

firstdraft

Gallery 2

3 February – 19 March 2023

Anna May Kirk Year Without a Sun

In 1815 Mount Tambora erupted on the Indonesian island of Sumbawa. Dense rock and superheated gases filled the sky, ash fell like snow, and vast quantities of sun-blocking particles circulated the planet, blown by stratospheric winds. By the following year, the Earth had cooled by an average of one degree Celsius sparking extreme weather events across the globe: social breakdown, crop failure, and widespread famine. This period of darkness stretched for three years from 1815–18, and is remembered in Europe as the ‘year without a summer’, but perhaps is better described as the years without a sun.

Year Without a Sun looks at the present through the lens of this historical climate crisis. In sculptural glass and film, the past catastrophe, caused by the eruption of Tambora, is reanimated as an eye through which we can view the environmental precarity of the present. Here, black volcanic sand from Tambora has been melted and shaped into a series of glass optical lenses. In these works, history has been given a form that is both tangible and transparent. Filming through these lenses, Australia’s recently unseasonable wet weather has been documented, mobilising the past to inspect the present.

Two centuries after the eruption of Tambora, humanity once again finds itself in the midst of a climate crisis – but this time it is a catastrophe of its own making. Where Tambora plunged the global temperature by 1 degree, the 21st century will be defined by its contemporary reversal, forecasting at least 1.5 degrees of warming. Marking the end of a three year period of sunless weather during La Niña, *Year Without a Sun* explores Tambora as a climatic case study, lens, and urgent warning.

Anna May Kirk is a multidisciplinary artist based on Gadigal land, Sydney. Kirk makes tangible the spectral nature of Anthropogenic climate change through sculptural glass, sensory installations, and film. From shifts in planetary weather patterns to microscopic chemical changes, her immersive works grapple with the many processes of environmental transformation that act upon temporal and geographic scales beyond the human sensorium. Kirk takes a research-based approach referencing past and contemporary moments of climate change, historical weather instrumentation, and aesthetics of the Romantic Sublime. Often utilising scent in her work, Kirk prioritises the non-ocular senses to involve the audience’s body as a sensitive instrument for encountering atmospheres of change. Her artworks act as conduits through which the intangible can become visible, employing materials that are porous to their changing environments, such as the crystallising 19th-century chemical composition of a storm glass, oxidizing copper, and glass. Kirk’s practice endeavors to facilitate corporeal encounters with the immaterial nature of climate change, producing new manifestations of our molten planetary condition.

Gallery 1
Conversion
EO Gill

Gallery 3
The Visible Invisible
Yvette Hamilton

Gallery 4
A Leakage of Wholes (iterations)
Betty Russ

firstdraft
gadigal land
13–17 riley street
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firstdraft.org.au

we acknowledge and pay respect to the gadigal people of the eora nation, the traditional owners of the land on which firstdraft is built and operates.

firstdraft is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW; and assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.



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Year Without a Sun

Anna May Kirk

Artworks (clockwise from left)

For sales enquiries, please
email anna-kirk@hotmail.com

Mountain Torch, 2023

volcanic sand from Mount Tambora,
glass, LED light
∅ 35 × 0.6 cm

Year Without a Sun (lens), 2023

volcanic sand from Mount Tambora,
glass, LED light
∅ 10 × 0.3 cm

Year Without a Sun, 2023

volcanic sand from Mount Tambora,
glass lens (∅ 65 × 1 cm), mild steel frame,
projector, circular projection screen (∅ 152 cm),
video, 14 minutes 35 seconds

The artist would like to thank Ben Edols, Katie Ann Houghton, Hugo Curtis, Canberra Glassworks, Jack Lanagan Dunbar, Noah Bennett, and Gillian Kayrooz.

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