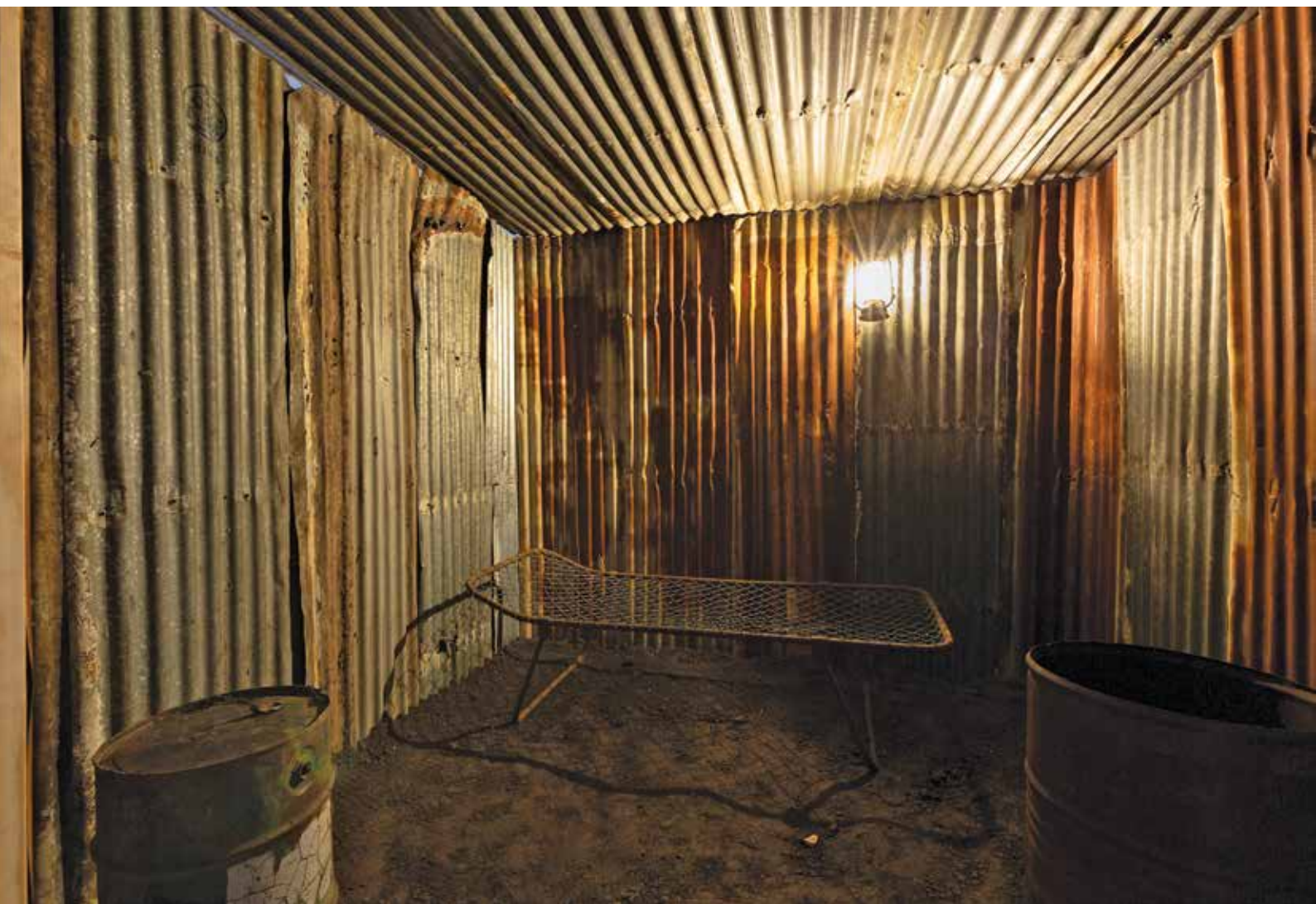


# STUDIO presents: In Your House

## Archie Moore and Tamsen Hopkinson in conversation

All images:  
**Archie Moore**  
*Dwelling (Victorian Issue)*, 2022  
presented at Gertrude  
Contemporary, 2022  
Photo: Christian Capurro  
All images courtesy of  
Gertrude Contemporary



*Dwelling (Victorian Issue)* (2022) at Gertrude Contemporary, is the fourth iteration of artist Archie Moore's large-scale installation *Dwelling*. Archie (Kamilaroi/Bigambul) was born in Tara in 1970, 171 kilometres northwest of Toowoomba. He currently lives in Ngudooroo (Lamb Island) QLD where this conversation took place. *Dwelling (Victorian Issue)* is a recreation of Archie's childhood home and considers ideas of archaic residue, time travel, constructed narratives, and memory. His practice is embedded in Aboriginal politics and the wider ramifications of racism.

**Tamsen Hopkinson**\_\_Thanks for having us in your home Archie. Do you enjoy living in Ngudooroo?

**Archie Moore**\_\_It's a lot better than being in the inner city. It's quiet and relaxing, the air is cleaner, there's more space. I was living in a one-bedroom unit with my partner in Red Hill for a few years. We were also spurred on by the COVID pandemic to move as a lot of people have been. They say a lot of people are moving out of cities into more regional areas.

**TH**\_\_Do you work from your studio here too?

**AM**\_\_I don't really have a studio. I've never really worked that way except when I was at university. I usually have an idea in response to the rationale of the exhibition that someone invites me into. I'll start by looking at the history of the place where the exhibition is going to be held. I think about materials and medium, then come up with the idea. Someone else might make the work which I do quite often so I haven't really needed studio space.

**TH**\_\_You are currently showing *Dwelling (Victorian Issue)* at Gertrude Contemporary, work you have shown before

multiple times. What's it been like showing this work for the first time in Narrm for you personally?

**AM**\_\_The one in Narrm was the fourth iteration of the house show, the first two were in a house and the other two in galleries. There is an agenda to the show, to put some personal history information out and have people respond to me or contact me if they know of anything which actually happened with the show in West End. I have some people in Narrm connected with my father's side that could possibly contact me. I'd like to show the work in other capital cities as well.

*I play at night in your house*

*I live another life*

*Pretending to swim in your house<sup>1</sup>*

**TH**\_\_Your show utilises physical space and scale in an interesting way. You've shifted the space to feel more domestic but there are direct references to the architecture of the gallery. It's a strange in-between.

**AM**\_\_A lot of people told me about their own memories and objects in the exhibition that remind them of their own home or their grandparent's home or something like that. A lot of Aboriginal people have a strong reaction to the corrugated iron and being inside the hut.

**TH**\_\_There is an element of choose your own adventure walking through your show. I personally found it emotional and harrowing walking through the space but there are some funny little jokes throughout the exhibition, like stickers and the collection of books on the shelf...

**AM**\_\_It's kind of a jokey thing because we never had much money. We didn't have a TV all the time because

we couldn't afford one—sometimes we had small black and white TV. A sticker was some kind of decoration or something fun to do, to stick something somewhere even if it was banal—like a business's name and phone number.

I used television, books, and music as escapism a lot of the time. I didn't associate with people much. I didn't really have friends—I mean I had a couple of friends, but I didn't feel like I needed them. I lived in a small country town and there was a lot of racism so you didn't feel like you were part of the town anyway. I stayed home and did lots of drawings and read books. I also watched a lot of TV. The shows playing on the TV in the exhibition are the shows I can remember. I also included things from those shows that I probably wouldn't have noticed when I was younger, racial profiling and things that would have got into my head subconsciously. There is a *Goodies* episode, a comedy show from England, where they travel to Australia to capture Rolf Harris for their celebrity Safari Park [laughs]. One of the Goodies says 'I don't want to go to Australia, it's full of Abos and dingoes.' That reinforced what I thought about Aboriginal people and what other people were saying because I didn't really have any other support from Aboriginal people to tell me otherwise. I grew up pretty ashamed and embarrassed about it.

**TH\_**As a viewer it feels like you are piecing things together and navigating the gaps between objects. What is the significance of these objects for you?

**AM\_**Objects have an aura about them and people have their own memories and emotional attachment to them, especially trinkets. Some of the objects are actual things that my mother had in her room like the golden swans and the cabinet. There is quite a bit in there from my teenage years—the drawings and the magazines I used to read. The viewfinder in the show is something I remember

having as a child. You get these slides of marine life or animals or whatever—fantasy things, a space scene or something. You can send your digital files away through this website and they make the slide for you so I sent in family photos. There are photos of my mother and my grandmother and photos I recently acquired of my father and his wife from 1939, new images for me that I've never seen before. The viewfinder is literally looking into the past and objects from the past—a form of time travel.

The things you can do these days with the internet and information is amazing. My father, who is long buried, can resurface digitally, he can be uploaded somewhere. I got some files from the Department of Veteran Affairs recently, some medical reports about my father from his war service, which told me something else about him, like his mental health... Might explain my own mental health [laughs].

**TH\_**The radio broadcasting live through your show created a sense of time travel too, Radio National has a particular classic, timeless aesthetic.

**AM\_**My father listened to Radio National for years. He didn't really watch TV. He just read the newspaper, and he'd watch the evening news and listen to the radio. I think it probably sounds the same as it did back then, a lot of talking.

**TH\_**When the Queen died there was a lot of commentary coming through your show into space which confused the present sense of time even more.

**AM\_**Ahh yeah that's right. That works with the show [laughs].

*I change the time in your house  
The hours I take  
Go so slow*



**TH\_** The skylight in the classroom was particularly powerful. You removed the false ceiling of the gallery ceiling so natural light comes into the classroom space and shines down on the corrugated iron shed. It made me question the role of contemporary art galleries and the current framing of Indigenous voices. How has institutional framing of history and educational resources in Australia impacted Aboriginal people through different generations?

**AM\_** The film playing in the space is about the merits of mining which is exactly the kind of film that I saw at school. We had these old sixteen millimetre projectors and we'd get these reels of film from the Department of Education in Queensland. They would come in a big blue reel. They were often about mining. I decided to put that hut next to the projection because the huts are made of extracted materials from the mines, possibly from discarded corrugated iron. It represents the hut my grandmother lived in. They were better made back then, but she did have a dirt floor, which is indicative of a lot of Aboriginal people's homes at one point.

The education lessons seemed to be stuck in the 'fifties when I was at school and there was nothing about Aboriginal people. That was left out of the history lessons. I'm not in the same situation as my grandparents were because they were both illiterate, never went to school and lived under very different circumstances. The skylight for me is like breaking through the iron ceiling and then there is another ceiling above you. You break through that and then there's another ceiling. I was thinking about that when I removed the panels from the roof at Gertrude Contemporary.

*I hear no sound in your house  
Silence  
In the empty rooms*





**TH\_**A lot of your practice considers questions around memory and the construction of narrative. What has your experience been showing work in predominantly white spaces, from smaller contemporary art spaces to bigger institutions? How do you feel about the audience response to your work?

**AM\_**A lot of my work is cathartic I suppose. I've always been interested in memory, my past, and the things that contributed to my Aboriginal grandparents living in a corrugated iron hut on their own land in a town where everyone else lived in houses. I'm not really concerned about what the audience thinks and I don't really think about the work much afterwards. It's really important to me while I'm making it and it's a big cathartic release at the end of purging stuff out.

A lot of people have responded to the show. The space changes so much because I tried to make the gallery disappear. I wanted to make people forget they were in a gallery and get into a real domestic space or into a memory. That's an ongoing motif in my work; I'm trying to put the viewer in my shoes. It's highlighting the impossibility of knowing another person, how they feel or what they think. I think that might be a metaphor for [the] failure of reconciliation. Maybe we'll never fully understand or know the other person, or group of people.

There can be implications just because I'm Aboriginal talking about Aboriginal things in a white space like you said. The work speaks for itself. I was talking the other day about my work *Inert State* (2022) at Queensland Art Gallery being removed for a wedding because the water feature is a backdrop for the wedding photography. It's interesting—just the fact that it even needs to be removed at all. My work



*A Home Away From Home (Bennelong/Vera's Hut)* [2016] was also moved for the same reason as part of the Sydney Biennale because I wanted it to be right in front of the Opera House and they said I couldn't do that because they host weddings which they make a lot of money from. It got shifted to the side to this little overgrown area which was the only part of the Botanical Gardens that isn't maintained. I know some people might've been angry at that but I thought it was kind of perfect in a way, getting shifted to the side.<sup>2</sup> My *United Neytion* [2017, in *The National: New Australian Art*] flags were also taken down at Carriageworks for a fashion week or something like that.

*I drown at night in your house  
Pretending to swim  
Pretending to swim*

**TH\_** You also make music and you mentioned earlier that your Dad played music too?

**AM\_** Yeah my Dad used to play the piano but he stopped. I never really saw him playing. He worked as an earth mover, building dams, roads, and things. Someone did bring a keyboard in once and he tried to play it for a while but his fingers were too stiff. I felt like it might've brought back bad memories because it reminded him of some bygone era in the 'thirties when he was playing music, which was quite a long time ago. I remembered he hated the music I listened to, he used to hate rock music. I used to get up early and watch rage to see the top 100 songs and he'd always complain about the music, especially the drumbeat. He said it sounded like someone chopping wood and it was monotonous. Wasn't his type of music.

I remember getting up really early one time to watch The Cure's new clip which was *Lullaby* [1989] at the time. He would usually be awake before me but this time he walked out and I was watching Robert Smith with big black eyes and red lipstick on and crazy hair. He kind of looked like a panda. My father walked past in that moment and said, 'Look at that fucken idiot' [laughs].

**TH\_** What other albums did you listen to growing up?

**AM\_** I wasn't really interested in music enough to follow a band until someone gave me two Cure cassettes and one was *The Head on the Door* album and the other was *B-sides & Rarities* which I found really interesting, more experimental. I really related to the lyrics which is kind of weird—this Aboriginal teenager relating to this white English goth. I started reading about The Cure and finding pen pals and they would tell me other bands that The Cure fans liked like The Smiths, New Order and Joy Division.

The The I liked a lot. I would just buy their cassettes and records and listen to them. Everyone in the town listened to George Thorogood or Creedence Clearwater Revival and it was just boring—everyone listening to the same thing. Where I grew up there were no record stores and you couldn't pick up an alternative radio station, so any connection was through music magazines. I used to write to Rocking Horse Records in Brisbane to send out records sometimes.

**TH\_** And you had a tape player at home?

**AM\_** Yeah a pretty dodgy one but I got to listen to stuff I liked. I was already alienated but the music was alienating to other people, it annoyed them and they hated it, which I liked. They would leave me alone even more! [laughs].





**TH\_**You use a lot of found materials and objects in your work, how do you feel about the land and using natural materials in your practice?

**AM\_**I'm not really a spiritual person and I'm not religious at all. I look for the scientific reasons for things. Sometimes when I'm in nature or just driving around I'll see some kind of feature in the landscape that gives me a strange feeling and I like to sit there for a bit and try and work out what it is. It's impossible to explain it but I think it was the psychoanalyst Carl Jung that talked about this idea called archaic residue which is information, experiences, and memories from your ancestors that are passed down genetically. I wonder if a certain land feature—it could be a pile of rocks, a path through some bush area or some trees or something—could it be trying to talk or communicate with me? I don't have the tools to decode it because I haven't been brought up in a traditional way. There is a feeling there from my ancestors, this archaic residue.

I This and subsequent quotes from The Cure, "In Your House", written by Simon Gallup, Matthieu Hartley, Robert Smith and Lol Tolhurst, first release 1980\_2 See Moore's essay, "Archie Moore: Days of our lives", Artlink 38:2, (June 2018): 66–69 and online: <https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/4683/archie-moore-daze-of-our-lives/>

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**Tamsen Hopkinson (Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Pāhauwera) is a Māori artist, writer and curator whose practice is an expression of Tino Rangatiratanga (Indigenous Sovereignty) considering ideas around education, translation, materiality and sound.**

