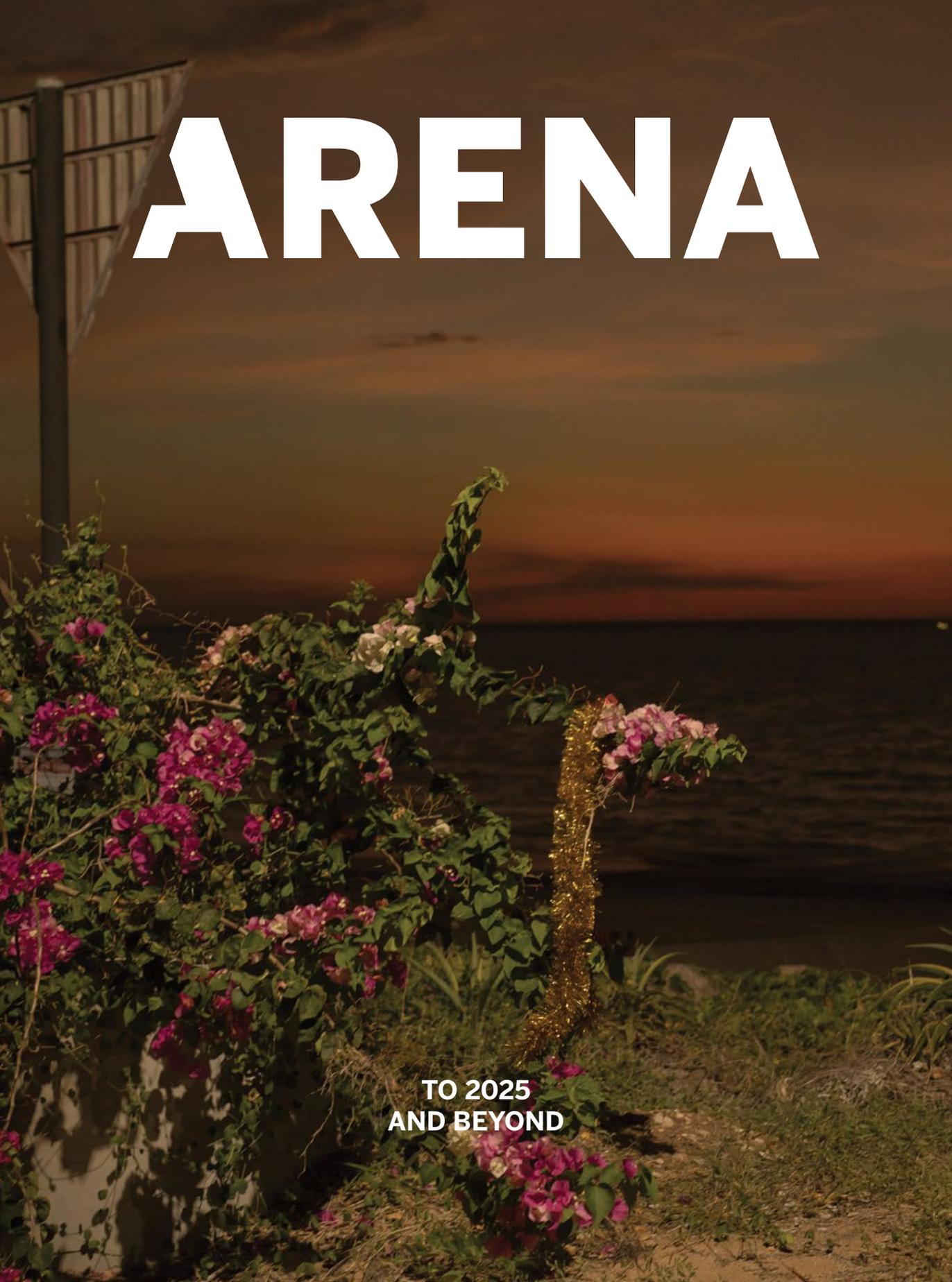


# ARENA



TO 2025  
AND BEYOND

# Arena has big plans as we head into the 2020s.

**T**hrough our journals and publications, our discussion series, our online publishing and our research, we are bringing new ideas and cutting-edge debate to the crises affecting nature, our cities and societies. What we do has never been more necessary to building a better world. We're energised by the challenges and opportunities facing humanity, and we want you to be a part of our response.

Founded in 1963 by figures in Australia's 'New Left' as a forum to debate and develop new ideas about society and the world, Arena

has occupied a unique place in Australian cultural life ever since, publishing engaged commentary and searching analyses of the issues of the day. At the heart of our project is a commitment to the creation of a genuinely and fully human society for all—a society that draws on left social and political traditions and a 'green' revisioning of the world but goes beyond simple or entrenched versions of those ideas.

The urgency of such a project, and the challenges to it, have significantly intensified in recent years.

## ARENA VISION

**A**rena has witnessed the emergence and vast expansion of forces within and outside of capitalism in the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century associated with science and high technology, hyper-consumption and the radical individuation and alienation of the person. We focus on the consequences of the deep forces set in train in this period.

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### **These are the questions that energise our work:**

- Who are we today? What is human being in an age of total transformation?
- What is nature? How might we revalue and rebuild our relationship to our conditions of existence?
- Why are the institutions we once trusted now held in suspicion or experiencing collapse? What has happened to authority, care and the common weal?
- Why are received traditions of political thought, ideas of class and political struggle no longer effective—or are they even part of the problem?
- How might we live differently? Are there ways to deepen social connections and trial new forms of community and social organisation?
- How should nations understand the variety of their own peoples internally, and relations between nations and regions?
- What intellectual frameworks and art-cultural practices do we need to answer these pressing political and existential questions?

## RESPONDING TO CULTURAL COLLAPSE

**W**e see our role in the struggle to create a just and flourishing world as exploring these questions not as discrete issues, with singular causes, but as interrelated products of the autonomous development of ever-expanding technology, capitalism and belligerent nationalism.

Pursuing that mission over the decades, we have dug deep into the theories and approaches of left-wing and social-movement thinking, in part as a response to the limited successes and defeats of such movements. Thus while we critique the structures that support mainstream culture and politics, we also interrogate the taken-for-granted beliefs of those on the left of politics. Without endorsing simplistic ‘back to nature’ approaches, we explore humanity’s deep delusion that liberation and fulfilment can be found through total separation from nature and the false promise of radical self-determination.



THE NEXT THREE TO FIVE YEARS

**Emerging from the devastation of the pandemic, we are pursuing a nested set of activities centring on and extending out from the publication Arena quarterly. We wish to establish a new city centre where we can bring together the growing networks of concerned people through public discussions, art exhibitions and publishing activities, and where we can generate new forms of public practice geared towards rethinking the social arrangements of contemporary life.**

# Four overriding themes will guide our work:

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## **Nature, transformation, and the search for better ways of living.**

**W**e'll explore the crisis in the relationship between humanity and nature, beyond technofixes and greenwashing, and beyond any simple notion that humanity can continue on its current path and preserve a habitable and flourishing planet. Articles and discussions in this series will connect with renewed attention to developing alternative forms of production and community.

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## **Nation, war and global politics.**

**A**s the rulers of the world start a new cold war and clash of civilisations, we'll look at the global historical forces underlying such movements, from the complexities of nationalism, culture and race on a world scale to the death-drives of robotics and weapons automation and the assumption of unbounded growth. We'll partner with other institutions and critical think tanks for public discussions, as we head into a dangerous period for this country.

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## **Technology and human being: what limits should we set?**

**T**echnology is transforming the basic fabric of human being—our material and psychological identities, the contexts of work and class, our sense of what our collective and individual character is. We'll draw in a range of philosophical thinkers on these questions but also offer a critical account of philosophy itself and a more searching conception of this onrush to total transformation.

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## **The crisis of the university and the future of education and intellectual practice.**

**A**cross the West, the extended idea of the university as a centre for free thought and as an anchor to a broad culture of free inquiry has been attacked, undermined and, in Australia, all but destroyed. Rather, the university has become a powerhouse of high-tech capitalism and a centre of corporatisation and neoliberal regulation. In considering intellectual inquiry, its future and its enemies, we'll explore how an organisation like Arena can serve as a place where the idea of the university carries on.

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**As a practically engaged independent publishing project, since 1963 Arena has published a remarkable archive, comprising 100 issues of its first series, *Arena* (1963–1992), 163 issues of *Arena Magazine* (1992–2019), 53 issues of *Arena Journal* (1992–2021) and, from 2020, regular new issues of *Arena* quarterly, as well as our fortnightly *Arena Online* commentary service.**

It has also published a series of books, on Australian culture and Indigenous affairs most especially, under the imprints of Kibble Books and Arena Publications. Always more than a publishing house, in the 1970s and '80s, the group learnt the mechanical skills and hot-metal technology needed to print its publications in letterpress, involving members in every aspect of production and the exploration of that rich mode of collective work and cooperation. Later, we ran our own printing business as a support to our publications. In this period where the expansion of digitisation coincided with the corporatisation of universities, creative work and urban life, Arena's city centre became home to an artist film workshop, an exhibition space, and a lively network of artists, thinkers and makers.

## YOUR SUPPORT

**F**or nearly sixty years Arena has operated without government funding. In 2020, after more than four decades running its own presses, Arena closed its commercial printery and wound up its most recent city centre. We launched *Arena* quarterly, with high production values and engaging visual style, bringing in-depth commentary in extended essays and reviews to a period of disturbing social and environmental transformation. We did this during the first challenging year of the pandemic—when bookshops suddenly closed, and it was impossible to hold face-to-face events that would have helped us to cultivate a growing readership and engaged network.

**Today, Australia stands at a pivotal moment. Within a highly skewed media landscape, a shrinking democratic sphere and the evisceration of the humanities in Australian universities, there is a vital need for spaces where alternative voices can be fostered.**

To secure our future operations, Arena is urgently looking to embrace new friends who share our concerns and are willing to support our work through significant donations, especially through regular financial contributions, to ensure our ongoing viability and the expanded reach of our operations.

Thanks to a new supporting arrangement with the Institute of Postcolonial Studies, donations to Arena are fully tax deductible.

