Floating on the ocean surface, my body rises and falls with the swell, the rocks below appearing to breathe as the watery environment sways my perceptions. Buoyant in my wetsuit I follow pathways of sand that are revealed between the submerged archipelagos of rock formations. The Oceans of the Unknown project has drawn me underwater, to imagine and empathize with a world I can only glimpse. My skills as an artist that rely on observation, visual analysis and a haptic sensitivity are dulled in this environment dominated by sound. The liquid atmosphere distorts sight but transmits sonar so that sound becomes the language below the surface of the sea. Sound becomes as physical as touch in the ocean, a profound sensitivity in the life forms who reside here. In this porous realm, science enters into this sonic language to decipher the environment and understand the complexities of the formation of habitats. Clouds of sonar dots are sent out, rebounding off rock, sediment and grasses, following their rhythms and currents in systems we are attempting to fathom.

To understand these multiple transformations of material systems I work closer to home, swimming and drawing the rocks and reef systems in the Derwent estuary. I work directly on rocks exposed by tides, in the water, and along the tidal edges to engage with a material understanding of what the scientific data from the submerged underwater vehicle references. The saltwater transforms my artistic materials, revealing new behaviours as inks separate and congeals and paper collapses. Sand infiltrates everything, its coarseness revealing another aspect that ocean habitats contend with. This project has opened up another world, taking me below the surface, awakening other senses and artistic possibilities. Science has given reference to systems, their formations and actualizations in order to predict behaviours and habitats. Art’s role is to imagine these systems as creative forces, composing them to see what they are capable of. Both art and science are creative modes of thought that attempt to bring order to chaos, to fathom the depths of the unknown.