

Rebecca Belmore

*Turbulent Water*



**BUXTON  
CONTEMP  
ORARY**

An exhibition from Griffith University Art Museum, Brisbane, co-curated by Wanda Nanibush, Curator of Indigenous Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, and Angela Goddard, Griffith University Art Museum Director.

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## Main exhibition wall text

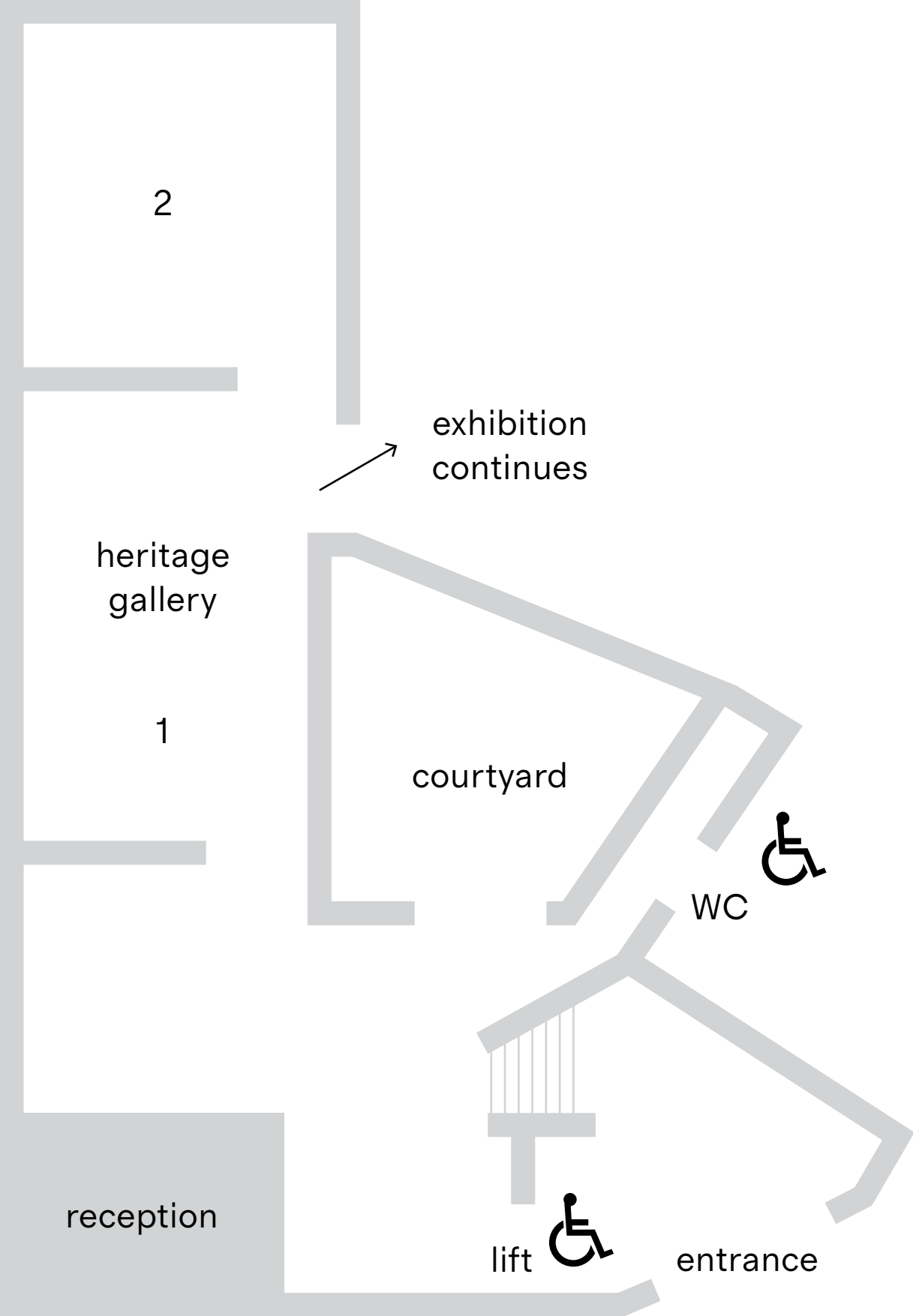
*Turbulent Water* is the first solo Australian exhibition of internationally acclaimed artist Rebecca Belmore (b.1960), a member of the Lac Seul First Nation (Anishinaabe) people, who currently lives and works in Vancouver, British Columbia.

*Turbulent Water* brings together several key installations from the artist's multi-disciplinary practice that address social and political issues faced by Indigenous communities, as well as connections between bodies, land and language. Works in *Turbulent Water* use the medium of video innovatively, questioning official narratives and highlighting the labouring, struggling or missing body.

Water is a central motif, carrying both the symbolic power associated with the cycle of life and death that frames human experience and its material power as a precious natural resource required to care for the land.

The artist's body is a constant presence, enabling her to explore boundaries between public and private; power relations in contemporary society; and the effects of colonisation on Indigenous people, especially women. These themes also parallel in many ways the historical and contemporary experiences of Australian Indigenous peoples.

# Ground Floor Floorplan



# Heritage Gallery area

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**Rebecca Belmore**

*Perimeter* 2013

video projection, wall text, 22 min 24 sec

Video credit: Darlene Naponse

Soundtrack: Julian Cote

Courtesy of the artist

*Perimeter* traces physical and conceptual lines through the urban landscape of Sudbury, Ontario. Using florescent flagging tape, Rebecca Belmore surveys Indigenous land and all it has lived through. She wears a surveyor's vest to point to the history of mining in the area.

Belmore has often made interventions at specific sites where colonial power structures operate.

In this video, she walks across imaginary borders between a private nickel mine property, the city, and the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek (Whitefish Lake) First Nation. These spaces are linked by water through lakes, rivers and streams, yet are subject to widely differing cultural and legal relationships.

## Rebecca Belmore

### *The Named and the Unnamed* 2007

video projection, wood, light bulbs, 38 min 21 sec  
Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art  
Gallery, University of British Columbia, purchased  
with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts  
Acquisition Assistance program and the Morris and  
Helen Belkin Foundation, 2005

In the video installation *The Named and the Unnamed*, Rebecca Belmore makes the invisible visible. This work transforms documentation of the performance *Vigil* into a media installation, where a screen is embedded with lightbulbs. The performance took place on 23 June 2002 at an intersection in Downtown Eastside Vancouver, where women were going missing, many of whom were Indigenous. In February 2002, a serial killer had finally been arrested for murdering women from this area. When you look through the lightbulbs in present time to the candles being lit in the video, you are joined to the audience witnessing the vigil. By screaming out the names of the women, Belmore remembers them while also pointing to all the names we don't know.

There are still thousands of missing and murdered Indigenous women whose families are fighting for justice.

## Rebecca Belmore

### *Fountain* 2005

video projection on falling water, 2 min 23 sec  
Collection: Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Gift of  
Rebecca Belmore, 2018

First presented at the Canadian Pavilion of the 2005 Venice Biennale, *Fountain* captures a transformative gesture where water turns into blood.

Water, a precious resource in much of the world, is abundant in Canada. Inspired by the many decorative fountains throughout Venice and Vancouver, the artist chose Iona Beach as the Vancouver site for this work. This bleak industrial area is located just outside the city, with a sewerage treatment plant nearby.

*Fountain*, like many of Rebecca Belmore's installations, uses video sculpturally as just one element of a viewing experience. In this work, the video is projected onto a screen of rushing water. Belmore was thinking about a future time when we might go to war over water.

In her own words:

If you look at current politics, brutality and colonisation continue to go on. So my idea is that between water and blood, we repeat all these acts against one another. It's endless. I question how civilised we are. I question our civility.

**Rebecca Belmore***Apparition* 2013

video projection, paint, 4 min

Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, gift of the artist, 2016

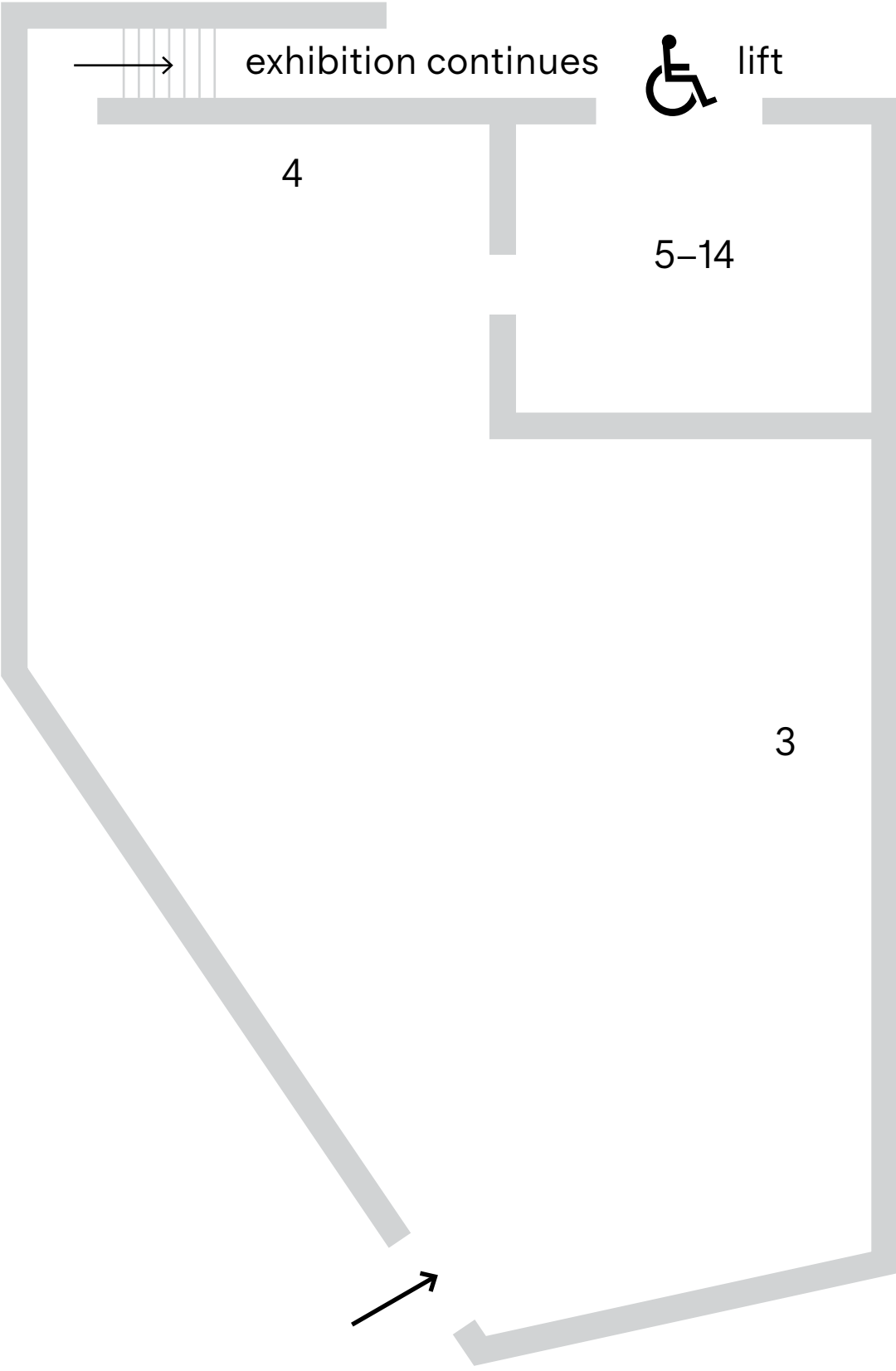
*Apparition* is an artwork that reflects my understanding of the loss of our language. More, it is an illustration of the potential for its disappearance. I do not speak Anishinaabemowin even though I grew up within it and around it. Sadly, I am well aware of the devastating effects of the residential school system, particularly the deliberate role it played in the silencing of our languages. For this reason, *Apparition* is an image of myself, a silent portrait of this loss.

—Rebecca Belmore

Indian Residential Schools were Canadian government-sponsored religious schools that stole First Nations children from their communities for over 150 years. In Australia, churches were also involved in the 'Stolen Generations', where Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families from 1905 to the 1970s.



# Ground Floor Floorplan (Continued)



**Rebecca Belmore**

*Facing the Monumental* 2008

1 July 2012, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Materials: 150-year-old red oak tree, kraft paper, wig, water, black and tan clothes

Video duration: 1 hr 1 min 19 sec

Audio: Pre-recorded Canada Day 21-gun salute performed in Queen's Park

Assistants: Cherish Blood, Francisco-Fernando Granados, Hilary Wear

Videographer: Alex Williams

This 150-year-old indigenous red oak tree, located in Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, is a living witness to colonisation. In this work, the tree becomes a temporary monument to the Earth, to women, and to life.

**Rebecca Belmore**

X 2010

10 June 2010, Price Chopper exterior, 181 Brock St,  
Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

Materials: black truck, bags of milk, four buckets,  
water, four cushions in the colours used in Robert  
Houle's *Mohawk Summer*, four stones, brick wall,  
black hose, red band leader outfit, black clothes

Video duration: 34 min 13 sec

Audio: Charlie Glasspool (trumpet)

Assistant: Daina Warren

Videographers: Nick Ferrio, Jessica Rowland

Editor: Nick Ferrio

X responds to the Kanehsatà:ke Resistance of 1990, a 78-day standoff between protesters, Quebec police, and the Canadian Army over a proposed golf course to be built on Kanien'kehà:ka (Mohawk) lands in Oka, Quebec. The artist and assistant perform repetitive actions of marking, erasing, marking, and erasing large X's on the wall of a Price Chopper grocery store in Peterborough, Ontario. At the same time, Curve Lake First Nation peoples hold a ceremony across the street to rebury the 2,000-year-old body of an Indigenous man that was uncovered when the parking lot was created. A ritual of return – a reburial of what was disturbed and removed – is taking place.

**Rebecca Belmore***Making Always War* 2008

March 13, 2008, exterior courtyard of Frederic Lasserre Building, University of British Columbia

Materials: six desert storm uniform shirts, wood beam, truck, nails, hammer, beer, sand from a nearby beach, empty sculpture platform

Video duration: 48 min 47 sec

Audio: Whitefish Bay Singers

Assistant: Daina Warren

Videographer: Harold Coego

Working for forty-five minutes, using a salvaged piece of west coast timber, buckets of sand from nearby Spanish Banks, six Desert Storm shirts purchased from an army surplus store, a hammer, some nails, and the sound of pow-wow music emanating from my truck, I set out to make, to build, to destroy, and to raise my thoughts about war. Driving nails through the camouflage fabric and into what used to be a majestic tree – I assaulted, soothed, and shaped a personal version of a memorial pole with the setting sun and then working in the headlights of my own vehicle... making, making always war.

**Rebecca Belmore**

*A Simple Truth* 2003

November 23, 2003, Western Front, Vancouver,  
British Columbia

Materials: two cakes, microphone, forty-three  
candles, paper rubbing of John A. Macdonald  
monument epigraph "A British Subject I was born,  
A British Subject I will die," black pants, black shirt  
with the inscription "blah, blah, blah," music player,  
boxes, forty-three glasses

Video duration: 27 min 28 sec

Audio: "Hurt" by Johnny Cash, "Happy Birthday"  
sung by the audience

Assistant: Florene Belmore

*A Simple Truth* is a performance in which Belmore discusses her process of creating work through a narrative involving her connection to the suicide of a student with whom she worked with during a residency. During the performance, she lies down while being surrounded by glasses with candles lit inside that are carried out of the Western Front when the performance ends.

**Rebecca Belmore**

*The Indian Factory* 2010

2000 May 25, 2000, AKA artist-run, Saskatoon,  
Saskatchewan

Materials: serving tray with a picture of Queen Elizabeth, novelty-store police car light, photo of a buffalo rubbing stone, five work shirts, candles, plaster, blood, fan, hammer, nails, water basin, water, buckets, clay, feather, white coveralls with feathers attached, blue coveralls with red stripe

Video duration: 15 min 59 sec

Audio: "Fightin' Side of Me" by Merle Haggard

Assistant: Osvaldo Yero

Videographer: Charlie Fox, courtesy of Tribe Inc.

In *The Indian Factory*, performed in Saskatoon, Belmore entered the space carrying a bucket of plaster, which she then applied to several men's jackets hanging from hooks on the wall. The hollow and hardened plaster forms were an acknowledgement of Aboriginal victims of ongoing racial violence in the prairie city.

**Rebecca Belmore**

*Creation or Death: We Will Win* 1991

December 1991, Castillo de la Real Fuerza,  
Havana, Cuba

Materials: red rope, sand

Video duration: 3 min 15 sec

Videographer: Domingo Cisneros

This performance took place in the 16th century Castillo de la Real Fuerza (Castle of the Royal Force), a star-shaped fort in the Havana harbour, Cuba. The title of this work reveals its intention to have the viewer experience the piece as the struggle of Indigenous people to reclaim their territories and culture.

**Rebecca Belmore***Tent City 2003*

November 20, 2003, live-streamed online

Materials: clothing, food, and numerous objects collected in the vicinity of Tent City

Video duration: 28 min 03 sec

Audio mix: Paddy Ryan

Video mix: Archer Pechawis

Videographer: Thirza Cuthand

Belmore's video collage addresses issues of homelessness, poverty, and hunger in the midst of a thriving and prosperous city. The title refers to a temporary city of tents erected by Vancouver's homeless in protest to welfare cuts and regulations designed to further marginalize the poor. Actions such as collecting bottles, washing feet, and ripping open packets of ketchup to pour on French fries spread in the mud take on ritual significance as they are juxtaposed with scenes of the tents and reflections of the city in pools of muddy water. At the edge of the tent city is a sign that declares to the world, "This is the other Canada The poor, now in your face!"



**Rebecca Belmore**

*Bury My Heart* 2010

August 15, 2000, Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art, Great Falls, Montana

Materials: white dress, wooden chair, 50 red carnations, 100 white carnations, blood, shovel, two water sprinklers

Video duration: 30 min 14 sec

Audio: Violinist Mary Paporis

Video: Paris Gibson Square Museum

Presented at *Material Culture: Innovation in native art*, an exhibition curated by Bentley Spang

A performance based on history. In the winter of 1890, three hundred Oglala Sioux, most of them women and children, were massacred by the US Cavalry at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota. Their bodies were left exposed.

## Rebecca Belmore

*Victorious* 2008

14 June 2008, Centre for Digital Media, Vancouver,  
British Columbia, Canada

Materials: newspaper, honey, photocopy of  
Queen Victoria, video montage of bees, wood  
pallet,

plastic patio chair, black pails

Video duration: 3 min 20 sec

Audio: "God Save the Queen", Thomas Arne  
(composer), Henry Carey (lyricist)

Assistant: Daina Warren

Videographer: Elisha Burrows

The Canadian Prime Minister's Statement of Apology on 11 June 2008 was the impetus for this tribute to Indigenous survivors of the Indian Residential School system, which separated over 150,000 children from their families and communities.

**Rebecca Belmore**

*Clay on Stone* 2016

October 1, 2016, Walker Court, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario

Materials: clay, water, stone floor, black buckets, black clothes

Video duration: 12 hours 6 min 41 sec

*Clay on Stone* was a performance that took place overnight during Nuit Blanche, Toronto and as part of Toronto: Tributes + Tributaries, 1971–1989 curated by Wanda Nanibush at the Art Gallery of Ontario. A twelve-hour performance, from sunset to sunrise, where the artist covers the stone floor of the Walker Court with clay by hand. Initially writing the words “land”, “water”, and “breathe”, Belmore eventually obscures the texts, creating an abstract painting that covers the entire floor.

All works courtesy of the artist