

Transcript of audio descriptions: Joel Sherwood Spring – *HOLECODED*

by Joel Sherwood Spring

At the end of the exhibition corridor of concrete floor and white walls, there's a polished concrete wall with a video of a tunnel and the rocky surface of the earth or the crust or the underground.

The corridor of the space, like the tunnel in the work itself, closes in around you as you move towards the video, the projection on the rear wall. It feels like a tunnel, an unending tunnel that burrows through the earth.

No particular finish has been applied to help the clarity of the projection. It's just projecting straight onto the wall. You can see where the reinforcement holes have been patched and potted onto the pre-formed concrete blocks that create the wall. You can see the memory or the stain of the word 'lab', maybe painted, or the residue of a vinyl ... piece of glue.

Where the work is being projected onto the unfinished wall, there are all of the common fixtures that you would see at the entrance of any university building. A surveillance camera, a light sensor, and a conduit or lighting track that all end on the wall, and the work projects onto those as well.

The light from the projector reflects back on the dark, filtered, spherical, hemispherical lens of the security camera. Circular, like the hole in the work.

The first scene in the work is a recording of an Acknowledgement of Country that was given at the 2023 Diggers and Dealers Mining Forum, where Lynas Rare Earths was acknowledging the traditional owners of the land in which they live, work, and meet across Australia. Lynas Rare Earths is a company that sells rare earths, unprocessed rare earths, such as lithium and nickel and other things, both globally and from Australia. It is a blue image with the logo of the

Diggers and Dealers, as well as a blue and white painting done by an unlisted artist.

A burning brand cuts over the top of the image, which is a reference to a set of drawings that I had done after reading a book called *Cyclonopedia* by an author, Reza Negarestani, who is an Iranian philosopher.

The Acknowledgement cuts to an image of a wide-angle view of a mine shaft: timber struts holding up the rocky roof, pieces of metal mining equipment strewn along the floor. Large beaten and weathered light sockets hanging affixed to the timbers, the wires running from light to light, light the space as the camera slowly proceeds down what appears to be an unending tunnel or hole.

- A landscape aspect ratio video of a shovel digging in soil is overlaid over the centre of the screen, blocking the hole.
- A chroma key relief of an 1830s woodblock drawing of mineral processing during the early colonial period is over the top of the image.
- Centre left of the screen is a cropped video of a World of Warcraft character, mining a vein of minerals – and then, after five seconds, it's gone from the screen.
- An overlay of a frame of a video of a pair of hands squeezing wet almond meal in a piece of cheesecloth. The video is a guide to how to make almond milk at home. The liquid squeezes out from the surface of the cloth into a bowl, and then disappears.

The traces of human habitation and use, the equipment, structural supports, are dematerialising the deeper you go. The surface is revealed with the face of the rocks that have been cut away as you continue to burrow down this seemingly unending, unlit tunnel.

- An overlay of a video of somebody climbing through an incredibly shallow and claustrophobic space in a cavern appears for six seconds, and disappears.

What was once a lit tunnel with lighting and wiring that would be supplied from some energy source, some generator at the surface, is now gone, and all that is lighting the path is a light coming from the character, the camera or the viewer that moves through the tunnel.

Sharp cut.

You continue to burrow down this tunnel. Small winding and organic rocks strewn about the floor, some on the ceiling.

- An overlay of a video of a hand in a blue rubber glove turning loose ground soil, maybe a garden bed, and then disappears.

This tunnel feels more like a cave than a man-made hole. A tunnel formed over a long period of time by water and other natural forces, non-human forces.

- An image of burning gasoline being dropped down into a mine shaft plays for three seconds.

The hole continues.

- An image of a missile being launched in infrared video, tracked by some image tracking algorithm, plays over the screen for four seconds.
- A portrait TikTok video of heaps of missiles fitted with JDAM missile guidance systems shown on an airstrip. A JDAM is a piece of equipment that turns what is understood in defence as a 'dumb' bomb into a guided bomb. Bombs you would drop from a plane ... a JDAM, a guidance system with a GPS computer and rotors that move fins that guide it, turns it into a traceable or tracing missile. Rare earths like copper and nickel and coltan not only go into our domestic products like our phones and laptops and driverless cars, they also go into these war machines.
- The image of miners; two men in high-vis orange and yellow in a tunnel, setting off an explosive, somewhere out of sight. You see the shockwave loosen dust off all the surfaces as one man blocks his ears, smiling. And then it cuts away.

- A video image of a mine shaft appears. Burning material is dropped. The camera follows the light source as it goes further and further until it reaches a point out of sight, and the camera and image disappears.
- Image of African miners escaping a collapsing mine in the Congo. where a huge amount of coltan and rare earth minerals are extracted, often under slave conditions, then sold on – either through informal means or otherwise to technology companies and armament design companies like Elbit Systems, and other people, other groups.

The projection transitions from a hole or cavern that looks like the surface of the interior of your ear or some other sort of skin, and moves into a pink, glossy vascular space that gives the feeling of some bodily interior space, whether it's an artery or a vein or a blood vessel, or an organ like your intestines.

- There's an overlay image of a promotional video for the ADF that shows a package or a deployment being dropped from the back of an aircraft.

The pace at which the camera or the character or the viewpoint is moving speeds up as you move through these more bodily holes. You see passages into other places, other spaces; these tunnels are branching, much like you would imagine your own veins or organs to branch into different channels. The quality of the interior space changes with the colour and glossiness of the walls. There's almost a glow in this space.

The walls themselves seem to move or pulsate as you move through them, giving the impression that you are not only moving through a thing, but a living thing. The texture gives way from a spotted pink and red to a much more rough and red and almost brown section of tunnels or veins or arteries. You're inside something; you're inside someone.

- A grayscale image of the interior of a pipe plays for two seconds and disappears.

Moving through these veins, these channels, there is a sense of speed and urgency. An image of a burning brand or sigil is overlaid.

The light reflects off the surface inside of these living tunnels. It's like you're in liquid, or are liquid moving through this system. You might be blood. You might be water. Something in between.

- A portrait image of a TikTok from the perspective of a FIFO miner who works in WA plays over the top of this unending organic tunnel. You see a huge mining excavator dumping rocks and material into the back of a loaded truck. The TikTok is first person. The author is walking up a flight of industrial stairs onto the back of a piece of mining equipment.
- Off to the right, there is a landscape video of a white-skinned hand that has punctured through a light blue surface. It looks like paper and is gesturing, fingers rubbing together, a symbol or sign or gesture often meaning money.
- A landscape video from first person perspective of a person climbing through an underground cavern that is overflowing with water. It looks like a waterfall, yellow limestone being eroded and moved by the water. The hands enter the frame, and then it cuts away.
- A landscape video of a fish kill in which hundreds of thousands of fish have died and floated to the surface of an inland river somewhere within the Murray-Darling Basin. The surface of the water has turned white as the upturned fish bleach in the sun.
- Landscape image of a white-skinned man with short brown hair, moving through a space between two rock faces. It's forward facing camera, like on a phone call. He turns it around, and it cuts away.

You're back in the vascular tunnel. The movement has slowed.

You now see the pulsating shapes of the tunnel more clearly. This thing is alive. You turn one of the many branching paths inside of this living organism system and come to a black hole, an opening. It goes to darkness.

As you get closer and closer, the texture, the quality of the image gives way to more darkness, until the entire pane screen surface is only a few pieces of pink amongst a black screen – and then it's all faded away.