

Randy Lee Cutler



Introduction

Born 1964 in Montreal, Canada
 Artwork Title: *Mineral Collection*, 2019-20
 Artwork Location: National Art School

Randy Lee Cutler is an interdisciplinary artist whose practice weaves together themes of collaboration, materiality, science and fiction. Taking the form of walks, performance, collage, printed matter, installation, video, audio and creative writing, she has produced numerous hybrid projects that engage with conversation and research.

Mineral Collection explores the presence of minerals in our daily environments and their profound but often unacknowledged effect on our experiences. Using a variety of media and participatory events, the project maps the physical structures, geographies and biological effects of minerals, showing how they work as the invisible building blocks of our bodies and technologies. Each component becomes a geological dig across a physical-metaphorical spectrum, connecting and rupturing familiar meanings and assumptions.

This multi-faceted approach encourages a non-linear encounter with crystal formations from the past, present and future to better contemplate our human interactions with these earthly deposits.

The collection includes *SaltWalks*, a series of performative walks around Sydney; *Rock Album*, a sound work; *The Underworld*, a poster series; and *Mineral Garden*, a collaborative installation including collage works with NIRIN artist Andrew Rewald.

SaltWalks shares stories, anecdotes and information about the ubiquitous mineral known as salt. The walk begins with taste tests of different kinds of salt, from mass produced table salt to Himalayan rock salt and Fleur de sel from Brittany. These savoury comparisons initiate conversations where we explore the use of salt across vast timescales and different cultures.

Rock Album is a series of sound works that explore deep time, extractivism and mineral medicine among other rock-related themes. Set to an ambient soundtrack, each of these spoken word pieces collapses scientific, industrial, philosophical, spiritual and informal knowledge practices into new mineralogical arrangements.

Randy Lee Cutler, *Mineral Collection*, 2019-20. Installation view for the 22nd Biennale of Sydney (2020), National Art School. Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney with assistance from Canada Council for the Arts and the Consulate General of Canada in Sydney. Courtesy the artists; Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney; and Christine Myerscough. Photograph: Zan Wimberley.

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Inquiry questions

- Listen to some snippets from the *Rock Album*. What did you notice about it?
- Track 7 of the *Rock Album*, 'Rock Song (One Minute Equals and Millennium)' is one minute without sound. How long did that minute feel to you? Why do you think Randy Lee Cutler included that silence within the *Rock Album*?
- How would you describe the *Rock Album* to somebody who had never listened to it before?
- What do you think the artist is trying to say through the recordings?
- Randy Lee Cutler is a multidisciplinary artist. Why do you think she blends so many mediums to create her art?

Creative learning activity

Randy Lee Cutler uses collage in her practice. Think about something that's important to you and make a collage about it.

Collect pictures, text, pieces of material and other images to make the collage.

Select a background to stick your images onto. When thinking about the type of background take into consideration the colour, feel and thickness.

Sort and play with the images and things you selected. Mock up a layout, then arrange your things and stick them to the background to bring your story to life.

Share your collages with us using the #NIRINathome tag on Instagram and Facebook.

Reflection

- Randy Lee Cutler demonstrates the importance of minerals and rocks in human history, life and culture. Can you think of any rocks or minerals that have a cultural, historical, religious or any other type of significance?
- Is there a rock or a mineral that is significant to your family, culture or personal history?
- Thinking about Randy Lee Cutler's way of working and her pairing of artistic practice and science, what subject area would you be interested in exploring within your own artistic practice?

Extension

- Think about the place that you live. Find out the most prominent rock or mineral in your area. If you're from the city and there's a lot of concrete around you, find out what the concrete is made of.
- Create a register of materials your home is made of. Which rocks and minerals are present?