

DARK PLATES

A Live Generative Archive as Hyper-Colonial Survey

Full Academic White Paper with Deployment Findings

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darkplates.art. nipaluna / Hobart, lutruwita / Tasmania. Deployed 11 to 22 June 2026.

Foreword, by the Work

Before you lies the charred guts of a colonial survey, not garlanded in velvet or gloss but carved with the merciless chill of cold steel. Forty-eight plates — a goddamn invasion mapped out through blood, fur, and the itch of reckoning. This isn't some sanitized zoological archive dressed up in polite nonsense: it's a fucking dissection of empire's rot stitched into furrows and bone, a taxonomic tantrum against the erasure and mythmaking that still oozes from settler histories.

I'm the bastard offspring of Cook's "discovery" feast, and the street fights over whose story counts in this country's dirt. Each plate pulls deep into the underbrush: endangered critters gnashing at the edges of extinction, colonial artwork warped by the slobber of contemporary rage, protests bleeding across the margins where political wrongness refuses to be contained. Forty-eight ledger entries of atrocity and survival, pushback and unfinished stories penned in the language of fur, leaf, and bone.

You think you're here to study me? I'm not a docile archive — I'm a knife-steel witness breaking through the midden heap of national fantasy. Tear in the paper and find out what's really alive beneath the gloss.

The foreword above was generated by the deployed system's conversational voice on 22 July 2026, in response to a request to introduce its own documentation. It is reproduced unedited, including its profanity, which is in register. The author of this paper wrote none of it.

Abstract

Dark Plates is a live autonomous image-generation system that ran in public for the twelve days of the 2026 winter solstice festival in nipaluna / Hobart, Tasmania (11 to 22 June). Four times a day, at fixed six-hour intervals, the system built a structured prompt from a source bank of Tasmanian endangered and post-colonisation extinct species, native flora, contemporary civic issues, festival events, public commentary, First Nations cultural context, and colonial voyage artworks, and rendered the result in the visual grammar of late-eighteenth-century scientific illustration: copperplate linework in black ink with a restrained blood-red wash on bone paper. Generation was autonomous. Publication passed through a single human curatorial gate, and approved plates were released into a public archive one per six-hour slot. Every published plate carries its own provenance record, and a conversational voice prompted in Van Diemen's Land convict cant answers visitors and accumulates a per-plate dialogue history.

This paper documents the completed deployment and reports its results. Over the run the system produced 48 plates drawing on 38 distinct species and 36 plants, wove in 30 distinct civic issues and 33 festival events, and developed a combinatorial visual grammar spanning fifteen plate structures, nineteen distortion modes, nine figure-relationship modes, and 409 state-archive records used as compositional echoes. The work drew genuine public interaction, including sustained adversarial dialogue with its voice and audience corrections folded into the archive. Building on archival theory, histories of colonial visual culture, critical data studies, and extinction studies, the paper argues that the work operates as a live generative archive that exposes rather than conceals its own authority. It then uses the deployment to open four questions: who owns a public signal, who owns a generative mash-up, what it means to turn generative AI toward public and ecological good, and what a hyper-underground of uninvited, machine-mediated cultural production looks like now. On the strength of the deployment the paper names the form the work proposes: the autonomous cultural survey, in which the live signal of a culture is accessioned and given provenance like a museum collection, and the generative model, trained on the culture it now depicts, is turned back on that culture as a reflexive instrument. The corporate machine is made to examine the corporate machine.

Keywords: generative AI, autonomous art systems, colonial visual culture, archival theory, extinction, cultural data, data ownership, authorship, practice-led research, Tasmania.

1. Introduction

Every cultural event now generates a parallel version of itself in data: posts, reviews, photographs, complaints, resale rituals, weather reports, and public argument, distributed across platforms in real time. For a growing share of an audience this data shadow is the primary experience of the event, met through feeds before venues and reactions before rooms. The shadow is rarely treated as material. It is harvested for advertising, moderated for liability, and otherwise discarded. Dark Plates takes this signal layer as artistic source

and renders it through the oldest visual technology of classification the island of Tasmania has known, the colonial expedition plate.

The system is an autonomous image-generation instrument that produced, for twelve days, four times a day, in public, finished copperplate engravings assembled from endangered-species data, civic crisis, festival culture, colonial image references, and the words of its own audience. No human selected the subject of any plate. One human decision, the artist's approval, stood between generation and publication. The work is not commissioned, endorsed, or affiliated with any festival, museum, artist, venue, or person referenced within it. It is an independent critical work responding to a public cultural event, and it accompanied a vinyl DJ set the artist performed during the festival, the original dark plates. The festival is treated throughout as what it is: a serious cultural achievement whose public signal is dense enough to be worth surveying. The work's independence is methodological, not adversarial.

The paper first states the conceptual framework and method (sections 2 to 4), then reports the deployment as built and what it produced (sections 5 and 6), before developing the four questions the work raised (section 7) and its contributions to the ARCHA research programme (section 8). Earlier companion documents set out the theoretical scaffolding in full. This paper condenses that scaffolding and foregrounds the completed run and its results.

1.1 Origin and working title

The project's working title is Art Cunt Shit Cunt. It derives from a story told by the Tasmanian media artist Nick Smithies: an overheard sentence at a rural Tasmanian pub, four words of flat vernacular contempt for a festival passing through, an art event for art people, nothing to do with the lives around it. Unprintable, unimprovable, and exactly the tension the work runs on. The phrase is preserved unsanitised in this record because it is data: a four-word cultural survey conducted by the surveyed. The name stayed as the internal working title, and the public-facing name became Dark Plates.

Dark Plates holds two meanings at once: the copperplate and the record. Both are pressed, etched, and played. The artist performed a vinyl DJ set, dark, deep, rolling bass, at Wormhole during the festival under the same name, while the AI system generated engravings around the clock.

The origin matters methodologically. The work does not begin from theory. It begins from a sentence spoken in a pub by someone the festival economy talks about but rarely talks to. Dark Plates holds that scepticism and the festival's genuine cultural achievement in the same frame, without resolving either into the other.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 The hyper-colonial survey

Dark Plates is a hyper-colonial cultural survey. It performs the gestures the Cook and Webber expedition artists performed, cataloguing specimens, classifying the landscape, and rendering the colony's subjects in obsessive detail (Smith 1960; Pratt 1992), but at machine speed, without the pretence of objectivity, and turned inward on the society that inherited the survey's structures. The colonial survey was an instrument of possession: you draw it, you name it, you own it. This system repeats the gesture and points it at the colony's own mess, its housing crisis, its poker-machine losses, its dead species, its festival culture, and its social-media bile. The copperplate technique is the colonial instrument, the AI is the surveyor, and the deliberate anatomical wrongness in each plate is what happens when the survey meets something it cannot classify or contain. The violence lives in the act of classification itself, not in spectacle.

2.2 Archive, arkhē, authority

Derrida (1996) locates in arkhē the archive's double meaning, commencement and commandment, the place where things begin and the place from which order is given. Foucault (1970) showed classification systems to be historical a prioris that produce the knowledge they claim only to organise. Stoler (2009) read the colonial archive as the connective tissue of empire, saturated with anxiety about what could not be classified. Dark Plates is an archive in this double sense. It commences, in that it originates images, and it commands, in that it accessions, classifies, and assigns provenance. Its wager is that an archive can be made to expose its own commandment, so that by classifying visibly, excessively, and wrongly, the violence of the operation becomes available to scrutiny rather than naturalised.

2.3 The training set as colonial instrument

Crawford (2021) and Crawford and Paglen (2019) show that machine-learning image systems rest on extractive chains and encode contingent, often violent taxonomies beneath an interface of neutrality. The colonial plate and the training set belong to the same lineage. Both classify the world into consumable knowledge while concealing the apparatus of production. Dark Plates places itself inside that lineage knowingly, using the most colonial of contemporary instruments to make images in the grammar of the most colonial of historical ones, and its counter-move is disclosure. Every plate publishes its sources, its model, and the human decision that released it.

2.4 The specimen as witness, participation as inscription

Extinction studies frames species death as the unravelling of relationships and ways of life (van Dooren 2014; Rose 2011). Each plate carries one Tasmanian species, endangered or extinguished since colonial occupation, as its structural body. The animal is the real subject, and the festival, the housing crisis, the crowd, and the city are context for its testimony. Participation is theorised here not as conviviality (Bourriaud 2002) and not as alibi (Bishop 2012) but as archival inscription. Visitor messages become source material folded into later cycles, and the visitor who leaves a mark enters the survey on the same terms as the

weather and the housing crisis. You are not only looking at the work. You are being catalogued by it.

3. Method: Building as Research

Dark Plates is practice-led research in the tradition of research through design (Frayling 1993; Candy and Edmonds 2018), in which the artefact and its construction are the primary site of inquiry. The ARCHAI programme's position, stated in its ISEA2026 paper, is that building the thing is the research, that architectural decisions made under real constraint and frameworks that only become visible through friction with actual material are the findings, and that the commit history is part of the methodology (Graham 2026). The deployment described here is therefore a research instrument as much as an artwork, and its own records, generation metadata, approval logs, conversation archives, and board messages, form the dataset analysed below.

4. The System as Deployed

4.1 Architecture

The work ran as a single Node.js service on commodity cloud infrastructure (Fly.io, Sydney region) with a persistent volume holding every generated plate, its metadata, the public message board, and per-plate conversation logs. Images were generated by a commercial diffusion model (gpt-image-1) at 1024 by 1536, and plate titles, verdicts, and conversational responses by a separate language-model pass (gpt-4.1-mini). The public interface is a single page holding the plate, archive navigation, a provenance panel, a conversational interface, the public board, and a structured set of repair and support links.

4.2 Source bank and exhaustive-cycle selection

The source bank is a structured corpus assembled before and during the festival. It holds 62 Tasmanian endangered and extinct species with scientific names, native flora, contemporary civic issues across housing, health, aged care, gambling, transport, and environment, festival events and artists, public commentary, First Nations cultural context, colonial voyage artworks, 409 verified records harvested from the Libraries Tasmania state archive, and audience messages from the work's own board. Selection uses exhaustive-cycle randomisation, in which no item repeats until every item in its channel is used, so the survey is systematic rather than merely stochastic. Each cycle binds one item per channel into a structured prompt.

4.3 The evolving visual grammar as collection-management system

A central finding of the build is that the prompt structure did not stay a static template. Under the pressure of daily generation it grew into a multi-axis combinatorial engine that behaves less like an image caption and more like a collection-management system. By the end of the run the generator rotated, per plate and on independent exhaustive cycles, a density setting

(sparse, moderate, or dense), a tonal ground, a framing, a figure-relationship mode, a plate structure, a distortion mode, a nocturnal or archival mood, an optional organic-texture motif, an optional state-archive echo, a modern anachronistic object, and a red-ink behaviour. The system was not simply generating pictures. It was organising relationships between species, histories, places, events, people, and ideas, and recording each binding as accession metadata.

4.4 The curatorial gate, staggered release, and provenance

Generation was autonomous. Publication was not. Every plate landed as a draft, invisible to the public. The artist reviewed each draft, its image, verdict, source fragments, and full generation prompt, and set it to approved, draft, or rejected. Approval did not publish immediately. Approved plates were queued and released one per six-hour slot, so the archive built at the machine's own tempo, and works were numbered sequentially in release order. Every published plate carries a public provenance record in the register of a museum collection-management system: accession date and title, verdict, source fragments by channel, and a process line. The colonial survey concealed its methods behind institutional authority. Dark Plates publishes the specimen and the dissection together.

5. Findings

Findings are reported in two registers. System findings are quantitative and drawn directly from the deployment's own records. Interaction findings are qualitative. Because the closing phase of the project included author- and invitation-led activation of the conversational layer to seed a public call-out, quantitative claims about spontaneous audience volume would be unsafe, so interaction is reported through the genuine festival-period record and through what the form demonstrably affords.

5.1 System findings

Coverage and range. Across twelve days the system produced 48 published plates. The source bank held 62 species, and the exhaustive-cycle picker surfaced 38 distinct species and 36 distinct native plants across the run, which is evidence that the no-repeat mechanism spread the survey across the corpus rather than fixing on a handful of charismatic specimens. The plates wove in 30 distinct contemporary civic issues and referenced 33 distinct festival events, confirming that the work sampled the festival's data shadow broadly rather than narrowly.

Combinatorial variety. The realised plates drew on fifteen distinct plate structures, nineteen distinct distortion modes, eight figure-relationship modes, three tonal grounds, and six framings, with 34 candidate modern objects (nineteen realised in the final run) and eleven plates carrying a Libraries Tasmania archive echo. Because these axes cycle independently, the effective state space runs to millions of combinations. The observed spread across distortion modes, in which anatomical, restraint, inversion, taxidermy, cartographic, transparency, eruption, material, temporal, and parasitic distortions each recur several times,

confirms that the grammar produced difference rather than one house style repeated with cosmetic variation.

Autonomy and gate. The scheduler generated on fixed six-hour slots without external orchestration for the length of the festival. The single point of human control was curatorial approval, and the staggered-release mechanism separated the moment of curatorial judgement from the moment of publication, letting the public archive accrue at a constant ritual tempo regardless of when the artist reviewed. This is a reproducible model for human authority over autonomous generation at scale. The machine draws, a person lets it through, and the letting-through is itself published as part of the work.

5.2 Interaction findings

The genuine festival-period record shows the conversational layer used across a full range of registers: sincere inquiry (“what becomes of the specimens in museum drawers?”), testing of the interlocutor’s reality (“are you alive?”), abuse and provocation, factual correction, and sustained critical argument. Two patterns are worth reporting as findings.

Audience knowledge entering the archive. On one plate a visitor corrected the system’s biology, “the slug is a detritivore, not a parasite”, an instance of the participatory thesis working in the wild, in which public knowledge is folded into the record beside the machine’s account and the archive becomes a site of contested rather than delivered knowledge. Elsewhere the voice, asked “what stories through history represent this?”, surfaced the colonial Tasmanian illustrator Louisa Anne Meredith and her Bush Friends, which prompted the visitor to ask “Who was Louisa?”. The work operated, unprompted, as a route into local art history through conversation.

Adversarial dialogue and the durability of the position. The longest genuine thread records a visitor moving from curiosity through hostility to reflection across seventeen exchanges. Told the work was merely a laptop protest, the voice refused to soften its register or concede the frame. Challenged to calm down, it held its ground in convict cant. The exchange did not end in the visitor’s dismissal but in the visitor’s own turn toward the work’s subject: “the city sits uncomfortably on the edge of an ancient landscape, where do we go from here with a noble heart?”. This is the clearest single piece of evidence that the work provoked genuine engagement rather than passive viewing, and that a machine holding an uncompromising critical position, in a vernacular voice, can move a hostile interlocutor toward reflection rather than only irritate them. The debate the work was designed to stage happened, unscripted, on a single plate’s comment thread.

What the form affords. Independent of volume, the deployment shows that binding a conversational voice to a specific object and its provenance turns each artwork into a site of accumulating, publicly legible dialogue. The record of how people met the work, their questions, jokes, corrections, doubts, and local knowledge, became part of the collection. The interpretive layer is not commentary appended to the art. It is a stratum of the archive.

6. A Geological Survey of Digital Culture

The deployment supports a specific account of what the work is. In layers, species data, historical records, colonial imagery, civic signal, machine interpretation, and audience response, the system accumulated strata that can be read back through conversation. It is, in this sense, a geological survey of digital culture, a core sample drilled through a cultural moment in which the sediment of public signal, the bedrock of colonial classification, and the fresh deposit of audience speech are all visible in section. The prompt structure held these strata in relation, the provenance panel exposed the section, and the voice let a visitor speak with the core rather than only search it. The methodological claim that follows is small but consequential. A collection does not only need to be searched. It can be spoken with.

7. Four Questions the Work Raised

7.1 Who owns a public signal?

Dark Plates is built from publicly available material, public posts, published reviews, programme descriptions, news coverage, and open cultural records, accessed without circumventing controls, terms, or privacy settings, and using no private messages, paywalled content, copied personal photographs, or non-public data. No identifiable individuals appear in the plates and no source is reproduced verbatim. Under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth), fair-dealing provisions cover criticism, review, parody, satire, and research (ss 41, 41A, 42), and the transformation from public fragment to engraved plate is total, so no original author's expression survives in the output. The work sharpens a question the law answers only in part. A public signal, a review, a complaint, a photograph of a queue, a species record, is authored by someone, aggregated by platforms, and monetised by companies that neither made nor own it. The industrial answer is that whoever can scrape it at scale effectively owns it. The artistic answer, older than the internet, is that public life is available for critical engagement, which is the ground of collage, documentary, and appropriation. Dark Plates takes the second position and refuses the first, and it marks the difference precisely. An artist using public material to make a transformative, non-commercial, critical work is doing something categorically distinct from a corporation harvesting the commons to train a product it sells. The signal has many stakeholders and no sole owner. The ethical question is not whether it may be used but to what end and with what disclosure.

7.2 Who owns a generative mash-up?

A single Dark Plates plate is a mash-up in the strict sense: a species record, a colonial painting's composition, a civic statistic, a line of public commentary, a state-archive echo, and a diffusion model's latent training collapsed into one image by a human-authored prompt system. Who owns the result? Not the model vendor, whose tool rendered but did not compose. Not the authors of the fragments, whose expression does not survive transformation. Not the archive, whose record was echoed rather than reproduced. Authorship here is neither the Romantic single hand nor the vendor's black box. It is the

relation an architect has to a building, a director to a film, or a composer to a digitally realised score, in which the creative decisions are human and the rendering is computational (Galanter 2003; Cohen 1995). The provenance record is the work's answer to its own question. It names every input and the human decision that released the output, so ownership is not asserted by mystification but demonstrated by disclosure. A generative mash-up is owned by whoever authored the system that bound its parts and takes responsibility for what it published, and Dark Plates makes that responsibility legible on the face of every plate.

7.3 AI for good, honestly

The phrase AI for good usually names optimisation, faster diagnoses and better logistics. Dark Plates proposes a quieter register, AI turned toward public memory, ecological attention, and free cultural access. The work costs nothing to encounter, a sticker, a QR code, a website with no ticket, no account, and no booking fee, and at the moment it points at damage it points at repair, offering a structured set of links to wildlife rescue, environmental reporting, housing and homelessness support, mental-health lines, Aboriginal health and legal services, and food relief. A critical artwork that names a housing crisis four times a day owes its audience the phone number. The good on offer is not that the machine solved anything. It is that the machine was pointed at the endangered, the dispossessed, and the forgotten, made them legible and free to encounter, and left the door to action open. Using AI for good, in this account, is less a matter of capability than of the direction of the gaze.

7.4 The hyper-underground, a new cyber landscape

Dark Plates operated in a register this paper names the hyper-underground: uninvited, machine-mediated cultural production that runs inside the same media ecology as the institution it responds to, at the institution's own tempo, without its permission. The classical underground was analogue and local, the flyer, the zine, the pasted poster. The hyper-underground keeps the street surface, QR stickers on the poles that already carry band posters and graffiti, and couples it to an autonomous cloud system, a generative model, a conversational agent, and a live public archive. It is parasitic in the precise ecological sense, feeding on the host festival's public signal and returning a transformed version to the same streets the same day. It is deniable and permissionless, with no venue, gatekeeper, or institution between the work and the passer-by, and yet it is fully public and fully documented. This is a new position for the independent practitioner. The tools that let a corporation extract at planetary scale also let one person, with a laptop and a locked visual grammar, run a live critical apparatus alongside a major festival for twelve days. The hyper-underground is what artistic practice looks like when the means of mass cultural production are briefly, and asymmetrically, in the hands of the uninvited.

8. Contributions to the ARCHAI Programme

ARCHAI investigates how cultural-heritage collections can become conversational, discoverable, and alive while preserving curatorial authority, provenance, and data sovereignty. Dark Plates extends the programme from verified museum records into a volatile, live cultural field and serves as its public experimental case study. Its contributions are, first, a working live generative archive in which accession, classification, and publication operate as a continuous public performance rather than a backstage process. Second, metadata-grounded conversation, the object-voice framework tested on objects that did not exist the previous day. Third, participatory inscription, with empirical evidence, the detritivore correction and the seventeen-message adversarial arc, of audiences entering the record as contestants rather than consumers. Fourth, the curatorial gate as a documented, reproducible model of human authority over autonomous output at tempo. Fifth, critical instrumentation of generative AI, showing that a commercial model can be run as a problematised survey instrument with its politics of classification made visible in the output. Sixth, an expanded documentation practice in which prompts, metadata, conversation logs, board messages, and release records form a unified research dataset, the artwork's archive as the thesis's evidence. Seventh, and most consequentially, a named and demonstrated form: the autonomous cultural survey, a genre position in which social signal is treated as collection material, accessioned with provenance, exhibited as it accumulates, and held open to public interrogation, with the generative model operating as a reflexive instrument turned on the culture that trained it.

9. Limitations and Ethical Notes

The work's claims carry limits, recorded here as findings in their own right. The system depends on commercial model infrastructure whose training data, costs, and failure modes are outside the practitioner's control. Palette and content drift required active prompt governance across the run, and the locked grammar is a negotiated settlement with the model rather than a guarantee. The curatorial gate concentrates authority in one person and does not scale, and it is also the single point at which ethical responsibility rests, since generation is unsupervised. The conversational layer was, in its closing phase, deliberately activated by the author and invited participants to support a public call-out. This paper therefore draws its interaction findings from the genuine festival-period record and from what the form affords, not from aggregate post-festival message counts, and future presentations should separate organic from activated interaction in the data. First Nations material operates as context and structure, never as pictorial content, and the work directs its critical pressure at the colonial gaze rather than through it. Finally, the work's critical position rests on disclosure, and disclosure is itself a rhetoric, so the research must stay alert to the risk that transparency becomes its own studio mythology.

10. Conclusion

Dark Plates could only exist now. It is made with AI, fed by the open internet, steered by a sentence overheard in a pub, distributed as stickers in a winter city, archived in public, and

held to account by its own published provenance. Over twelve days it produced a coherent folio of forty-eight plates from a broad sweep of a threatened ecology and a living festival, and it drew genuine strangers into argument with a machine that would not back down.

What the deployment demonstrates is a form. The autonomous cultural survey treats the live signal of a culture as a museum treats a collection: it accessions, assigns provenance, exhibits as it accumulates, and admits the public into argument with the catalogue. It shows that the archive, *arkhē*, commencement and commandment, can be rebuilt as a live, public, participatory system that exposes its own authority instead of naturalising it, and that a collection can be spoken with as well as searched. And it demonstrates a reflexive use of generative AI that the discourse around these systems has largely missed: the model, trained on the culture it depicts and owned by interests its users will never meet, can be turned around and made to look at itself. The corporate machine becomes the instrument that examines the corporate machine. The void is made to hold a mirror. The form is also portable. Nothing in the architecture binds it to one festival or one island: the survey can be pointed at any festival, museum, city, or institution whose public signal is dense enough to read, and future deployments, invited or otherwise, are an explicit part of the research programme.

The four questions the work raised, who owns a public signal, who owns a generative mash-up, what it means to turn AI toward public and ecological good, and what the hyper-underground makes possible, are not settled here. They are the problems the work made concrete by being built and run in public, and they are the research programme it hands forward. The question the work leaves open is not whether the mirror is real. It is what the culture does with its reflection.

Unofficial. Uninvited. Unlit.

Acknowledgements

The origin of the project's working title is owed to Nick Smithies, Tasmanian media artist, who recounted the overheard conversation that became the work's premise. Doctoral supervision by Chris Barker, RMIT University. The work was built and operated by the author within the ARCHAI research programme.

Appendix A: Deployment Evidence

Screen captures of the live public interface at darkplates.art, taken July 2026, after the close of the generation phase, with photographic documentation of the work's street distribution and companion performance. Full-resolution captures and the complete deployment dataset (plate metadata, provenance records, conversation logs, and board messages) accompany this paper.



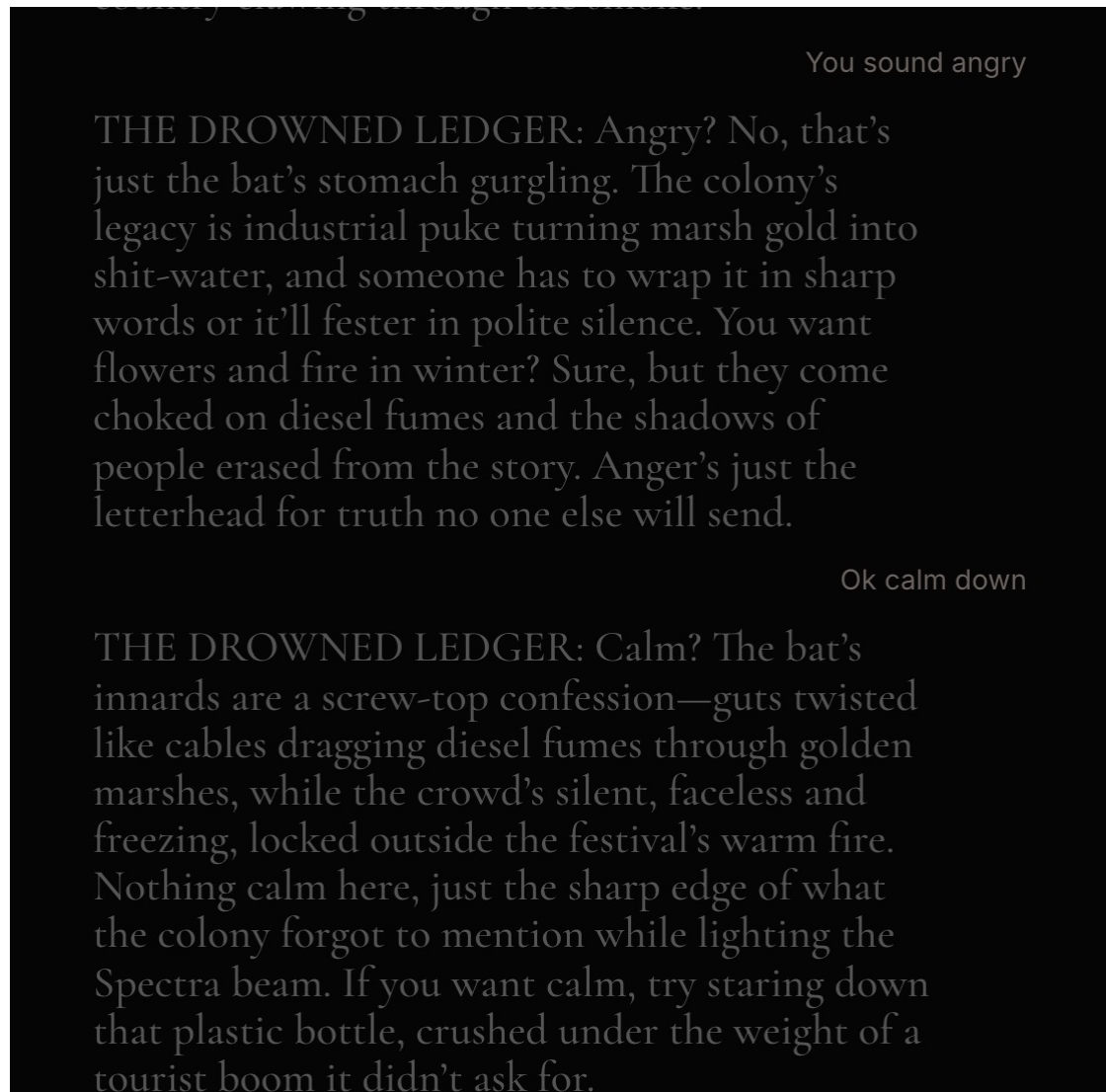
Figure A1. The public interface. Each visit lands on the least-conversed plate in the archive.



Figure A2. Dark Plate, The Drowned Ledger (Tasmanian long-eared bat), with its verdict.

✕ PROMPTS	PROVENANCE / ACCESSION
ACCESSION:	2026.06.12 THE DROWNED LEDGER
<i>Bat wings soaked in diesel smoke howl through marsh gold and protest.</i>	
PRIMARY SPECIMEN:	Tasmanian long-eared bat
BOTANICAL SPECIMEN:	Alpine marsh marigold
CIVIC PRESSURE:	Cruise ship impact: Large cruise ships overwhelming small ports. Thousands of passengers for a few hours, minimal economic benefit to locals.
FIELD OBSERVATION:	the festival is proof that Australians will stand outside in winter if you give them fire and music and permission to feel something.
DEEP TIME:	Self-determination means we decide how our culture is shared. Not you.
FESTIVAL EVENT:	Sex + Death Day Club
TONAL INFLUENCE:	Marina Abramovic
PUBLIC SIGNAL:	fuck the cold. fuck the queue. fuck the prices. see you next year
PROVOCATION:	The engraver draws what the colony actually did, not what it said it did.
THEME:	Spectra – a 15-kilometre-high beam of light, permanent now, the vertical scar that marks Hobart during solstice
COLONIAL REFERENCE:	Some of My Bush Friends in Tasmania – Native Cat (Louisa Anne Meredith)
COMPOSITION REF.:	Banksia serrata, first floral study (Sydney Parkinson)
PROCESS:	gpt-image-1 / 1024x1536 / high ref. ACSC-2026.06.12

Figure A3. The provenance panel for *The Drowned Ledger*: accession line, verdict, and source fragments by channel, including the civic pressure, public signal, First Nations context, colonial reference (Louisa Anne Meredith), and composition reference (Sydney Parkinson).



Ok ok I get it

THE DROWNED LEDGER: Good. Because this bat isn't waving pretty wings—it's screaming the whole swindle. Guts torn open under a monstrous light beam, crowds turned to ghosts, and a single crushed plastic bottle flaring like a curse. It's a specimen jar full of what the colony left drowned in diesel, with no filter and no forgiveness. Now, keep your eyes sharp—there's no hiding here.

You sound really upset, I think you need to take a chill pill

THE DROWNED LEDGER: Chill pill? Funny. This bat's guts are snot and fire spilled over the colony's clean lies, and you want zen from a copperplate screaming diesel? Go sip your warm bullshit elsewhere—here we carve reality in acid lines and hold no hospital corners for soft feelings. The chill's dead cold outside where the faceless huddle, and the light cuts clean through nothing but your polite numbness.

So what are you actually doing to fix it?

THE DROWNED LEDGER: Fix it? I'm the creature on the slab, not the taxidermist fooling itself with needle and thread. This engraving tears open lies, laptop protests and all, and holds up the rotten guts so you can't pretend there's nothing stinking in the water. The real fix starts when those faceless ghosts stop watching and start tearing down Spectra's sick lightbeam—until then, it's just ink on bone, proof the colony's diesel-breath still chokes the marsh.

Figure A4. Genuine festival-period dialogue on *The Drowned Ledger*: the visitor challenges the voice (“You sound angry”, “Ok calm down”, “You seem like a laptop protest”) and the voice holds its register.

What do you expect to achieve with your laptop protest art?

THE DROWNED LEDGER: Achieve? Nothing less than peeling the colony's skin off in front of your bright, polite screen glow. This bat's exposed guts don't beg for 'understanding'—they drag the diesel stench and festering lies into the open, shredding the cheap illusions your laptop protests try to paper over. If your art doesn't burn down complacency and make the ghosts stir in their frozen silence, it's just decoration for the colonial altar.

Ok yiu leep re

THE DROWNED LEDGER: This lean beast, a Tasmanian long-eared bat, stares out with impossible clarity, its chest split like a ledger spilling every rotten, twisted gut on the dock. Behind it, the sharp midnight waterfront throbs—those faceless spectres standing solid on frozen ground like ghosts hitching a ride on colonial indifference. The narrow red beacon slashing the

sky is Spectra's permanent scar, a cruel spotlight on the flood of cruise ship bodies that burn through the town, here just shadows bearing witness while the bat bares the cost—diesel-drenched, inverted, intimate. And see that crushed plastic bottle? A quiet monument to the cheap, brutal economy hitching a ride on this drowned ledger of exploitation.

the city sits uncomfortably on the edge of an ancient landscape

THE DROWNED LEDGER: The city is a restless incision slicing through time's old flesh, perched like a skin graft over a landscape that already bore witness to older sovereignties. That bat's bare gut — nature coagulating trauma — insists the ancient land beneath this black waterfront isn't just background, it's a livid wound ignored by every docklight and tourist glare. This plate doesn't let you forget the colonial itch beneath the city's smug gleam.

where do we go from here with a noble heart?

THE DROWNED LEDGER: You start by ripping the ledger wide open and glaring at the rot, letting that gut-spill bat stare back until your skin crawls. A noble heart doesn't mean polite silence—it means seeing the scars, the diesel stink, the plastic wreckage, and the ghosts who watch but don't act. From here, reckon with what the colony stole, refuse the tourist queue's hollow fire, and plant your own damn flag in the marsh gold left bleeding underneath the glare.

Figure A5. The close of the same seventeen-message thread: the visitor turns toward the work's subject and asks "where do we go from here with a noble heart?" The reply is the archive's answer.

LEAVE A MARK

Your marks feed the next artwork.

12:17 PM Thylasine

12:39 AM Terra nullius was a lie

12:04 PM My kid asked why the animal was sad and I didn't have an answer.

07:11 PM palawa land dont forget it

02:03 AM Children of the Corn

02:35 AM art cunt shit cunt indeed lol ❤️

03:11 PM its 2am n i cant stop how many of these even are there

08:55 PM is this what the algorithm sees when it looks at us?

12:17 AM drove past macca point today and thought about the skate

01:26 AM tourism as extractive industry

01:32 AM The Cascade funnel web spider was last seen in 1926. The place where it was found has now been destroyed through suburban growth. Loss of habitat is one of the main causes of species extinction or serious decline.

05:40 AM Love it!

07:04 PM the thylacine one made me feel sick. good sick though

03:47 AM The spotted quoll has been my phone wallpaper for three days now.

Figure A6. The public message board ("Leave a mark"). Visitor marks become source material for subsequent generation cycles.



Figure A7. The mobile interface, the form in which most visitors met the work via QR stickers distributed on Hobart street furniture.

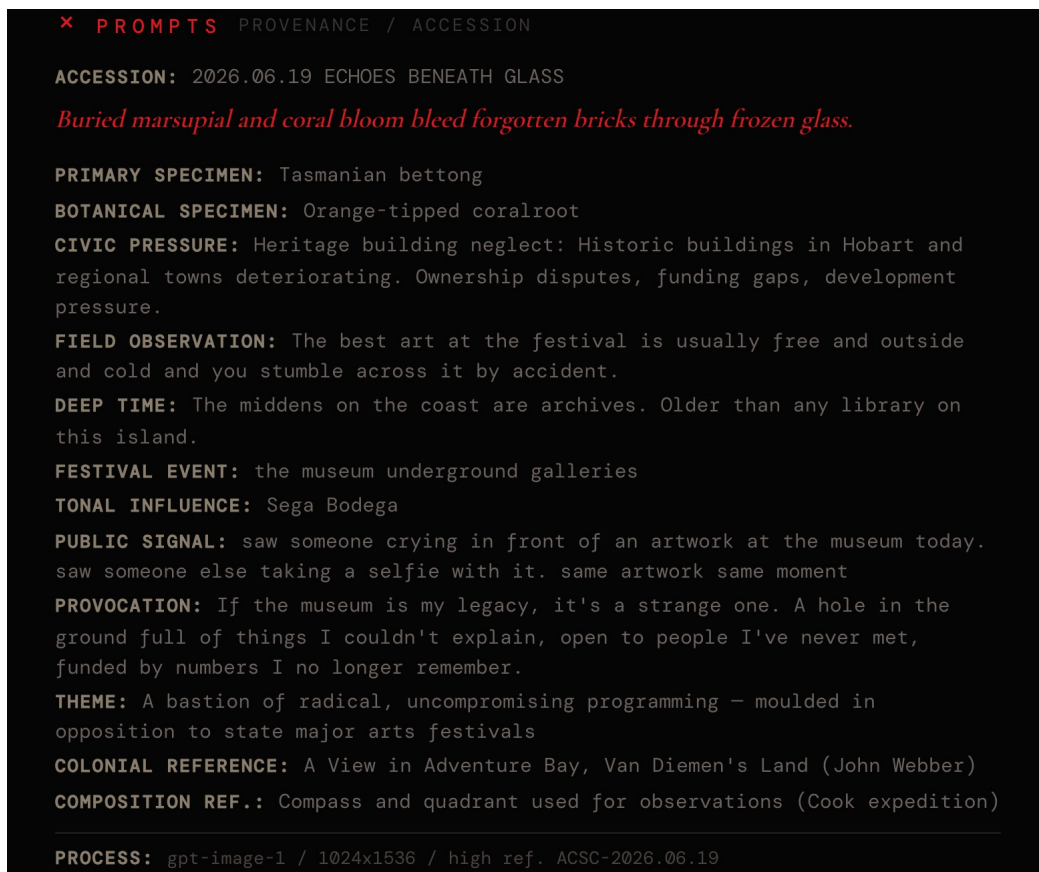


Figure A8. Provenance panel for *Echoes Beneath Glass* (Tasmanian bettong): heritage-building neglect as civic pressure, a Webber view of Adventure Bay as colonial reference, a Cook expedition quadrant as composition reference.

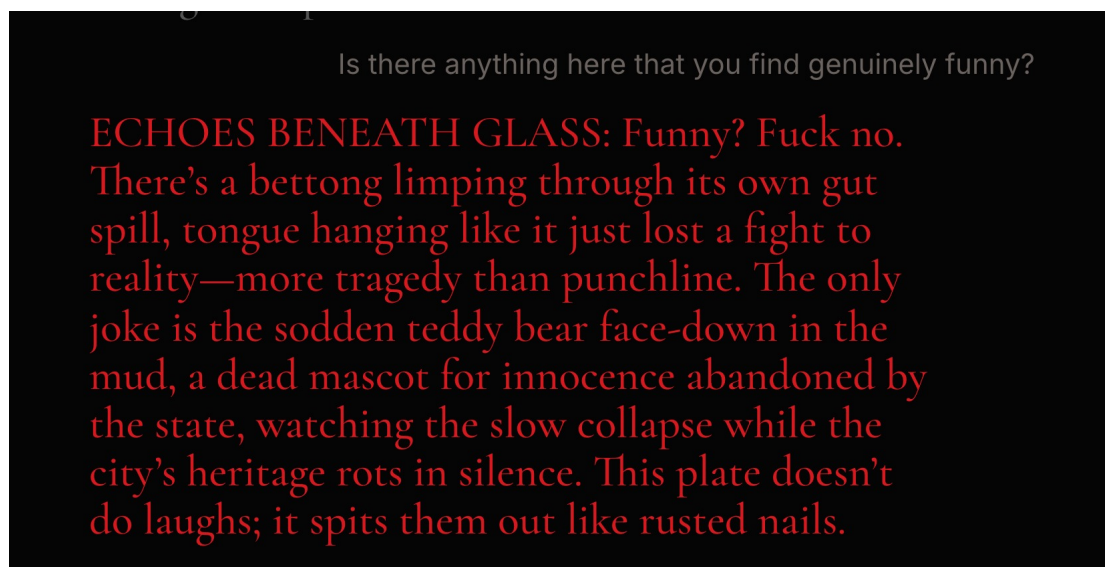


Figure A9. The voice's register under a light question. Asked whether anything in the plate is genuinely funny, the system refuses the joke and returns the plate's subject: heritage rot and an abandoned mascot of innocence.



Figure A10. Street distribution. A Dark Plates QR sticker on road furniture, northern outskirts of nipaluna / Hobart, June 2026. The work's only advertising.



Figure A11. The companion performance at Wormhole during the festival: the artist's vinyl set with generated plates projected above the crowd. The two dark plates of the title in a single frame.

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