

Dolphin House, Amrita Hepi Audio Description transcript

You are listening to the audio description of Amrita Hepi's HD video work called *Scripture for a smokescreen: Episode 1 – Dolphin House*, as part of *Interfacial Intimacies* an exhibition of photography, film, painting, installation, textile, and performance by artists who hold and express tenderly the multiple aspects of their selves through a series of portraits and anti-portraits. The exhibition has been curated by Caine Chennatt, developed by the Plimsoll Gallery and toured by Contemporary Art Tasmania.

Hepi's artwork is in two parts: 1. A smokescreen projection that is played on loop, projection mapped onto a flat surface upon entry. 2. *Dolphin House*, a 15 minute video work, with sound, dialogue, and open captioning.

Opening titles in red capital letters against grey smoke pluming in the background.

The video starts with the back of a person, hair in a bun, wearing an orange t shirt with the words Dolphin temporary help services printed onto the back.

They stand, back to the camera, in the backstage corridors of a building, readying themselves before they walk down the passage, on to a closed stage, where they part some black curtains, and then enter onto another closed stage, where different crew members climb ladders, set up lights and cameras on tripods. Another person walks past them carrying a shiny inflatable dolphin balloon. The main person walks onto a completely white set and is now seen alone in this vastness.

They eventually turn, and face the camera and slowly, ever so slowly bend into a forward stretch, reaching down to touch their feet before slowly rising up again.

Raising one arm, they spin a slightly off-kilter pirouette, and dash off screen right.

Next, they stumble into a rosy red-lit set. They have changed, now wearing a black short sleeved leotard, their dark brown shoulder length hair loose and down. They stand centre, brightened by a soft spotlight, restfully looking into the camera.

Walking closer to the camera, to the viewer, they steadily step backward again.

They raise their right arm straight, palm out, and then move it in waves in the air, the left arm and hand join in, and together, in parallel both create broad vertical waves in the air.

The image of them now flips, where their upper half is upside down at the top of the screen. Their dark form with bare swaying arms swiftly slides across the top left to right to left again. The background and surrounding light is a much deeper tangerine than before.

The camera pans to a wider shot of their full body repeating fast downward dog yoga poses, and in the seemingly edgeless space, they hover, settled, flat on their belly,

upside down, hands sweeping the floor, which in reverse may be perceived to be the ceiling.

Meditative and revitalising yoga-like movements and stretches continue in changing flows and tempos.

Resting on inter-crossed legs their hands scan and swipe closely across their open staring eyes.

When they rise again, image still upside down, their hair cascades and licks like flames in their fired-up moments, matching the burnt tangerine tones of the space they are within.

At 6 minutes the space and image on screen has changed.

A single light-skinned arm extends horizontally in from the right. A visual effect has been applied to make it appear as if the hand is creating ripples in clear water as it moves. The hand ebbs in and out of frame, distorting, and only looking undistorted when it is completely still.

The dancer on screen is whole body and upright again in their black leotards, without any rippling, in the white space. In slow motion, and with an effect that elongates the body with every movement, their form, lines and silhouette stretch and morph in abstracted ways.

In the next shot oversized single pages are haphazardly strewn across the white floor, some are rolled up. One open page contains black and white images of a dolphin in water, with a bikiniied person sitting on the pier nearby, and has the headline The Dolphin House written above.

Next, we see bare feet walking in from the top of screen and as they enter, we see they are wearing white pants and a white top. It is the same dancer who has entered. They kneel by a roll and slowly unravel it.

The page is a colour photograph of a dolphin and human in the water together. The headline reads Communication between human and dolphin.

The dancer sits beside it, taking it in.

And walking around they unfurl another sheet.

They rearrange the sheets and with the camera panning away to a wide shot from above we next see them lying on all the sheets resting.

It quickly cuts to a close up of a wet mirrored surface that has a mess of pastel-coloured jelly-like globules all over it. One mirrored surface is angled 45 degrees to the other that is flush on the floor. Jelly-like globules continually slide down the ramp. The dancer in a black wet suit with two white stripes down the front, then slides in and slips along the wet and messy runway. Similar to the slip and slide of yester-year eras, they continue to flail and flop, dive and glide, squirm and steer like a dolphin, feet clasped together, hands clasped together, they are one long slippery form.

At 10 minutes 20 seconds, there is now a car in the studio, a small white station wagon with its interior lights on. The dancer is positioned in the driver's seat. The lighting is blue, nocturnal, nightly. They smile happily, joyfully, content. From above and outside a silvery blue inflatable dolphin balloon floats in descending on to and just above the car's rooftop.

Next with the image of the car front on, headlines bright, the dolphin can be seen in the passenger seat facing the driver, and both are in deep togetherness.

The interior lights switch off, the space within and around, darkens.

Next an image of the person submerged in water taken from above, pops an orange ping pong ball from their mouth. The ball bobs on the surface, to gather with many many more. The balls drift and gather around the persons face as they rise and shift position, breathing air.

Back in the tangerine lit studio, the dancer crawls in from the right, towards an upright triangular prism that has a mirror surface. They are reflected on its surface, and both forms peer into each other's eyes. They stare at this fixed point while the rest of their body moves without disrupting the gaze.

Close up of fingertips connecting on the flat surface. They arch their back, disconnect, and back away. They back away, facing away, from the prism, and as the camera tracks and follows their departure from a new angle, the mirrors surface reveals an audience of watchers who are sitting beyond the edges of their space, including the camera person themselves.

The camera pans around 180 degrees. The final shot is of the dancer from behind on the floor looking out to the row of observers looking in.

Amrita Hepi, born in 1989, is from Townsville of the Bundjulong/Ngapuhi territories. They are an award-winning artist whose practice is concerned with dance as social function performed within galleries, performance spaces, video art and digital technologies. She engages in forms of historical fiction and hybridity —especially those that arise under empire— to investigate the bodies relationship to personal histories and archive. Amrita is represented by Anna Schwartz Gallery.