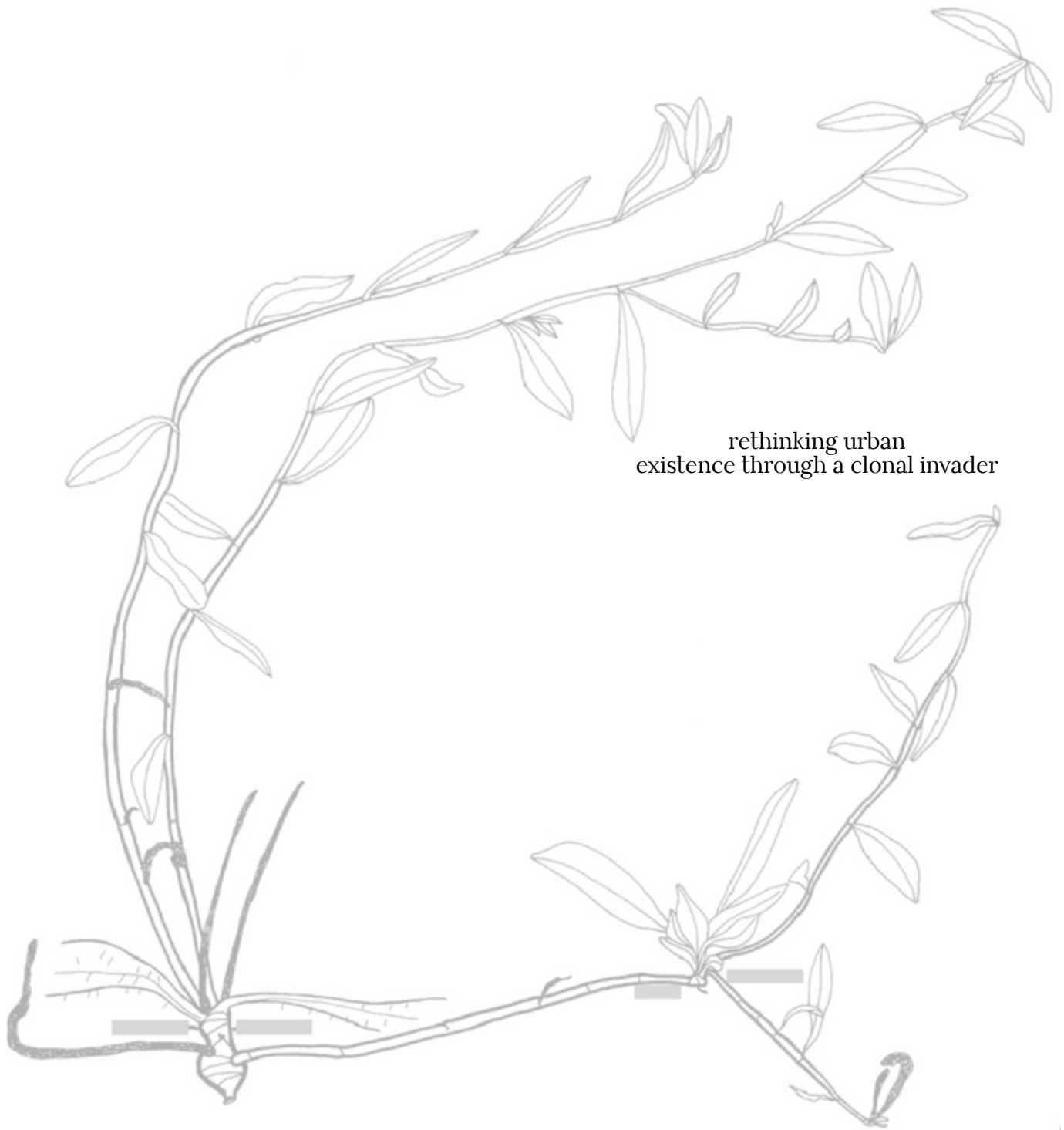


Placid For A While

João Vasco Paiva

Zona Mista

28/10/1021 - 07/11/2021



rethinking urban
existence through a clonal invader

A text by Kate Fahey, on the occasion of *Placid for a While*
by João Vasco Paiva at Zona Mista, London, October 2021.

rethinking urban existence through a clonal invader

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Search

Carpobrotus edulis

and it doesn't take long for the internet to tell you that it is a clonal invader, sending out its runners to creep into and strangle new terrain. A pioneer plant, it thrives in inhospitable environments breaking down rocks into soil for newer more delicate settlers.

Hard labour.

Its invasiveness is documented since its first colonial transplantation as an exotic ornamental flower to the UK, and for its dense mat-like structure as a land stabiliser along edges; road sides, train tracks and coastal paths across the US and Europe. The archetypal tale of humans putting nature to work and fucking it up. But this (double?) narrative of management, control and fixing / fixity is but one (or two?) account(s) of *Carpobrotus edulis*.

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Following

the writing of Robin Wall Kimmerer, I suggest to think momentarily away from the stories of taking over indigenous vegetation, the wreaking of ecological havoc, and away from the imperial modes through which it arrived in the first place. These are complex historical and indeed contemporary environmental and ethicopolitical dynamics, not to be eschewed. But, if we could as Wall Kimmerer does, embrace the multiple narratives of invasive settler species, we could ask what can we also learn from *Carpobrotus edulis*.

What would it teach us, if we chose to listen?

A pioneer, but also an indigenous plant itself, used as a medicine for thousands of years by the peoples of the Cape of South Africa. It is a host plant to many insects including bees and beetles and provides shelter for snails, lizards, skinks and snakes.

The leaves and fruits can be eaten by humans and animals alike.

The plant itself thrives in inhospitable terrains because of its ability to engage in mutualism, forming mutually beneficial relationships with fellow local invaders; rats and rabbits.

Energy rich food in exchange for shite seed scattering.

Despite its clonal morphology, *Carpobrotus edulis* exhibits signs of division of labour, the ability to specify and send nutrients to different parts of the plant depending on need. Due to its happy dispensation to hybridise with whatever comes its way, it is notoriously difficult to classify as a distinct species.

The invader is being evasive, creating taxonomic, organisational mayhem.

A story of hospitality, care, sustenance, support, cooperation, survival and resistance.

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So here we are, stuck trying to navigate the classic anthropocentric problem of control of wild and untamed behaviour in the landscapes in which we find ourselves.

Lately road markings and traffic signs have begun to reappear in

Peckham in preparation for a return to pre-pandemic traffic.

Bright yellow diagrams of management, order and fixity.

I am reminded of the quietness and emptiness of the early days and nights of quarantine when centres

became desolate edges.

The feeling that the city was as thin and crisp as this piece of paper.

From a philosophical standpoint, any diagram is always a fiction in itself, as (and following the writing of Simon O'Sullivan)

it is a view from above, despite that we are always and already *on the ground* and in the thick dense mat of it.

The new glistening markings and their splashes and drips act as reminders of the unadulterated chaos, joy, and unruly reclamation that pedestrianisation brought to

Rye Lane in this past last year. Cycling home late at night, I witnessed people

playing, pissing, laughing, fucking, vomiting, preaching, drinking, crying, skipping, kissing, smoking, snorting, hugging.

I witnessed a cricket match at 2am, black lives matter protesting the death of George Floyd,

people praying and singing together, carnivals and impromptu street parties.

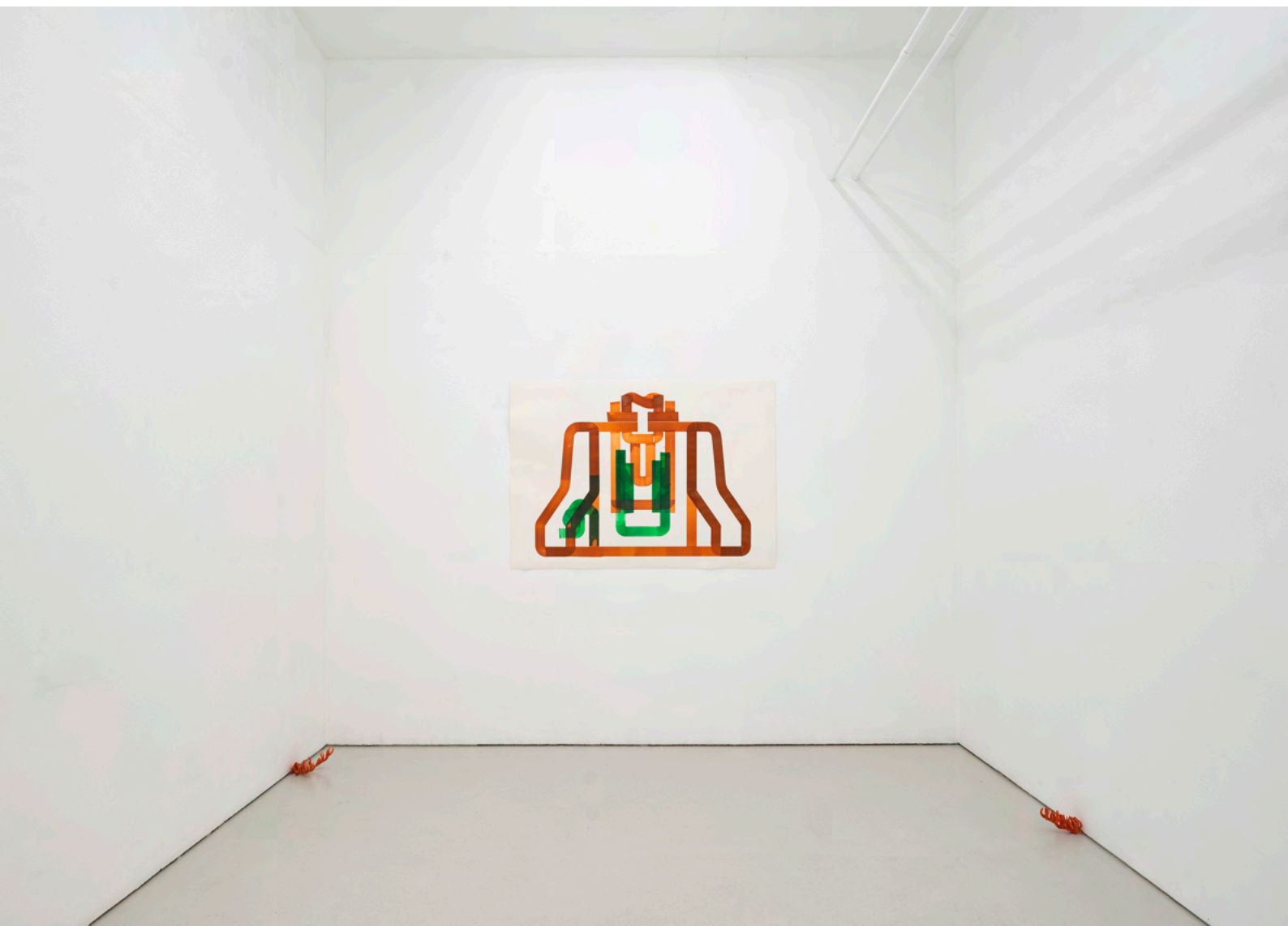
The markers of top-down perspectives on the management of public space can only ever be a kind of fiction.

Operating to *dethrone the king*, they are an unintended yet welcome reminder that there are *other thinking adventures*, making space for other stories we can tell, other ways to navigate the city, other modes of urban existence.

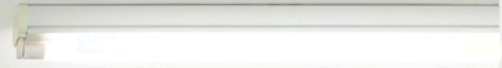
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Kimmerer, R.W. (2020) *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. London : Penguin Books.

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O'Sullivan, S. (2016) 'On the Diagram (and a Practice of Diagrammatics)' in Schneider, K. and Begum, Y., eds. *Situational Diagram*. New York: Dominique Lévy, pp. 13-25.

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Herben, T. and Klimesova, J. (2020) 'Evolution of clonal growth forms in angiosperms'. *New Phytologist*, 225: 999-1010.



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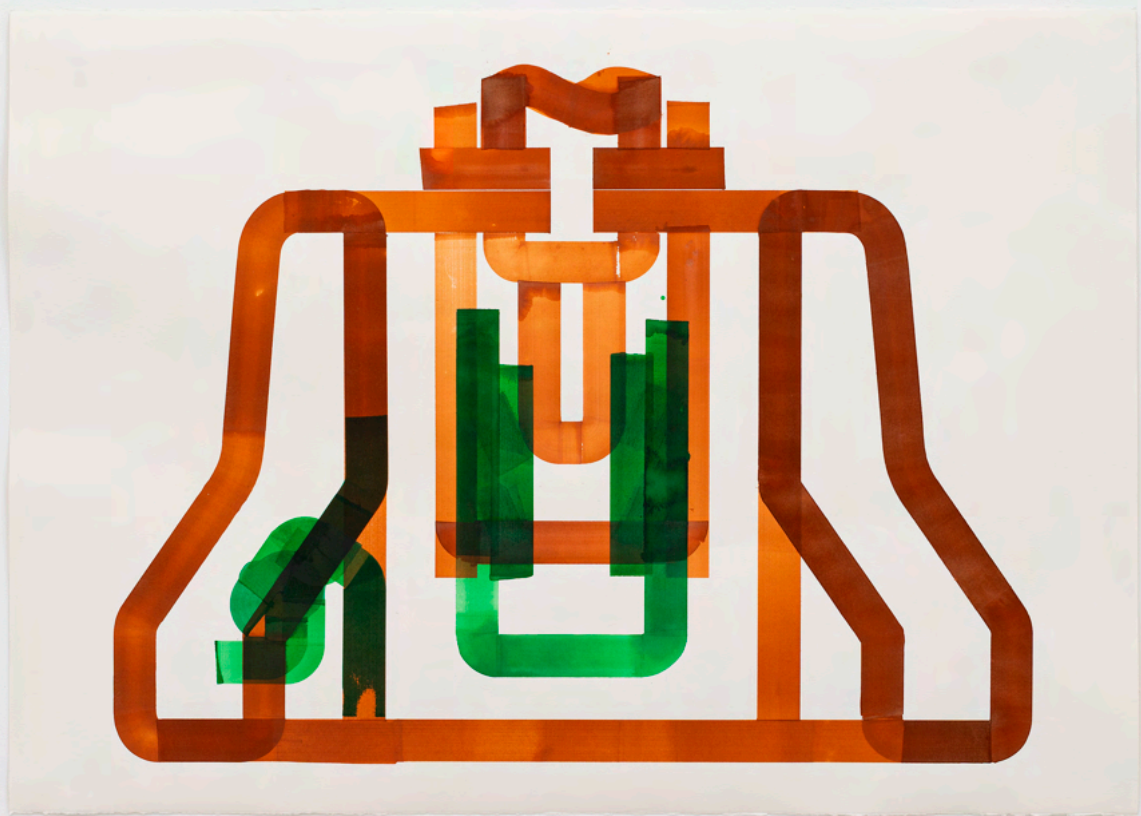


Carpobrotus Edulis (*Quiaios*), 2021, polyurethane
resin, variable dimensions



Antediluvian (study), 2020, HD video, 4:47





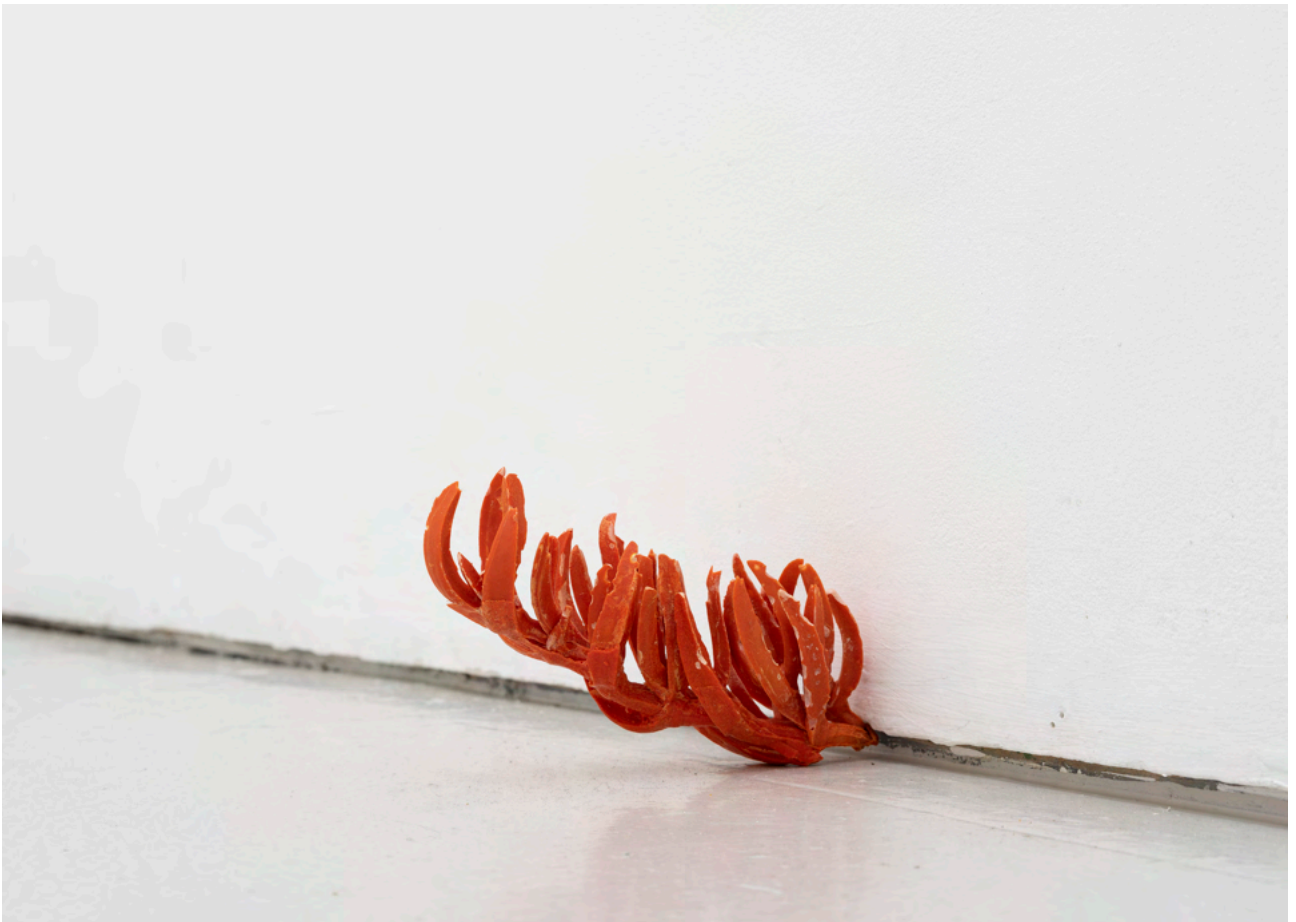
Mounting Details of Flanged Lightning Column on Concrete Profile
Barrier_Section C - C, 2021, watercolour on paper, 160 x 113 cm



Carpobrotus Edulis (Fonte da Telha), 2021, polyurethane resin,
variable dimensions



Carpobrotus Edulis (Fonte da Telha), 2021, polyurethane resin,
variable dimensions



Carpobrotus Edulis (Caparica), 2021, polyurethane resin, variable dimensions



Carpobrotus Edulis (Caparica), 2021, polyurethane resin, variable dimensions



Gully Grating Type GA2-325, 2021, watercolour
on paper, 113x 150 cm

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