This work was originally published in Sydney Review of Books https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/writer/alexandra-crosby/

Sydney Review of Books

ESSAY: CLARE BRITTON & ALEXANDRA CROSBY

Walking Wolli Creek

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In this iterative writing and walking project, we have been making space to ask questions of each other about caring for Country, to share conversations about climate change, and to remind ourselves of the love that keeps us present. We start with an anecdote, usually shared while walking together on Gadigal/Bidgigal Land along the Cooks River; we live on either side of the river and have been walking together for many years. We take turns both to propose prompts for writing and directions for our walks responding to what we've encounteredmangroves, casuarinas, or for this essay, dingoes. Our walks in the catchment have also included following <u>Papaya, Banana and Dragonfruit Trees</u> through Marrickville and rowing and walking the river.

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Clare Britton: The entrance to Girrahween Park is marked by a rusty panel embedded into hefty blocks of Hawkesbury sandstone. My grandmother was born in Slovenia, where they have granite mountains and bright green trees. Old castles in Slovenia are built out of the rocks they sit on and look like they are growing out of the mountains. I think about those buildings when I walk around Earlwood and see places built in sandstone. According to our last census most people in Earlwood have Greek ancestry. Memories of Greece are legible in the olive trees planted in the nature strips, the columns in the architecture and, best of all, a stained-glass double front door with the Acropolis on one side and the Sydney Opera House on the other.



Rain in the catchment 2022. Photo: Clare Britton.

This is Bidgigal Land. Earlwood is in the Canterbury Bankstown Local Government Area and under strict COVID lockdown orders. I've walked this loop for long enough that there are passing strangers I now recognise; during lockdown I've walked almost every day with M and

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More rain in the catchment 2022. Photo: Clare Britton.

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Descending into the bushland, spiky green grass – lomandra – 'council grass' is abundant. Long green blades stretch out from a central base folding when gravity becomes too much. The dirt track meanders off into the distance. There's a railway line nearby which, like this track, follows Wolli Creek along the bottom of the valley. The rocks climb up next to me. The valley is often in the shade, so the sandstone has moss and lichen growing on it. I am sure a more trained eye than mine could make sense of the tangle of weeds rolling down to the creek. Every time I walk here with someone new, I see new things and I find there are questions I can't answer. When was that built? What's this plant called? Who was this named after? I hadn't paid attention to the sewage system that follows the creek until I went walking with F, who teaches and researches hydrology. I took my friend who is a sound artist for a walk while the colony of bats were having a high decibel orgy.

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collaborative practice, landscapes, performance and image making.

Essays by Clare Britton →



Alexandra Crosby

Alexandra Crosby is an Associate Professor of Design at the University of Technology Sydney.... <u>Essays by Alexandra Crosby →</u>

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