

MOONRISE

SHORT FILM PRESS KIT





The Moon as represented by a grapefruit.
Still from *Sky: A Film Lesson in Nature Studies*, 1928.
Courtesy of Prelinger Archives.

TAGLINE

If the Moon could speak, what would it say?

LOGLINE

An experimental film that explores our ancient and complex relationship with the Moon, inviting us to reconsider the ways in which we engage with Earth's only natural satellite.

SYNOPSIS

A commercially-driven, international Space Race has propelled us to this moment in the 21st century: within a few years, the Moon's surface may be subject to permanent human occupation, its resources aggressively mined for profit, and its ancient nature-spaces polluted by private industry. Do we want to stand by silently as such irreparable damage is caused to our sister satellite? What if we actually listened to what the Moon had to say? Based on an original poem by award-winning Australian author Ceridwen Dovey, *Moonrise* is a striking, surreal montage of historical, artistic and scientific lunar imagery that invites us to consider the Moon's point of view in the face of increasingly exploitative human activity in space.

"FOR MILLENNIA, HUMANS HAVE GAZED AT THE MOON IN WONDER. IN DIFFERENT PLACES AND TIMES IN HISTORY, WE HAVE UNDERSTOOD IT TO BE A PERSON; A GOD OR GODDESS; THE PLACE WHERE THE SOULS OF ANCESTORS LIVE; A MARKER OF SEASONS, CYCLES, AND COSMIC CALENDARS; A METAPHOR, MYSTERY, OR MYTH; A SCIENTIFIC PUZZLE TO SOLVE. BUT HAVE WE EVER THOUGHT OF IT AS NATURE?"

I AM INTERESTED IN WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF WE DEFINE THE MOON AS PART OF NATURE, RATHER THAN AS PART OF "UNNATURAL" SPACE, THUS MORE POWERFULLY ACKNOWLEDGING ITS RELATIONSHIP TO EARTH. PROSPECTIVE COMMERCIAL MOON MINERS ARE ALREADY TRYING TO DO THIS, FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES, BY CALLING THE MOON OUR "EIGHTH CONTINENT" IN THEIR VENTURE-CAPITAL BIDS, SO THAT THE IDEA OF MINING IT BECOMES LESS SHOCKING.

YET I SUGGEST THAT THIS KINSHIP EXTENSION FROM EARTH TO OUR SISTER SATELLITE CAN INSTEAD BE USED TO FRAME THE MOON AS THE ULTIMATE PLACE OF RESISTANCE—AS THE WILDEST SPACES ON EARTH ALWAYS HAVE BEEN—TO ENCROACHMENT AND DESTRUCTION BY HUMANS."

- CERIDWEN DOVEY, WRITER & SPACE ENVIRONMENTALIST

KEY CREATIVES

Director, Editor and Archive Producer | Rowena Potts

Rowena is a filmmaker and visual anthropologist with a doctorate in Cultural Anthropology from New York University. Her short films have explored a range of topics, from the relationship between people and animals in urban settings, to the legacy of an infamous literary hoax in Australian cultural history. Her observational portrait of two pigeon breeders (*They Come Home*, 2017), won the Grand Jury prize for documentary short at the Independent Film Festival in Boston. She holds a graduate diploma in documentary from the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) and a bachelor's degree in Comparative Religion from Harvard University.

Writer and Producer | Ceridwen Dovey

Ceridwen is a fiction writer and essayist based in Sydney. She's the author of several works of fiction (*Blood Kin*, *Only the Animals*, *In the Garden of the Fugitives*, and *Life After Truth*), and non-fiction (*On J.M. Coetzee: Writers on Writers* and *Inner Worlds Outer Spaces: The Working Lives of Others*). Her essays have been published by *newyorker.com*, the *Smithsonian Magazine*, *WIRED*, the *Monthly*, and *Alexander*. She won a prestigious 2020 Australian Museum Eureka Award for her long-form essay critiquing the commercial push to mine the Moon, and she won the 2020 UNSW Press Bragg Prize for Science Writing for her essay on Moon dust.


Sound Designer | Annie Breslin

Annie is an award-winning film, theatre and interactive sound designer with credits spanning *Mad Max 2*, *Evil Angels* and Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* as well as sound design installations for the Australian War Memorial and the Melbourne Aquarium. She was Head of Sound at the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) from 1996 to 2001 where she co-wrote and introduced Australia's first full time, tertiary Screen Composition course. Annie is currently the moving image specialist on a mass film and video digitisation project at the State Library of NSW.



Composer | Bronwyn Cumbo

Bronwyn is a composer, musician and design researcher. Some of her notable compositions include *Tall Stories* (Melbourne Festival), *Dawn* (Silent Spring) and the scores to the documentary *Umoja: No Men Allowed* (2010) and the short film *Happy Ending* (2002). She has arranged and designed a number of contemporary works for a variety of ensembles and music for theatre, including *Bienvenue á Breville* (Adelaide Fringe Festival). She is a violinist and pianist in the experimental duo Silent Spring, which has performed both nationally and internationally. More recently Bronwyn has explored how sound and interaction design can be combined to create immersive audio experiences that connect people in cities to the natural world. Bronwyn is currently a postdoctoral research fellow at Monash University.



Profile View of a Woman Strolling in the Moonlight,
ca 1908. Unidentified Artist.
Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I HAVE ALWAYS TAKEN FOR GRANTED THAT THE MOON WOULD REMAIN A PRISTINE AND BEAUTIFUL BODY IN THE SKY THAT WE ON EARTH COULD GAZE AT WITHOUT FEAR THAT ITS LANDSCAPE MIGHT BE ALTERED OR EXPLOITED BY HUMAN ACTIVITY. CERIDWEN'S RECENT ESSAYS ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN SPACE HAVE ALERTED ME TO THE FACT THAT NOT ONLY WAS MY ASSUMPTION WRONG, BUT THAT THE MOON AS A PRECIOUS OFF-EARTH ENVIRONMENT IS CURRENTLY UNDER GRAVE THREAT.

WE ARE AT A CRITICAL TURNING POINT IN TERMS OF THE LEGAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS WE MIGHT EXTEND TO THE MOON, AND WE HAVE A CHANCE TO RADICALLY RETHINK THE WAYS IN WHICH WE ENGAGE WITH OUR CLOSEST AND ONLY NATURAL SATELLITE. AS CERIDWEN HAS WRITTEN, "WE MUST LEARN TO APPROACH THE MOON AS A CO-PARTICIPANT IN ITS FUTURE, AND TO SEE OUR SISTER SATELLITE NOT AS A SIMPLE REPOSITORY OF RAW MATERIALS OR COSMICALLY IRRADIATED ROCKS WITH WHICH WE CAN DO WHAT WE LIKE, AS POSSESSIONS AND PROPERTY—BUT AS OUR KIN."

WITH THIS FILM, BASED ON A MOVING ORIGINAL POEM, COMBINED WITH A SURREALISTIC MONTAGE OF STRIKING LUNAR IMAGERY, WE HOPE TO PROVOKE CRITICAL REFLECTION FOR OUR AUDIENCES ABOUT OUR ANCIENT AND ONGOING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MOON – AND TO SPARK THEIR IMAGINATIONS ABOUT THE POTENTIAL FOR THIS RELATIONSHIP TO BE OTHERWISE.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Running time | 11 minutes 11 seconds

Type | Experimental, archival

Language | English

Country of origin | Australia

Colour | Colour and Black & White

Screening format | DCP/High Res Quicktime

Aspect Ratio | 16:9

Sound | Stereo 2.0 & Surround 5.1

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CREATIVE TEAM

Director/Editor/Archive Producer | Rowena Potts

Writer/Producer | Ceridwen Dovey

Original Music | Bronwyn Cumbo

Sound Design | Annie Breslin

Sound Mix | Peter Johnson

Voice Artists | Sepehr Jamshidi Fard & Rowena Potts

Sound Recording | Sound Studio

Mix Studio | Sydney Sound Brewery

Copyright Consultant | Laura Thomas

THIS PROJECT WAS SUPPORTED BY

The Copyright Agency Cultural Fund

The School of Humanities & Communication Arts

at Western Sydney University

The lunar surface, as imagined in the short educational film *A Trip to the Moon*, Service Film Company, 1920s. Courtesy of Prelinger Archives.

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