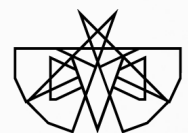




WILLIAM VERSACE

DIRECTIONS BACK HOME

22 March—1 April 2023



CURATORIAL+CO.

Deeply invested in the idea that to be at home is an action, a skill, a labour, my art practice is primarily concerned with what it means to be at home as a settler on Indigenous land. My exhibition *Directions Back Home*, is an attempt to encapsulate how I, a first generation migrant from Italy, connect to Country and the non-human life that it consists of. The exhibition is not completely my work—the body of work is a collaboration with Kamay, more specifically, Bunnabi, the north headland of Botany Bay, on Gadigal land.

As a rural kid moving to the city to begin life as an adult, Bunnabi was the first place I was truly able to connect to, a home away from home. I was enamoured—not for any specific reason, but an accumulation of reasons over a long period of time. It was an anchor for me, whilst living out the turbulent and somewhat un-grounded life of an early 20-year-old. As I was developing my art practice, I would go and experience life elsewhere with traditional owners in places such as Arnhem Land, then come back to Bunnabi to apply the lessons I'd learnt. This brought a realisation that connection to Country was not something that was done for you, rather something that you do. As the spiral of time went on, I began to be claimed by the place. My art practice grew with the guidance of this place and all the non-human life that it consists of.

Directions Back Home is a dialectic with place—the creation of new roots, the sprouting of new seeds. It is place speaking through me, not me speaking about place. The place has had full agency to tell its story. My role in the process was more removed than most artists wish themselves to be. I sought (if even possible) to take myself from centre stage with the living place itself centralised. Place as it is—not the history of the place, not what I think of the place but a complex, biological, physical, metaphysical, multi-faceted, constantly changing and flowing and dying place.

The artworks are simply by-products of these dialectics with place. With those very things. The microbiology, the botany, the water flows, the tides, the sea life, the minerals. Each artwork is a conversation, a collaboration with place. A physical manifestation of the relationship we have formed over the ages. The imagery created is co-created by Kamay and myself.

Throughout the body of work, I aim to bring the visible and the invisible elements of place into vision, or into sense. I'm tracking them, mapping them, bringing things like salt and wind and water streams and rain patterns and bacteria and chemicals into view through different lenses. I chose to work with many elements of place, because it's these complex interactions of the many elements that makes a place and my deliberately broad scope of processes and materiality within my practice.

Developing my existing practice of creating my own pigments by using the natural elements of place such as rocks, ochres and plants, this body of work explores old Italian techniques that are not necessarily used in art, but in the building of a home. Using the different plasterwork techniques such as *scagliola* and other techniques such as *terrazzo*, I have begun to form a language of which my two homelands meet.

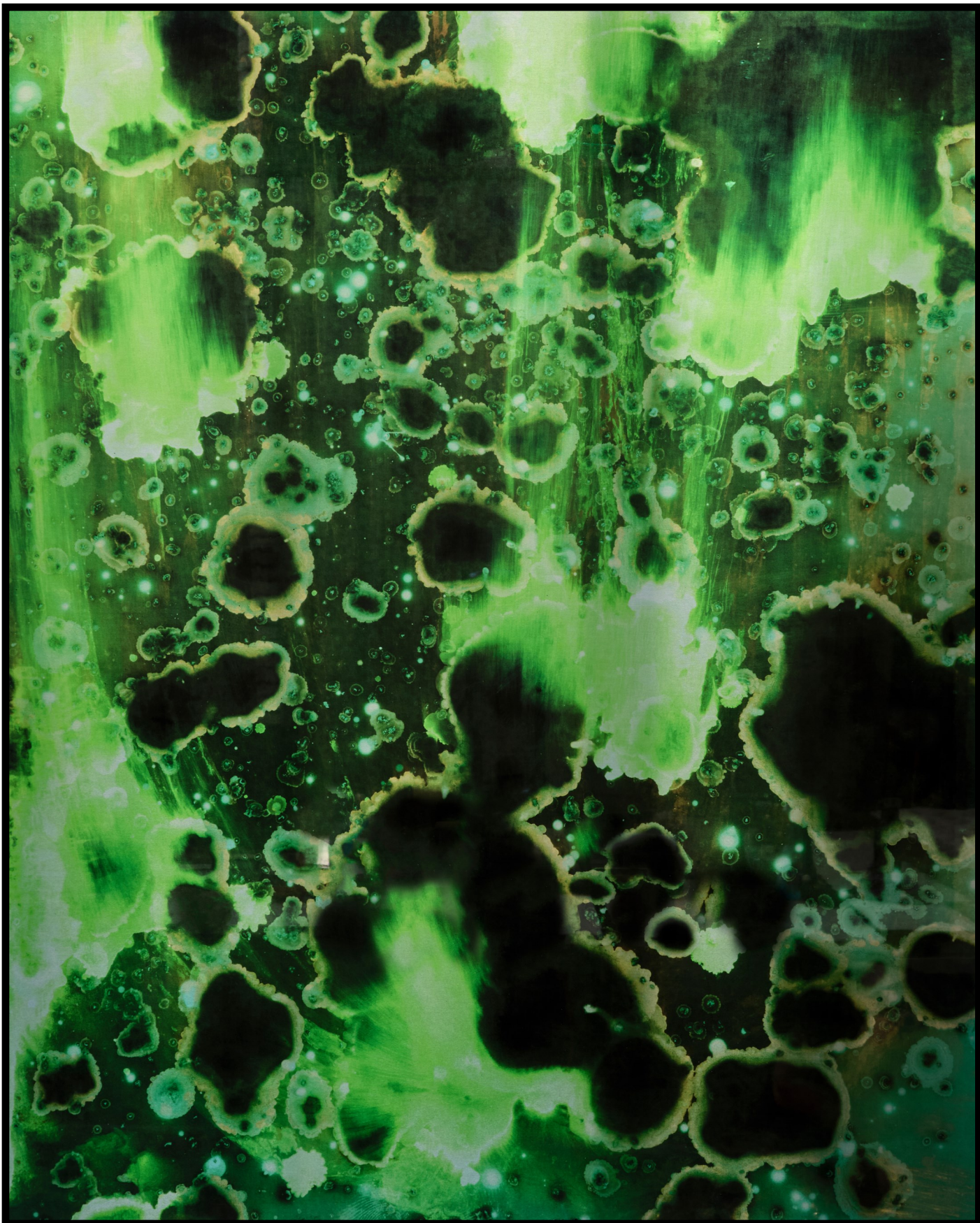
Some of the images are formed over decades, and some in seconds. Some over months and some over weeks. All however are incredibly complex in their representation of place. All form a story that makes you think slightly differently about

how you perceive place. I tried to break free from the static ideas of place, of Country, of what being 'Australian' or 'Italian' means, and to let the elements break it down a little. I let them change it. Let the tides wash over. Ideas wash over. Let it frost over and thaw, then let the sun burn it.

So let that sun touch your perception of place, observe what it has done to your connection to Country and let it be a reminder of the dynamic agency of the more-than human. Let it etch a curiosity of the rough magic that exists around us. It may, after all, give you directions back home.

WILLIAM VERSACE

DIRECTIONS BACK HOME



Conversations with a Rockpool

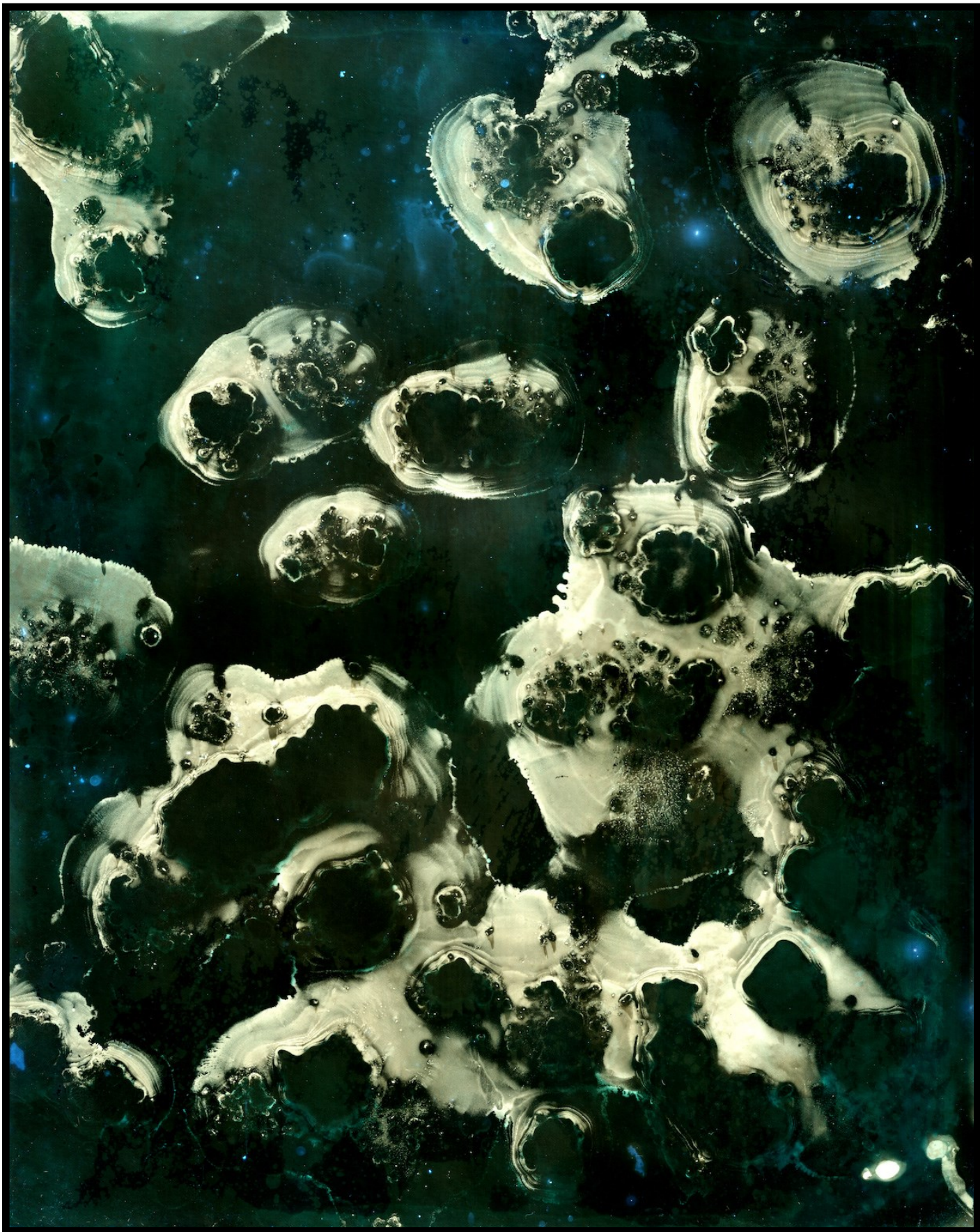
Dye sublimation print on aluminium (photogram taken with elements of a rockpool)

120cm x 96.5cm

Edition of 3 + 1AP

Framed in stained blackwood frame

\$3500 Unframed | \$4200 Framed



Bluebottles

Dye sublimation print on aluminium (photogram taken with bluebottles)

120cm x 96.5cm

Edition of 3 + 1AP

Framed in stained blackwood frame

\$3500 Unframed | \$4200 Framed



Chemical Runoff

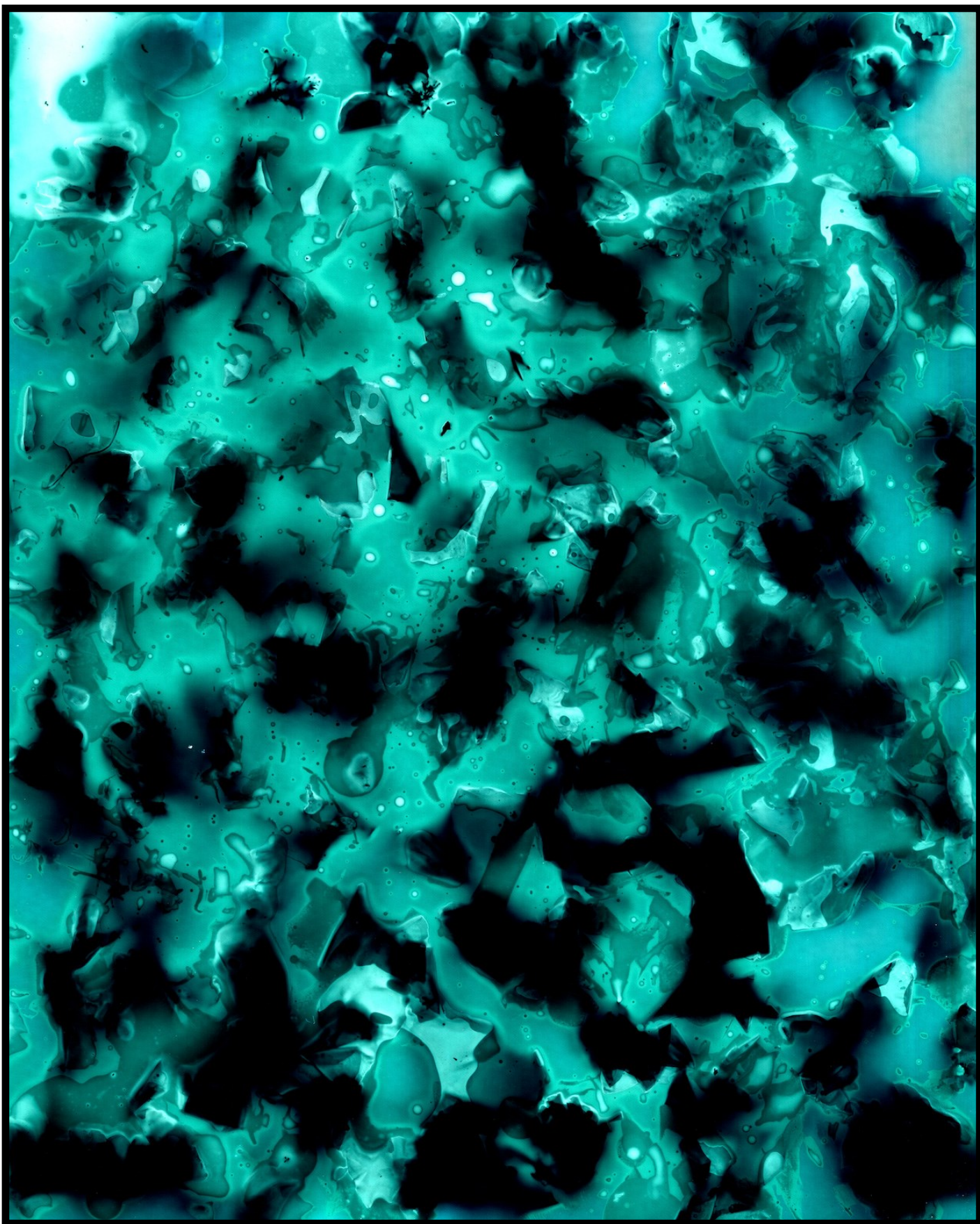
Dye sublimation print on aluminium (photogram taken with chemical runoff from the New South Wales Golf Club)

120cm x 96.5cm

Edition of 3 + 1AP

Framed in stained blackwood frame

\$3500 Unframed | \$4200 Framed



Sea Lettuce

Dye sublimation print on aluminium (photogram taken with sea lettuce *Ulva Lactuca*)

120cm x 96.5cm

Edition of 3 + 1AP

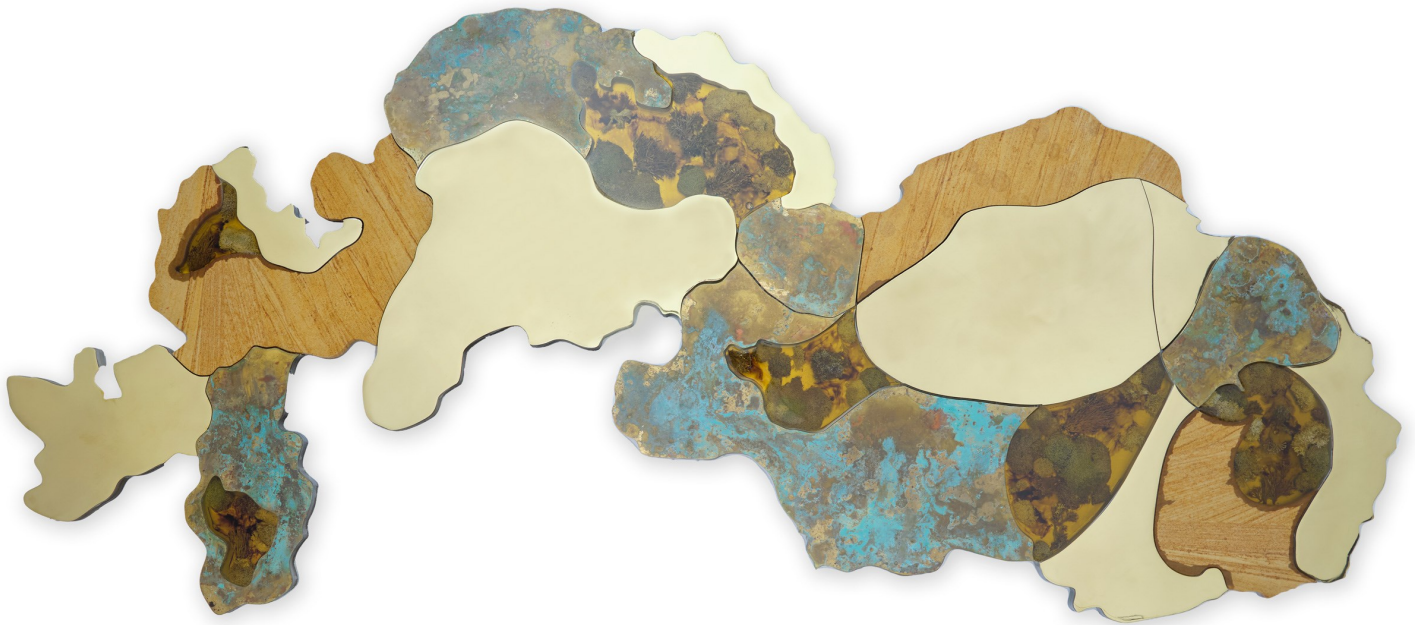
Framed in stained blackwood frame

\$3500 Unframed | \$4200 Framed



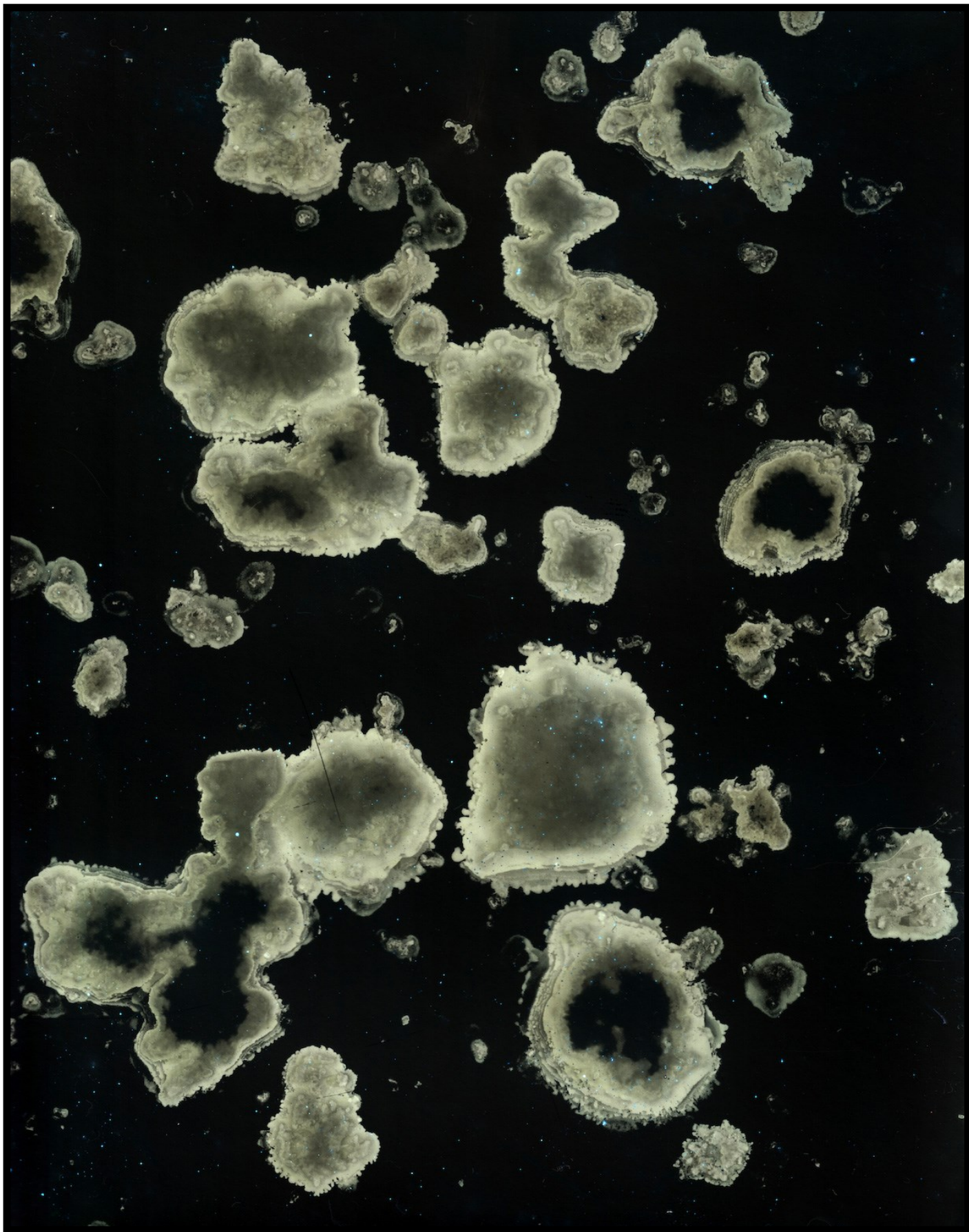
Rockpool / Urchin

Resin, plaster, rabbit skin glue, polished copper, acrylic, natural pigments from Kamay, urchin spines on aluminium board
117cm H x 70cm W x 2cm D (9cm with urchins)
\$10,000



Rockpool / Kelp

Resin, polished brass, sandstone, seaweed, coral, sea sponge, Kamay saltwater patina on brass on aluminium board
69cm H x 149cm W x 2cm D
\$10,000



Salt

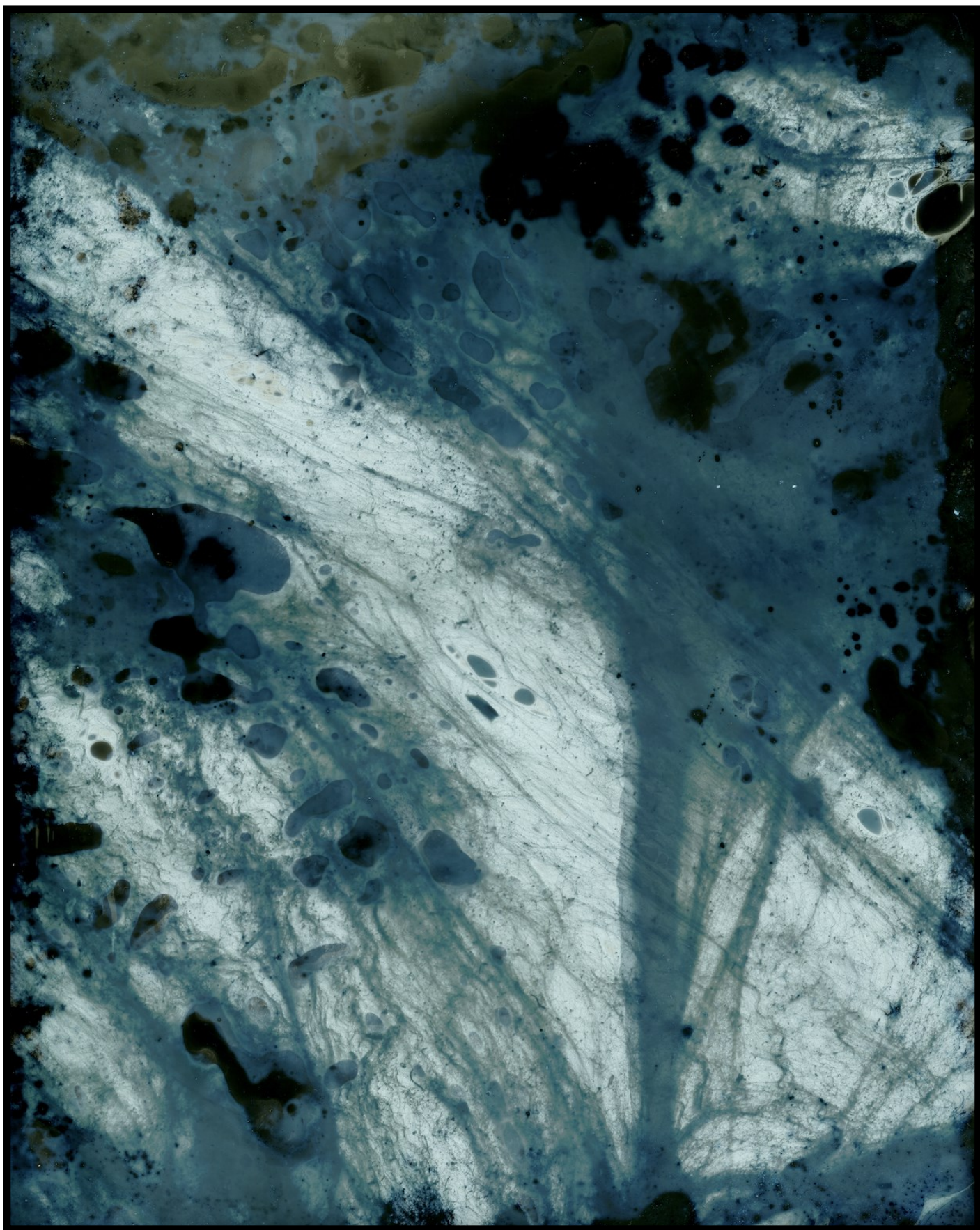
Dye sublimation print on aluminium (photogram taken with salt from Kamay)

120cm x 96.5cm

Edition of 3 + 1AP

Framed in stained blackwood frame

\$3500 Unframed | \$4200 Framed



Algal Mat

Dye sublimation print on aluminium (photogram taken with algal bloom)

120cm x 96.5cm

Edition of 3 + 1AP

Framed in stained blackwood frame

\$3500 Unframed | \$4200 Framed



Relic
Found relic, cast bronze
50cm H x 22cm W x 17cm D
\$6750



Harp
Found relic, cast bronze
55cm H x 38cm W x 15cm D
\$6750



Malocchio
Found relic, cast bronze
62cm H x 25cm W x 16cm D
\$6750



Sandstone 1

Plaster, rabbit skin glue, handmade sandstone pigments from Kamay, powdered pigments, resin

62cm H x 52cm W x 3cm D

Cast bronze frame made from waxed seaweed

\$5500



Sandstone 2

Plaster, rabbit skin glue, handmade sandstone pigments from Kamay, powdered pigments, resin

62cm H x 52cm W x 3cm D

Cast bronze frame made from waxed seaweed

\$5500



Rivet
Plaster in blackwood frame
55cm H x 114cm W x 5.5cm D
Edition of 2 + 1 AP
\$4000



The Bow
Plaster in blackwood frame
56cm H x 43cm W x 5.5cm D
\$1900



Oyster 1 and Oyster 2
Resin, handmade oyster shell pigment, ink, plaster, metallic pigment on wooden board
114cm H x 60cm W x 5.5cm D each panel
\$5000 each



Erode

Plaster terrazzo, natural pigment from Kamay, sand, steel, waxed blackwood base
48cm H x 23cm W x 23cm D
\$2000



The Boilerdeck
Plaster in blackwood frame
34cm H x 25.5cm W x 5.5cm D
\$1400



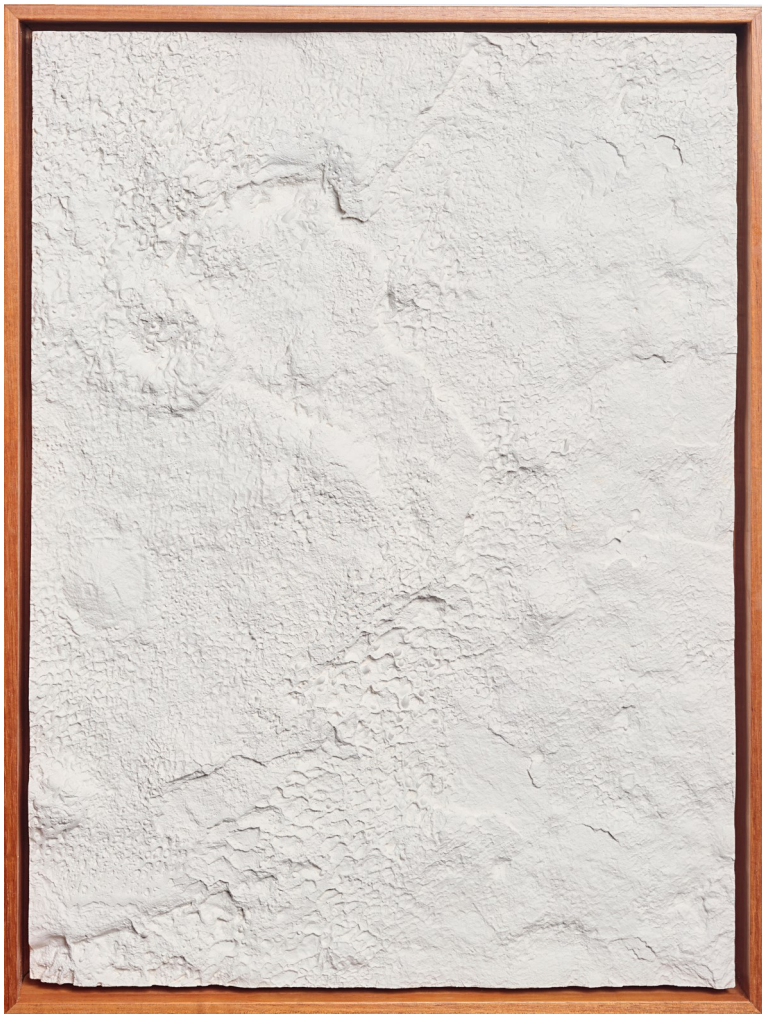
The Deck
Plaster in blackwood frame
41.5cm H x 31cm W x 5.5cm D
\$1600



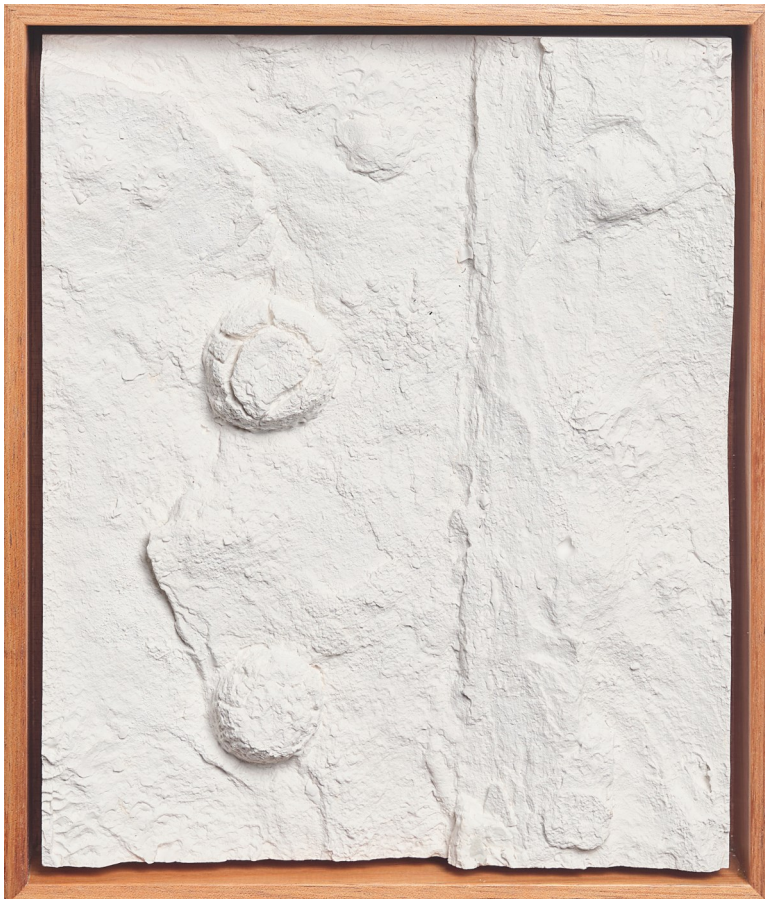
The Starboard
Plaster in blackwood frame
32cm H x 24.5cm W x 5.5cm D
\$1200



The Stern
Plaster in blackwood frame
29.5cm H x 23.5cm W x 5.5cm D
\$1100



The Rudder
Plaster in blackwood frame
51.5cm H x 38.5cm W x 5.5cm D
\$1900



The Keel
Plaster in blackwood frame
30cm H x 25.5cm W x 5.5cm D
\$1100

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT + CONTRIBUTION

The artist would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Kamay, the place that the works were created. 5% of the artist's profits from the exhibition will be split and donated to two organisations caring for Kamay and other places nationally, supporting the vitality of culture, community and Country—IndigiGrow (Kamay based) and Firesticks Alliance (national).

IndigiGrow is a 100% Aboriginal owned, run and staffed, not-for-profit native plant nursery. They specialise in propagation and growing of Australian native edible plants in the critically endangered Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS).

Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation is an Indigenous led network and aims to reinvigorate the use of cultural burning by facilitating cultural learning pathways to fire and land management. It is an initiative for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to look after Country. Firesticks is facilitating training, implementing on-ground works and conducting scientific monitoring to establish a greater understanding of the ecological impact of cultural burning practices. The program aims to work with fire to enhance ecosystem health by improving habitat condition and connectivity within culturally connected landscapes. The ultimate goal of Firesticks is to support cultural learning pathways that enable and empower Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities to work collectively towards resilient landscapes.

THANK YOU

William Versace and Curatorial+Co. would like to acknowledge the support and generosity of the community after Will's studio fire in early 2023 which resulted in the loss of the majority of artworks created for this exhibition.

Without the kindness of so many of you, Will would not have been able to pull together this extraordinary exhibition. Although many pieces were irreplaceable, most could be recreated with the support of these caring and compassionate businesses:

Standish & Co. | Pigment Lab | Reidy's Framing | Barnes

Thanks also to the 273 people who donated to the Go Fund Me organised by Cloe Jouin. Your generous and incredibly selfless donations have allowed Will to get back on his feet quickly and continue his practice by being able to replenish his studio.

Thanks to Kat Snowden for her magical creation of the scents that accompany the exhibition.

Thanks to Imogen Vander for the video which will be shown in the exhibition, highlighting the elements forged by nature then lost to fire that could not be shown in the gallery space.



Photo by Lu Deverall | Artwork photography Dean Qiulin Li + Robert McGrath



CURATORIAL+CO.

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Curatorial+Co. acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the country on which the gallery stands, the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and cultures. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.