

***Trade Routes* (2023), Bhenji Ra Audio Description transcript**

You are listening to the visual summary of Bhenji Ra's three-channel video installation called *Trade Routes, 2023* 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.

Trade Routes was co-commissioned by Plimsoll Gallery/University of Tasmania and TarraWarra Museum of Art. Direction and camera work by Bhenji Ra. Production by Bhenji Ra, Jen Atherton, and André Shannon.

Displayed across 3 screens, playing simultaneously, in separated spaces, all videos are highly textural and layered with multiple different moving images, never the same, but each containing similar motifs of trans-versing and self-filming along paths and root systems in Oaxaca, Jamaica, Philippines, Los Angeles and Tiwi Islands.

Trade Routes is the work of body capture, shot on mobile phones seen and unseen, and is a form of archiveology. Scenes merge and move. Various characters emerge and fade, out of sync and in synch,. *Trade Routes* refuses narrative comprehension, in place of choreographic editing.

The following descriptions are a collage of moments, layered, interweaving and are only some, and not the whole sum, of the many paths and ways one can notice, observe, feel and experience this work.

All screens commence with a flaming tropical tree, broad green leaves burning. Markets, roads, bridges, train station, no, an airport, an aerial view, topography of farmlands, housing.

Shopping centre, lone but not alone, a person holds camera to capture the other documentor, or is it their whole scene in reflection, including the long-haired dancer dancing freely behind them, for them, for themselves...or another.

General store, outdoor market, vendors, 2 friends walk through, never stopping, passing through and by.

Streetscapes with friends, gatherings, against, upon, in nature, to rivers and bodies of water.

Nightlife, public spaces, hot pink neon light blares and glares on the dancefloor.

The market walkers, the friends, carry on with shopping bag in hand, sometimes looking over shoulder, is the camera following, keeping up, smiling.

Mobile on the dash of the car, another mobile in hand travelling, hanging onto a vehicle, at the back, wind blowing, scenes and scenes passing by, close up of smiling faces, faces in the heat.

Market walkers start running, fast and past, to restaurants, eateries, families, eating, sitting.

The dancefloor highlights a constant central dancer, who becomes more prominent with the stay and sway, swinging their long hair, playing to camera, posing, enjoying.

In a car, gathered, side mirror shows glances of those inside outside, crates of fresh fruit.

Kitchens, walking dirt paths, down streets, from sunhats to carrying umbrellas, corridors, passages, to new gatherings, club, dancing, crowded, flashing night.

Against an evening, darkness, fence illuminated, people walk.

While on another an outdoor sunny scene, positive people in exercise clothes, sticks in hand, do not combat, and talk instead, conversation long, engrossed, happening, with a sense of waiting, it is beginning and continuing and continuing.

By the water side, by lake, its day, screen goes to blue.

On the microphone, karaoke, singing, in a hair salon it takes two to dry hair with hairdryers from all angles.

By 9 minutes blue is gone and paths around the lake, the lake take friends around, past slippers in the mud. Dancing is layered with pineapples and pineapples and bananas, yellowness.

The nightclub continues on another screen, flashing lights, dancer centrestage, juxtaposed to view of club or building exterior, outside, people on street, some just dance, others stand.

Touchscreen fingers zoom and move along the google earth coastlines of Indonesia, Australia and curiously around.

With the dirt of the outback, a road, car travellers, to their left beyond trees is the sea, water, sea.

The stones texturizes the market and pineapples, with grainy, speckled surfaces. Slow motion cutting, clever peeling of the skin with broad blade knife, then swiftly stripping, exposing juicy pineapple flesh.

An elder and younger folk dancing in space. Screen goes to blue.

Folk dancers dance in a video, held in hand as if showing another over a plate of an eaten fish dish, table of bottles, plates, the gathering, has otherwise finished and moved on.

A bulldozer, a digger, digging earth and land, fruit at market again, cat in a crib grooming. People playing ball. Fabrics, flags, cloth become sky, tree tops, in the wind, overcast cloudy.

Airport, gates of departures and arrivals, an escalator, grid lines over people from home, on land, on route.

A coiling sculpture.

Handheld camera.

Texture of leaves and leaves on the forest, land, floor, green saplings and shoots, as the camera keeps following and travelling forever more.

Bhenji Ra (born 1990) is a transdisciplinary artist currently based on Gadigal land, Eora Nation. Her practice combines dance, video, illustration and community activation. Her work dissects cultural theory and identity, centralising her own personal histories as a tool to reframe performance. She is the mother of Western Sydney based collective and ballroom house SLÉ.