



CHRIS BOHA

Upon the Threshold of Remembering

21 August - 13 September 2025

Reliquaries for the Unmade Future: Mythologies of Entropy

—Ursula Halpin 2025



I learned early to seek sense in poetry. Blame my father—he carried Irish verse like talismans, trusting words to mend what broke. Now the world frays. Sacred sites fall, and fossil fuels rise.

As I write, an algal bloom larger than the Wuthathi Great Barrier Reef smothers Narungga, Nukunu, Barngarla, Kaurna Sea Country, and beyond. Dubbed an 'underwater bushfire,'¹ it is fuelled by warming seas and environmental neglect.

In this unravelling, I turn to art and poetry—not for refuge, but reckoning. As species vanish, coastlines dissolve, and memory mutates, Chris Boha builds reliquaries: fragile, reverent, rich in symbols. *Upon the Threshold of Remembering* forms a constellation of sculptural elegies—intimate, haunting, suspended between memory and ruin.

Canadian-born, Boha's practice is rooted in material and narrative salvage. Now based in Tarntanya/Adelaide, he threads these early experiences through a practice shaped by Catholic altars, Roman grottos, medieval relics, migrant memory, and ecological despair. Yet the relics he enshrines speak not of miracles, or collapse, but of strange signals: reimagined fables, fairytales, and speculative myths.² The saints have left the building. In their place—skulls, derelict houseboats, and miniature remnants of late capitalist belief. Each piece is a sculptural parable: absurd, tender, and layered.

His materials recall their own histories. They remember making and unmaking. Honouring each object's trace life, Boha imbues fragments with narrative charge. Beneath the apocalyptic surface, a seam of play runs. He repurposes broken jewellery, 3D-printed ruins, skulls—not just with care, but with mischief. There's wit here. Joy, even. In a workshop I joined, we built dioramas with sequins and lace. Object selection became quiet ritual, and associative drift. Ingold reminds us: elements are brought together, split apart, synthesised, and distilled: the artist 'joins forces' with the materials at hand.³ In Boha's hands, matter is not mute—it enters into correspondence.⁴

Boha's practice is, at its core, an act of narrative preservation, not of fixed doctrines, but of inquiry. In *Mobile Home*, 2025, a caravan dangles beneath a zeppelin. Below, sea creatures rise. In this drowned world, entropy becomes ascension. His vision isn't redemptive, but it holds hope. Within the cracked and crumbling, Boha finds play. His works whisper: If we cannot prevent the end, might we still tell stories through it?⁵



Houseboat, 2025, imagines a climate minister disembarking from the S.S. *Last Chance* to attend a Geneva summit held underwater. 'After all,' the minister muses, 'what did another degree matter?'⁶ This absurdity lands too close to home: theatrical bureaucratic beachside photo ops, as ecosystems collapse⁷—Boha's parody made real.

And always, for me, there is poetry.

Poets stitch grief into language, lend breath to artists who shape despair into form. In *She is the Earth*, Yankuntjatjara poet Ali Cobby Eckermann traces a journey of devotional love, grief, and hope. Her language is aching and sovereign. Spare and raw, her words arrive softly, but stay with weight.⁸

Boha's reliquaries, by contrast, are materially dense—assemblages of symbols, salvaged fragments, and mythic reimaginings. Echoing medieval reliquaries once crafted to enshrine the shattered bones of saints, his works house contemporary remnants—of memory, ecology, and belief.⁹ As Eckermann pares language back to bone, Boha builds upward from ruin. Both speak of enduring loss, hold space for what has broken, and the honour the insistence of hope. Both ask us to stay with the ache, and to listen.

Irish poet Simon Ó Faoláin writes of vanishing: '*Ní féidir liom a rá leat an scéal, ach tá an talamh imithe i gcion ort / I cannot tell you the story, but the land has gone under your skin.*'¹⁰ Boha's reliquaries echo this erosion. His scorched wood, rust-stained metals, and fractured images don't just depict landscapes—they remember. Some stories are not told, but felt. Country, language, loss, and memory: things we cannot say, only carry.

This is Boha's terrain. His reliquaries are not explanations. They are emotional topographies. They do not cling to hope, but to ritual, curiosity, and the speculative act of imagining otherwise.



1 Graham Edgar, "Like an Underwater Bushfire, SA's Marine Algal Bloom Is Still Killing Almost Everything in Its Path," *The Conversation*, July 17, 2025, <https://theconversation.com/like-an-underwater-bushfire-sas-marine-algal-bloom-is-still-killing-almost-everything-in-its-path-257885>.

2 Chris Boha, interview by author, July 25, 2025

3 Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art, and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013), 21.

4 *Ibid.*, 105-8.

5 Chris Boha, interview by author, July 19, 2025.

6 Chris Boha, *Narrative Stories*, *Houseboat*, 2025, unpublished manuscript.

7 Thomas Kelsall, "Is \$14m and a 10-Minute Beach Trip Enough to Show the Feds Care about the Algal Bloom?" *ABC News*, July 23, 2025, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-07-23/sa-toxic-algal-bloom-funding-analysis/105559558>.

8 Ali Cobby Eckermann, *She is the Earth* (Broome, WA: Magabala Books, 2023).

9 Bynum, Caroline Walker, and Paula Gerson. "Body-Part Reliquaries and Body Parts in the Middle Ages." *Gesta* 36, no. 1 (1997): 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.2307/767274>.

10 Simon Ó Faoláin, *As Gaineamh: Dánta / As Sand: Poems*, trans. Seán Ó Coileáin (Indreabhán: Coiscéim, 2011).



Author's Note

This writing takes place on unceded Nukunu Country. I use the strikethrough ~~Australia~~ to honour Aboriginal sovereignty and unsettle colonial naming. Guided by *The UnMonumental Style Guide*,¹¹ this typographic choice affirms that each Nation retains its own name. It reflects the essay's concern with disrupted futures and shifting belief systems, colonised and sovereign.

About the Author

Ursula Halpin is an Irish-born, Talpiri/~~Port~~ Pirie-based artist living and working on Kurna and Nukunu Yarta.

11 James Tylor and Matt Chun, *The UnMonumental Style Guide*, 2023. <https://unmonumental.substack.com/p/the-unmonumental-style-guide>.

IMAGES:

FRONT COVER: *Where Once We Walked*, [WIP] Recycled timber, plywood, giclée prints, glass, gauge, 930 x 930 x 100 mm

PAGE 2: FROM TOP

Houseboat, Recycled timber, plywood, giclée prints, glass print, barometer, copper, steel. 920 x 920 x 110 mm

Last Flight, [WIP] Recycled timber, plywood, giclée prints, glass, heat gauge, 1220 x 620 mm

PAGE 3:

Mobile Home, Recycled timber, plywood, giclée prints, glass, found objects. 1320 x 800 mm

BACK COVER: *Adrift*, [work in progress, WIP].

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