diseases like these.

1   R. Horrox, *The Black Death*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994, pp.11-14

2   'Historical Estimates of World Population', *Census.gov*, https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/international-programs/historical-est-worldpop.html.

3   P. Doherty, *Pandemics - What Everyone Needs to Know,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

4   H. Brody, *Cholera, Chloroform, and the Science of Medicine: A Life of John Snow,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

5   Smallpox Fact Sheet', Center for Biosecurity of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), the Center for Transatlantic Relations of the Johns Hopkins University, and the Transatlantic Biosecurity Network, http://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/events-archive/2005_atlantic_storm/pdf/materials/issues_0900_a.pdf.

6   World Health Organisation, *World Malaria Report,* 2019, https://www.who.int/publications-detail/world-malaria-report-2019.

7   V. Y. Fan, D. T. Jamison and L. H. Summers, 'Pandemic risk: how large are the expected losses?', World Health Organisation, 29 June 2017  https://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/96/2/17-199588/en/.

# 3.
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The thematic focus of *Refuge* 2018, 'pandemic', imagines a situation in which an infectious disease rapidly spreads to a global scale. The disaster scenario of a pandemic outbreak in Melbourne presents particular challenges which differ from the previous *Refuge* themes of flood and heatwave. For example, in the event of a pandemic, members of the public are less likely to be brought together in a relief centre in order to prevent the spread of further infection. In reality, affected/ infected individuals would most likely be isolated, while others would be advised against large group gatherings or collective activities. Consequently, rather than presenting the venue of Arts House as a relief centre simulation, as was the case in previous years, *Refuge* 2018 responded to the theme of pandemic with a more geographically dispersed program.

This year's program of public events and associated activities included longer-term residencies (Kate Sulan at the St. Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre), site-specific works (Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey's residency at the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity and the Melbourne General Cemetery), conference and festival presentations, and door-knocking exercises and community meetings in North Melbourne (Red Cross and Lorna Hannan).

The *Refuge* program exists in a complex network of institutional relationships within and across organisations developed over the previous years. While intra- and inter-agency conversation and cooperation is an important outcome of *Refuge*, its primary goal is to engage individuals and community members with the aim of producing experiences in disaster management. To achieve this, *Refuge* 2018 provoked conversations and encounters through many forms: food sharing, rituals, soundscapes, stories, and games.



*Image: Lee Shang Lun, Isolate and Contain! Mapping the Pandemic, 2018*
*Photo: Byrony Jackson*

# 4.
# EVALUATION PURPOSE AND DESIGN

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The evaluation of the *Refuge* project in 2018 responds to the annual thematic of pandemic; the conceptual and thematic deepening of the project over its first three years; our evolving understanding of the meaning and value of the *Refuge* project to its many stakeholders; and, its place in a broader, international landscape of practices and collaboration in the fields of the arts and disaster preparedness.

The 2016 *Refuge* evaluation used a standard mix of quantitative and qualitative measures, based on testing against fixed criteria, independent tools and objective assessments provided by outside experts. In 2017, the *Refuge* evaluation used long-form interviews, transcriptions of group discussion, mixed with participant observation and critical analysis.

In 2018, the evaluation moves away from the use of individual interviews and instead relies on conceptual and contextual material (developed in the drafting of an Australian Research Council Linkage grant), participant observation and documentation (developed in response to the Lab and *Refuge* events), and the use of hosted group discussions (implemented at the annual Evaluation Day).

 Researchers from the University of Melbourne and Centre of Visual Art (Dr Lachlan MacDowall, Dr Suzie Fraser and Professor Nikos Papastergiadis, along with *Refuge* artist Dr Jen Rae) attended, documented and analysed all formal *Refuge* activities, including the Lab (May 1-2), the program of public events (April 29-September 1) and Evaluation Day (October 15), as well as planning days for Refuge 2020 (May 4) and Refuge 2019 (October 15).
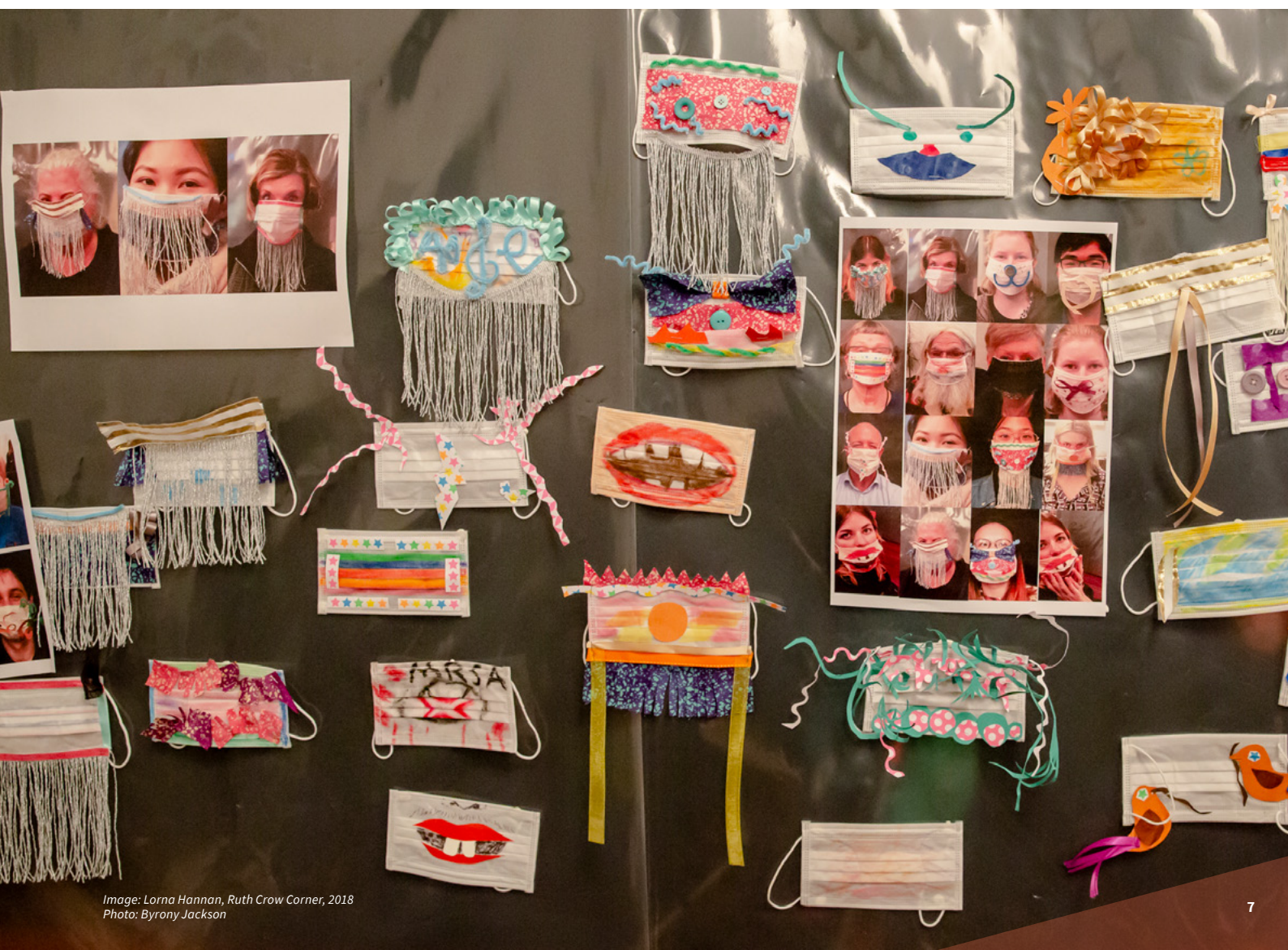


*Image: Lorna Hannan, Ruth Crow Corner, 2018*
*Photo: Byrony Jackson*

# 5.
# THE CONTRIBUTION OF CREATIVE PRACTICE

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The first public event of *Refuge* 2018 **Isolate and Contain! Mapping the Pandemic** took place on the evening of Wednesday 29th of August. The project was developed for *Refuge* by Melbourne-based artist and game designer Lee Shang Lun in collaboration with Professor Janet McCalman from the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, Professor Jodie McVernon and Kylie Carville from the Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity, and Steve Cameron from Emergency Management Victoria. Shang Lun's artistic practice explores the intersection of public performance and notions of medicine and 'playfulness'; for *Refuge* he created a simulated virus control room in which public participants were invited to invent new diseases of their own, complete with infection mechanisms and rates of spread, as well as the social contexts in which they could be released. One example was dubbed 'Saturday Night Fever', an invented airborne disease that affected the cardiac system and induced drooling and leering, spreading from Melbourne via transport hubs. Scenarios such as these prompted ethical questions around a number of issues, such as how should medical resources be allocated in an emergency, and how should we treat those who have been infected and are at risk of infecting others?

Playwright Michele Lee was commissioned by Arts House to write a new creative piece to be performed as part of *Refuge* in 2018. Her contribution was an interactive, performative piece titled **Hypothetical: What If?** which was staged on Thursday 30th of August. In the main hall of Arts House, members of the public gathered in seated rows in front of a panel of six public health and emergency services experts grouped in a horseshoe arrangement on the stage. An actor (Jem Lai) performing the role of an assistant to an absent boss stood at the podium on stage and read from a script detailing a scenario in which a disease was about to shatter the efficient daily business of Melbourne; beginning with 'patient zero', a woman who had been scratched by her pet pig, and culminating around Day 60 with the death of 2,500 people from the unknown virus. As the catastrophe unfolded, the actor asked the experts to comment on how they would deal with this situation. The experts included: Dr Julian Druce, Head of Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory (VIDRL) at the Doherty Institute for Infection & Immunity; Steve Cameron, Coordinator of Community-based emergency management at Emergency Management Victoria; and Dr Cassidy Nelson, Principal Public Health Medical Officer, Communicable Disease, Department of Health and Human Services. This performance was early-on signaled to the audience be a play within a play - and, as such, the extent to which it was a performance or rehearsal or even a real event







*Top Image: Lee Shang Lun, Isolate and Contain! Mapping the Pandemic, 2018*
*Middle & Bottom Images: Michele Lee, Hypothetical: What If? 2018*
*Photo: Byrony Jackson*

was blurred. While entertaining the audience with humour and well-crafted suspense, this performance was in keeping with the history of *Refuge* as a space in which simulation, performance and public engagement are core thematics.

Across the previous two years of *Refuge*, the preparation and consumption of shared meals was established as a valuable exercise in community building as part of the relief centre simulations. In 2018, the use of simulation was sidelined in the *Refuge* program. However, the tradition of collective meal-taking continued in the event **Supper Club: Sanatorium** designed by artist Lizzy Sampson and Asha Bee Abraham, which was held on Friday 31st of August. About 60 public attendees were seated at 8 tables in the main hall at Arts House. At each table there was one expert, labelled a 'table host', who led a discussion between the diners on a particular theme assigned to that table, such as 'Indigenous Futures' hosted by Maddee Clark, 'AI & Outbreak Forecasting' hosted by Nic Geard, and 'Ethics and Disease' hosted by Bridget Pratt. Attendees were invited to change tables three times across the evening, meaning that everyone was able to experience four of the eight themes represented at the event. Food was provided by Spade to Blade and comprised all local and sustainable produce. This event, which allowed public participants and experts to share knowledge and ideas about disease prevention and possible scenarios in an intimate, informal context, proved to be one of the strongest events of the year's program.

A full day of public events and activities was staged at Arts House on Saturday 1st of September, which saw the range of available spaces in the building utilised as performance venues, areas for group discussion and, in the basement, a projection space. Public attendees were invited to wander around Arts House while engaging with the theme of pandemic.

For example, in one of the ground floor bathrooms of the building, participants entered and were immediately met with a looped projection above the communal sink and an artificial voice which was activated when the participant spoke into a nearby microphone. **We Contain Multitudes**, created by artists Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey, with assistance from Live Umbrella Finland, explored the timeless themes of remembrance and forgetting using an entirely contemporary medium evocative of AI. Developed during a residency undertaken across both the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity and the Melbourne General Cemetery, the premise of We Contain Multitudes is an investigation of disease control, death and grief, all communicated to the audience through the emotionless tone of a computer generated narrator.

The great achievements of this installation were in part due to the unexpected location of the work in the Arts House bathroom, as well as the unsettling tension generated by the experience of interacting with a pre-programmed computer on topics of humanity and mortality.



*Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey, We Contain Multitudes, 2018*
*Pictured: Laureate Professor Peter Doherty, The Doherty Institute*
*Photo: Byrony Jackson*

Image: Lorna Hannan, Ruth Crow Corner, 2018
Photo: Byrony Jackson

Since the computerised voice conveys a tone of empathy in its 'dialogue' with the participant, the participant is forced to reflect on their fragile human existence, particularly when presented with threats from disease and contagion.

Kate Sulan, in collaboration with students from St Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre, presented an exhibition of personalised preparedness kits inspired by Red Cross' Rediplan, titled **In Case of …**, which investigated both how to engage younger generations in discussions of preparedness and also how to develop strategies to prepare for adversity that cater not only to physical necessities but also emotional wellbeing. This work incorporated an extended residency at St Joseph's, during which time Sulan was able to work with the students to explore their feelings and anticipated requirements when presented with the scenario of a pandemic emergency. With an emphasis on the needs of vulnerable young people and preparedness on both an individual and societal level, this work ensured that a broad representation of perspectives was included in the *Refuge* program.

From the first year of *Refuge*, the role of intimate conversation as a mode of transferring knowledge and expertise – serving as an ambient sharing of information - has been prioritised in the public facing program. In-keeping with this privileging of dialogical comunication, **Ruth Crow Corner** was once again staged in Arts House as part of *Refuge* Pandemic, with Lorna Hannan continuing at the helm of the project. As a means of investigating the specific requirements of the year's theme, Ruth Crow Corner in 2018 was set up as a peaceful and aesthetically nourishing space that created a sanctuary for learning about contagions and recovery in the main hall of Arts House. A series of round table discussions were programed from Thursday to Saturday which members of the public could sit in on and contribute to and included interactive

activities such as mask-making for a pandemic scenario. As part of the program, local Aboriginal cultural leader and storyteller Uncle Larry Walsh shared the story 'The Breath of the Mindye', presenting an Indigenous perspective of disease events in which airborne pathogens can be traced to Bundjil's punishments through a creature known as the Mindye.[8] Lorna Hannan's ongoing project has proven a successful staple of the *Refuge* program, embracing the simple yet powerful act of collective discussion and idea sharing as a means of creating new knowledge, thereby eschewing top-down processes of information distribution in favour of ambient knowledge flow.[9]

As part of the literary program of *Refuge* 2018, Mununjali writer Ellen van Neerven was commissioned by Arts House to create a new work titled **Tiddafly**, an audio-visual installation incorporating a spoken word recording exploring themes of fear, survival and 'disremembered histories'. Tiddafly is the culmination of a three-week residency at Arts House. By recalling to the historical reality of European colonisation in which diseases, such as smallpox, were spread to the Indigenous population through improbable objects such as blankets and clothing, Neerven's work poetically foregrounds both the tragedy of introduced contagions and the ongoing injustice of historic cultural violence. "I think about the suffering these mobs endured, and the efforts the colonisers took to try to cover up the story…where are the monuments memorialising our widespread dead, how can we make sense of their suffering?" In this lyrical evocation of the hurt and violence inflicted by introduced disease and colonial maltreatment, van Neerven actively memorialises the 'widespread dead' and asks the participant to join her in relistening to the lost voices. "I can hear you: *burning me, twisting me, hurting me, burning me, twisting me, hurting me, burning me, burning me.*"

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8    L. Walsh, 'The Breath of the Mindye', Arts House, 2018, https://www.artshouse.com.au/the-breath-of-the-mindye/

9    N. Papstergiadis and A Barikin, 'Ambient Perspective and Endless Art', *Discipline*, 4, Spring/Summer 2015, pp. 80-91.

Image: Jen Rae, *Apitherapy Quarantine (Zone II detail)*, 2018
Photo: Byrony Jackson

It is the role of artists to provoke and to generate indignation over forms of inequality and ignorance, which often surface as discussions turn to injustice or historical failures. Indigenous artists at Refuge presented forms of traditional knowledge and reflected on the importance of oral knowledge about mobility and safety in relation to historic epidemics of disease.

One of the most expansive projects to feature in this year's program was Jen Rae's **Apitherapy Quarantine** (AQ) which incorporated a range of activities in designated immersive 'zones', as well as a year of preparatory infrastructure and research. Pandemics are not human-centric. They can affect bacteria, plants and other non-human species, and in some cases, viruses jump between species creating new pathogens. This project explores specifically the symbiotic relationship between humans and bees, via an immersive spa-meets-science-lab-meets-quarantine environment. The AQ is a space to experience some of the tensions between what we believe and what is unknown, what we have control over, and the intimacies that may occur in isolation with strangers in the company of a live bee colony (located outside, but connected through a vent to the artwork). The AQ was created in response to what Rae says is "an increase in 'quarantine' or 'isolationist' thinking in today's socio-political climate. By focusing on the big, sometimes 'imagined' or fake threats, we limit our ability to see what may be a greater danger on our doorstep or borders." The experience for public attendees at *Refuge* began with the assignment of one of three coloured wrist bands which then dictated which of three apitherapy experiences they would encounter. Zone I included a Swedish massage using lotions handmade from the bee colony's production; Zone II, involved being sealed in an isolation chamber where pheromones from the bees were pumped into the space for an olfactory and auditory experience; and, in Zone III, you were hand-guided through seed propagations with a horticulturalist via a perspex glovebox. This multiplatform project offered alternative ways of thinking about collective treatments, how a quarantine environment might be set-up as a space of care and relaxation,

and what role you might have in a pandemic. Drawing on themes of depleting biodiversity and the influence of climate change, this work also served to foreground the multitudinal effects of the present climate crisis, as both bee population decline and an increase in contagious pathogens can be linked to the depleted wellbeing of the planet.

While *Refuge* 2018 saw a movement away from staging a relief centre simulation at Arts House and towards multiple, related projects spread across various days and locations, an element of rehearsal for a catastrophe was still present in the program, such as in the Australian Red Cross presentation **Practicing for a Disaster**. As part of this project, Australian Red Cross, a key partner in *Refuge*, conducted a door-knocking and home-visit exercise with interested community members living in North Melbourne and West Melbourne on Saturday 1st of September. The purpose of this performative process was to conduct mock wellbeing checks and to give specific information to local community members to utilise in the event of a pandemic. This activity served to keep the concept of 'community care' at the centre of the *Refuge* program, asking all participants to think about the responsibility they have to their neighbour and how to care for their communities in the event of a future environmental or social disaster.

Image: Kate Sulan, *In Case of… 2018*
Photo: Byrony Jackson

# 6.
# PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

The evolving context of emergency services provision continued to shape *Refuge* in 2018. At the Lab day, senior emergency services personnel discussed being overwhelmed and sometimes paralysed by the onset of new types of emergencies. Paul Holman, Director of Emergency Management Ambulance Victoria, stated that what is needed to increase preparedness and community resilience is to "imagine the unimaginable", citing the unimaginable case of 'Thunderstorm Asthma' in Melbourne in 2016 as an instance in which the sudden severity of the situation and the population's total reliance on public services for assistance created a tragic confluence of events.

To prepare for these extreme weather events, as well as broader challenges, emergency services in Victoria are currently undertaking significant reforms, shifting away from "traditional" approaches to a "modern" model of "emergency management" (2017a:10,14). For example, Victoria's statutory body for emergency response acknowledges in key planning documents that it must "realign policies, programs and activities to help build and strengthen community resilience" (EMV 2017a:6), leading a "sector-wide" shift from "traditional" "emergency services" to "modern" "emergency management" (2017a:10,14). This has necessitated "a shift away from a traditional emergency response centric model - based on a Command, Control and Coordination way of operating – to a more community centric, inclusive, resilience focussed model built on shared responsibility across the sector"(2017b:8),

a shift reflected in other disaster response organisations internationally (United Nations 2013, Morinière & Turnbull 2017). The EMV Strategic Plan also notes that "effective communication during emergencies is also as critical as ever, as emphasised repeatedly in recent inquiries and reviews into emergency management-related matters." (EMV, 2017b:8). Given this context, *Refuge* demonstrates the role of the arts in extending communication processes and activating cultural resources for emergency preparedness.

Discussion at the Refuge Lab in 2018 also focused on societal resilience related to the particular theme of 'pandemic'. With the first portion of the two-day Lab hosted by the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity at the University of Melbourne, key national and international specialists in infection and public health were made available to *Refuge* creatives and participants to ask questions and learn more about the topic. The Chief Health Officer for Victoria Health, Charles Guest, was asked by one participant if the community should be taking on more responsibility for their health with an increase in climate-related emergencies and weather events; he responded, "Climate change in Victoria will mean more days of extreme heat, worse weather for fires, less rainfall, more intense downpours, and rising sea level. It's always desirable for people to understand their own health needs, particularly considering these new conditions; greater community awareness is essential."

*Image: SES volunteers in Arts House foyer*
*Photo: Byrony Jackson*

# 7.
# CONCLUSION: LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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## Global vs Local: Pandemics, Climate Change and *Refuge*

As part of the University of Melbourne's suite of specialist presentations at the *Refuge* Lab in 2018, Dr Celia McMichael from the School of Geography presented 'An Overview of Climate Change and Health'. In her talk she stated, 'Climate change is a threat multiplier that can increase exposure to vectors and also exacerbate the severity of an [infectious] outbreak; mosquito-borne diseases, food-borne infections, severe weather events, damaged infrastructure are increased and affect public health.' Yet, despite this assertion, drawing a clear connection between climate change and pandemic through the *Refuge* program was not without its challenges. As the Introduction to this evaluation noted, the concept of 'pandemic' is both specific (as it pertains to infectious diseases that have broken out of particular geographic regions to have a global impact) and non-specific (as it relates to any number of viral diseases that stem from an almost infinite number of contaminants). Information around how exactly climate change will exacerbate the frequency and intensity of pandemics in the future is unclear, yet most experts, like Dr Celia McMichael, agree that a warmer climate will undoubtedly increase the possibility of new and pre-existing contaminants and the conditions for disease to spread.

The complexities inherent in this theme presented some confusion regarding how - and indeed whether - to foreground a link between climate change and pandemics in the events, projects and activities of *Refuge*. In particular, the nature of *Refuge* as a locally-oriented, community-based investigation into disaster resilience means that discussions of global climate change related crises, as opposed to local emergencies (e.g. floods, heatwaves) was difficult to reconcile with the larger program. Perhaps for that reason, creative contributors to the program in 2018 eschewed, for the most part, explorations of the global extent of 'pandemic' and instead focused on how to prepare individuals to manage the effects of a severe outbreak of disease in their communities and what the historic aftereffects of outbreaks have been. Here 'pandemic' exemplifies a larger conundrum for *Refuge* as a concept - that being that climate change (as well as pandemic, strictly by definition) is a global event, whereas *Refuge* generally uses a micro lens to look at individual and community impact. This conundrum is however not unique, as climate change communication often requires the use of micro-narratives to address the marco-reality.

## Successful Community Engagement and Accessibility

*Refuge* 2018 presented a highly produced, well-funded and thoughtful program of activities and events which had at its core an ambition to engage the local and broader community. The range and diversity of art work made it one, if not the most, successful *Refuge* programs to date. The participatory projects - which included an elaborate dinner event, an innovative theatrical performance, and several interactive digital works - were successful in engaging community members from a range of ages, backgrounds and demographics. In-roads were made into establishing sustainable, long term connections and relationships with the local migrant community of North Melbourne, which had previously presented a challenge to the organisers at Arts House; however, while representatives from the North Melbourne Language and Learning Centre attended events at *Refuge* 2018, there were continued barriers to inclusive communication, which will undoubtedly require ongoing attention in the remaining iterations of the program.

While Outbreak by Lee Shang Lun and PlayReactive, which was scheduled to take place during the public opening hours of Arts House, was cancelled at the last minute due to artist illness, which had ramifications on overall attendance numbers on the main days of *Refuge*, attendance was still strong and public participants noted positive and informative experiences across the program (as noted on social media and in discussion at events).

The process of the *Refuge* Lab has proven to be a vital element in facilitating community engagement; that is, spending time together in an intentional conversation. In fact, what is perhaps key to *Refuge* is the breakdown of singular forms of expertise, generating both a willingness and urgency for new perspectives. For example, a context in which emergency services technical procedures or scientific rationality dominate would not be conducive to the ethos of the Lab, a table where different forms of knowledge meet.

Community engagement continues to be a crucial factor in increasing collective resilience and preparedness in contemporary society. For that reason, *Refuge* is a valuable example of how to invite the public to be involved in facilitating community resilience through gaining new skills, perspectives and knowledge. According to Dr Faye Benrudps, the three main problems faced by emergency services are a lack of engagement from the public, a lack of people taking action themselves (rather than just waiting for services for arrive) and a lack of ability to mobilise collectively to take action. *Refuge* 2018 helped address these three interconnected issues, by offering new forms of engagement via the arts, as well as reframing and provoking both individual and collective action.

## Bringing together Science and Creativity

Without doubt, one of the enduring achievements of the *Refuge* program is the brining together of scientific research and creative practice for the purpose of establishing new knowledge. The contemporary climate crisis and the increasing prominence of public emergencies require us all to be adaptable and innovative in our strategies for ensuring the collective survival of our societies. In order to achieve this, it is vital that public institutions continue to fund projects that engage the public in creative, experimental strategies for conducting our collective lives, now and into the future, such as the ambitious *Refuge* program facilitated by City of Melbourne and Arts House. In turn, these institutions and the communities they serve must be open to welcoming the new shapes and styles for emergency management which may ensue, with efficacy not predicated on top-down efficiency but measured instead in long-term developments and learnings.

Artists are perfectly placed to contribute to these processes, being able to adapt and think imaginatively when confronted with exhausted systems in need of overhaul. It is important to highlight the vitality of knowledge exchange in a truly interdisciplinary context such as *Refuge*.

As part of *Refuge* 2018, creative contributors gained access to the information and resources of the University of Melbourne's world-renowned Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity and were introduced to expert researchers such as Dr Julian Druce. This access was offered both as part of the Lab discussions and in the form of an artists' residency at the Melbourne General Cemetery, which resulted in the installation We Contain Multitudes by Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey.

As artists and scientists, in their respective fields of practice, continue to grapple with new challenges to our societal wellbeing presented by a contemporary age, it is absolutely necessary to facilitate frameworks for dynamic dialogue between these divergent fields. Moreover, as *Refuge* continues to demonstrate, public services, government bodies and cultural institutions are likewise required and, it has been shown, eager to participate in such interdisciplinary dialogue.



*Image: Jen Rae, Apitherapy Quarantine (Zone III detail), 2018*
*Photo: Byrony Jackson*

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*Image: Lorna Hannan, Ruth Crow Corner, 2018*
*Pictured: Lorna Hannan and Uncle Larry Walsh*
*Photo: Byrony Jackson*