

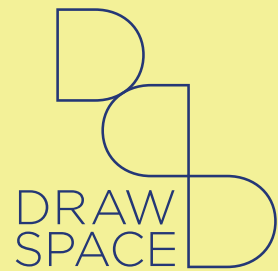
DRAW Space acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation upon whose ancestral lands our ARI now stands. We pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these places.

## Locust Jones / MAGIC SAUCE

What is in *Magic Sauce*? The potent and portentous title of Locust Jones' inaugural exhibition at DRAW Space in Newtown is blunt and wide open to innuendo.

In his own words, his is a practice centred around a maelstrom: *the depiction of a world slowly going to hell*.<sup>1</sup> Mired in the looping language and frenzied imagery of endlessly cycling news production and consumption, the artist wades across viscous outpourings of current affairs and his response? Why, to spray it back, in personal translation, across multiple mediums. With drawing sticks in hand, bodily, and audibly, his response to the daily news is multifaceted but also recognisably idiomatic. Accompanied by his own vocal patter and to the rhythm of drumming by Tim Bruniges, through drawings to be made in situ across papered walls and surfaces, *Magic Sauce* will be a work of many ingredients. It promises to be part drawing, part performance and once over, part echoing residue of what came before. Based on previous drawing-as-performances, this one will be a cry out loud, large-scaled, prophetic, sometimes despairing, occasionally awkward, but always bristling with furious energy. This time, with a focus on drawing and drumming, Jones aspires to create a space of counterpoint within the drama. As he describes it, this performance will be a turn towards the primacy and intimacy of drawing as a means of *clearing the slate, of purging the toxicity of negative news*.<sup>2</sup> Jones' work is already expressive; suggesting both visceral and cerebral responses to the phenomenon of the daily, hourly, to the minute news, and the performative aspect, with minimal elements, only serves to sharpen the impact of expression.

The form of verbal spray as description reflects the deep wellspring of inspiration as a source of discontent. It is also a characteristic of the ongoing relentlessness of news media. Frustration is evident, but also puzzlement, as Jones recaps the bites, stories, and headlines through his own lens - and here lies the tension - between the political and the personal, as has been observed, *ambiguity lies at the core of Jones' practice with its uncanny combination of personal and global motifs*.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting then to see how he takes these qualities of curiosity and ambiguity from completed drawing into the process of actually drawing. The development in Jones' practice to incorporate the performative, is suggested in the opening of his Situation Room performance, where he begins crouched among his drawings, then moves while muttering, swaying, and shouting<sup>4</sup>. In this and in other performances, Jones' drawing-in-motion continues, more expressively and to accompanied drumming, in an opening up of process that is so suggestive of the incessant (and maddening) impulse to continuously create. Continuity has also been noted as an explicit aspect of much of his work, as seen in his scroll pieces, wall murals and animations<sup>5</sup>. In a drawing performance though, the many levels and layering of elements interact effectively to convey simultaneity, and the scattering effect of receiving so much information, generating sensations of anxiety, being overwhelmed, fearful even. As hapless consumers of news the typical posture may be that of passive recipient, but Locust Jones is anything but. He rails at the brewing storm, shaking a fist at it, at once spectator, listener, bodily participant, and critical commentator.



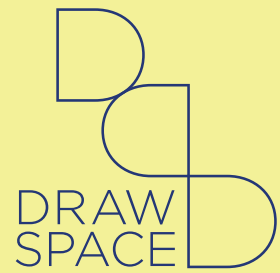
An non-profit, artist-run platform to make, see and experience contemporary drawing.

31A Enmore Road  
Newtown 2042  
PO Box 352  
Newtown NSW 2042  
[info@drawspace.org](mailto:info@drawspace.org)  
[www.drawspace.org](http://www.drawspace.org)

Drawing is a direct and primal art form. As a contemporary medium, and in the hands of Jones it continues to be a method of sense-making, a direct means of engaging with the world and a vehicle for his discourse with it. Using his body to draw while in full roaring voice and flight, with drummers marking a percussive beat, sometimes among other digital effects; projection, animation, backlit film, this is drawing enmeshed in the world it describes.

An utterly fascinating aspect of opening up drawing to the performative is seeing the way its processes and materials can reflect back the work's conceptual underpinnings, causing a subject to come in and out of focus in our mind's eye. Take for instance the way the language of news is mirrored in Locust's work as a drawing technique; as news occurs in looping cycles, we see looping marks being formed, over and again. (Once again, noting the pertinence of continuity in a daily ritual, as *Jones jots his daily meanderings on enormous coiling loops of paper that seem to go on and on*)<sup>6</sup>. An unexpected event, a collision or accident can be described succinctly in an ink blot or splash. Sometimes we feel events as shocks; as jolts of impact, and these are the strident marks – stripes perhaps, in repetition. Just as stories are selected for maximum emotive impact and so are attention seeking, so are bright colours, thick strokes, rapidly and crudely drawn representations of things – birds, banners, people, landscapes. We can relate to feeling the news viscerally – a punch in the guts – and this is seen in the way the artist contracts and jerks his own body, to the percussive drumbeat and sound of his voice, stretched taut and strained. Anger and a rant, ink blots and tapping drumsticks are as capable as the drawn line of conveying Jones' *signature rawness*<sup>7</sup>. Described as stream of consciousness performances, unscripted and unrehearsed, Jones' drawings emerge over the limited amount of time given to them, as permitted by his own endurance, and just like the rolled-up scrolls, the spaces and detritus left behind come to represent the coiled and compressed energy of the drawing sessions.

Online videos bring many of Jones' performative drawings over the years to be experienced in a single viewing session. We can watch with intrigue as the artist turns himself into the frenetic, engrossed, and idiomatic figure of the open-mouthed, scrawled representations in his own drawings. Bearded, dressed in faded black, facing away from his audience, he looms large and prophetically. He performs seemingly unaware of any context apart from his reference points – the drawings and maybe some notes. His body is frequently hunched, almost as if in pain and his voice is projected loud but oddly monotonal, as if he is a mere channel for the content – the fractured news of the day. This he sputters in fragments and bits, certain words and phrases recurring in chorus. Like the alloverness of his drawings. Spinning on his feet, gaining momentum, he wrestles and tussles with the media – or its content, his words frequently invective, until stress shows in his voice. There are long alliterative lists, and verbal springboards that jump from topic to topic. Is that tone one of argument, lecture, or heckler? Then, that monotone again, absent the rise and fall of the newsreader, its pronouncements are somewhat sinister. And just as locusts foretell destruction and devastation to come – here is one singular Locust, with his Magic Sauce and the sound of drums – witness, chronicler, crier.



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1. Tracey Clement, 'The End is Nigh: Locust Jones' Delta Park at Sheffer Gallery', Exhibition Review: Sydney Morning Herald, May 2007
2. Email from the artist to DRAW Space, May 2023
3. Rachel Kent, 'Locust Jones: Getting to the Truth' in Locust Jones: Trouble on the Range, Dominik Mersch Gallery Exhibition Catalogue, 2017
4. Locust Jones, Situation Room, Dominik Mersch Gallery 2020 (with Darren Seltmann and Tim Bruniges)
5. Justin Trendall, 'An Analysis of Locust Jones' Practice': artist's website, 2015
6. Elizabeth Walton, 'The Epic Chronicles of Locust Jones' in Oz Arts (Ed.18) 2018
7. Justin Trendall, Op. Cit.