

pandography

making sense of a bewildering world



a visual essay by

Jane Leonard

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Graph noun: /gra:f,graf/ a diagram representing a system or network of connections, relationships, values or interrelations among two or more things

-graph suffix: combined with nouns to denote something represented or drawn in a specified way

Eg. “pando-graph” an instrument that records experiences of a pandemic

Suddenly the TV news, the papers, and the online media are awash with graphs. We're bombarded with tangles of coloured lines and dots, neat-shaded columns, and pizza-like circles attempting to communicate the new bewildering, terrifying state of the world. One minute it was summer holidays, the next a global pandemic. The strangeness and confusion coming from the daily tallies and data that are thrown at us each night, are both contained within, and amplified by, these almost beautiful little diagrams. They are lovely to look at, seemingly benign, ordered, and simple. Yet they are filled with the grimmest of statistics.

We want to figure it out. Connect it. Map it. If we can do that, we can feel like we're on top of it. Not it on top of us. If we can just make sense of it, perhaps we can organise the chaos into containment.

Some days, even though they are bright and colourful, the graphs in the media make me cry. They are everywhere. I can't take them anymore, but they are hard to ignore. They define us. They chart the condition of our planet. I can't bear it. I am truly afraid.

Enough. I switch off the news, turn away from all the grim graphs, and I walk.

What sustains you? whisper the wrens in the bushes. No really, they persist, hopping around me, what lifts you? You will need to know.

I pick up a feather. And another. Then another further on. And when I get home, calmed, I lie them beside others I have collected from different places and times. A gentle, feathery chart materialises before me. It maps the state of my heart and tells me what I need to know.

And that's how it begins, this graphing of beauty and angst, love and fear. It becomes an antidote to the statistics on the news screaming the terrible state of things. And then I start to see them everywhere and a strange story in odd diagrams emerges, showing one person's – this pandographer's – experience of a world turned upside down, in a series of graphs.

Victoria, Australia, March 2020



Pandograph #1: A spike in the length of feathers

A bar graph demonstrating a spike in the length of feathers collected on lockdown walks, as compared to existing interstate cases, and including one long mystery gum leaf that remains under investigation. The significant finding from this study was that feathers are lovely to look at, no matter how long they are or where they come from, and that collecting and gazing at beautiful things in a pandemic is beneficial to the soul.

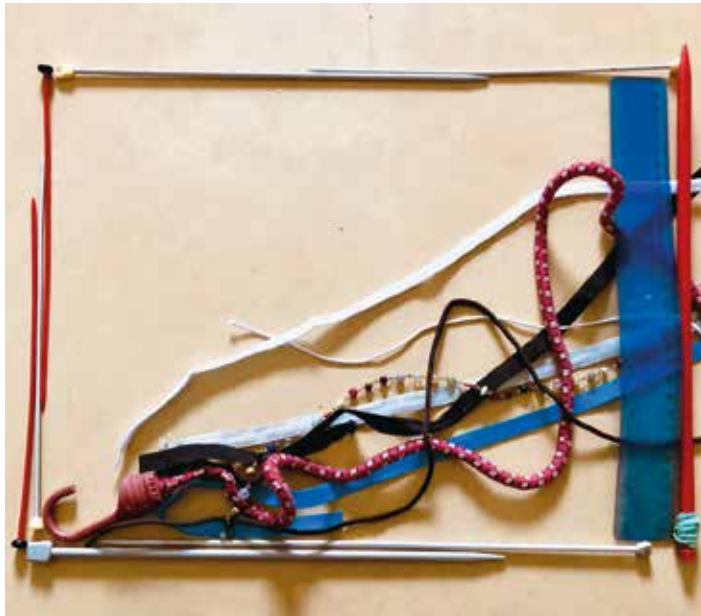
#goloookingforFeathersandNicethings #mysteryLeaf



Pandograph #2: Things in the garden that give pleasure

A pie chart showing the breakdown in percentages of various sources of pleasure in the garden in a particular given moment early in the pandemic. Sources of joy included blossoms from the weeping cherry tree, freshly flowered and strongly scented daphne sprigs, lichen on bark, wood splinters from a recently delivered load of redgum that looked like little angel wings, soil from the new son-built raised veggie bed, and bits of pinecones that resembled dragon scales and somehow offered obscure messages of strength, protection and courage amongst the increasing collective anxiety.

#courageofDragons #sourcesofSmallJoy



Pandograph #3: Sourcing mask elastic

A linear graph measuring the flurry of activity relating to the sourcing of elastic for homemade masks after announcements recommending the wearing of masks. Statistics indicate the widespread upending of sewing and craft boxes from under beds and on top of cupboards in search of appropriate materials. With a significant shortage in some elastics, the study also revealed the increased practice of looking in the backyard shed for alternatives, and the subsequent prevalence of the social media hashtags:

#cuttinguptheKidsNetballBibs

#NoReg!BloodywellCannotjustCutupanOckieStrap



Pandograph #4: Re-engaging with the disused games cupboard

A pie chart illustrating a percentage breakdown of entertainment time provided by each of the activities unearthed from the long-neglected games cupboard. Pre-internet staples of Scrabble and UNO dominated, closely followed by newcomers Quirkle, Bananagrams and that 1000 piece puzzle that someone got when they were eight and no one has ever done. Absent from the study is the time expended deciphering initials and tracing game dates from the ancient score pad in the old family Scrabble box, or perusing comprehensively marked up old Cluedo checklists from the 70s.

#seeingMydeadDadsNeatHandWritingAgain

#missScarletintheBilliardroomwithThecandlestick



Pandograph #5: Remote work and learning

A histogram plotting quantitative data and distribution of variables relating to the impact of remote work and learning, including simultaneous use of multiple devices, on mood and internal metabolism. Findings indicate the increased use of technology, screens and devices led to raised temperatures and a prevalence in grumpiness, a condition identified by many people's Nans as "shit on the liver". The study also found a growing incidence of technorage resulted in damaged equipment and hand injuries due to malfunctioning equipment and unstable internet connections.

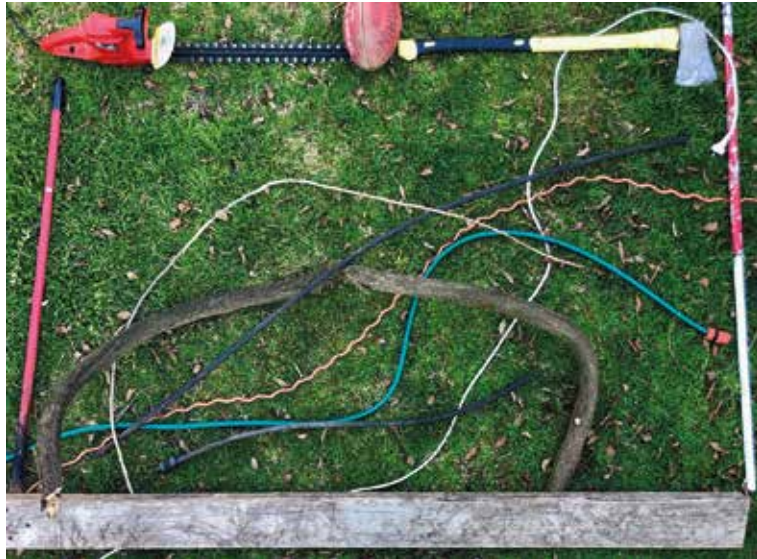
#shitontheliver #thef@%kingNetIsSooof@%kingSlow!!!



Pandograph #6: The exponential joy of making gnocchi

A linear graph indicating the exponential rise in joy experienced during the process of making homemade gnocchi during lockdown. The graph measures the curves relating to various contributing factors such as drinking a lovely red while cooking, having freshly picked flowers from the garden nearby as you do so, absentmindedly drawing a heart in the flour on the bench while a love song plays, and enjoying the look of the bright new birthday cutlery alongside the redness of the fresh cherry tomatoes to be tossed into the sauce.

#cooktheCurve #colours #lovelyThings



Pandograph #8: Backyard therapy

A linear graph tracing the therapeutic benefits and detrimental outcomes of finally attending to various backyard projects due to being stuck at home in lockdown. Projects that featured highly in the study were: trimming unruly hedges without cutting through the borrowed power cord; chopping back the wisteria that was lifting the roof off the shed; putting in the irrigation for the new son-built raised veggie bed; and finally having that promised kick of the footy with the kids (who have completely grown-up while waiting).

#windUptheCurveWhenYouhaveFinished #ItisOnTheList #Shit!theyreNotKidsAnymore



Pandograph #11: The power of flowers

A bar chart representing late winter flowers picked from the garden after the rain, with one shop-bought imported case. *#growFlowersforYourSoul*



Pandograph #12: Sneaky ciggies

A horizontal bar graph representing stats relating to sneaky cigarettes smoked under lockdown duress. The study was careful to protect the anonymity of participants, declining to reveal information about the distribution of butts apportioned to parents or children (grown) living in any particular house.

*#rollmeOneWillya? #gottaDart? #sneakyciggie
#needaf@%kingSmoke*



Pandograph #15: Awaiting test results – Part 1: Sock drawer memories

A psycho-domestic parallel bar chart documenting odd socks found in the process of optimistically cleaning out the socks and undies drawers whilst waiting for COVID test results after waking up with a sore throat. Not represented is the residual memory that each sock held, like a song or smell: the time you played on a soccer team when you lived in Alice Springs and felt like you had ten big brothers; a sock you wore when he broke up with you; the lucky sock you had on that time when...etc. etc.

#keepBusy #theGoodOldDays #alltheSocksareNowPairs



Pandograph #16: Awaiting test results – Part 2: Shadow thoughts

An inconclusive linear representation of dark, shadowy thoughts coming and going whilst stuck home alone, unable to leave the house for any reason until COVID test results come through.

#whatIf #itWillBeOkay #noItWont #yesItWill



Pandograph #19: Thinking in graphs

A combined histogram linear shower screen graph representing how the pandographer has started thinking in graphs during morning ablutions.

#steamyGraphs #showerStats #graphsEverywhere



Pandographs #29: Hope and doubt in bewildering times

An inconclusive early morning frosty winter pie chart all about fluctuations between hope, love and doubt whilst navigating a bewildering situation, and the variables and amounts involved in defining and influencing them. (But aren't all graphs about this in some way?)
#whatAllgraphsReallyMean #hopeVSDoubt #fluctuations
#whenWillthisEnd #okayNotokayOkay



Pandograph #30: Pando support groups

A vertical bar chart documenting the consistently wonderful high-levels of camaraderie, inspiration, insight and encouragement provided by the pandographer's kind, lovely, dedicated and talented writing friends and colleagues.
#zoomPandoWritingCatchups #keepEachotherGoing
#qualityFeedbackLoop #superGroup #groupofGold
#MYWC



Pandograph #31: Little vans come

A Venn diagram illustrating the rise of home consumption of seafood in various combinations, after increased availability to excited regional country residents through enterprising wholesale distributors in little vans whose usual city restaurant clients have been forced to close in the long hard lockdown.

*#cantGoToBeachSoEatSeafood #Yum
#SeafoodComestoTheCountry*



Pandograph #35: Emergency

A jagged linear bone graph representing elevated levels of pain and stress involved with a loved one's medical emergency during a pandemic lockdown.

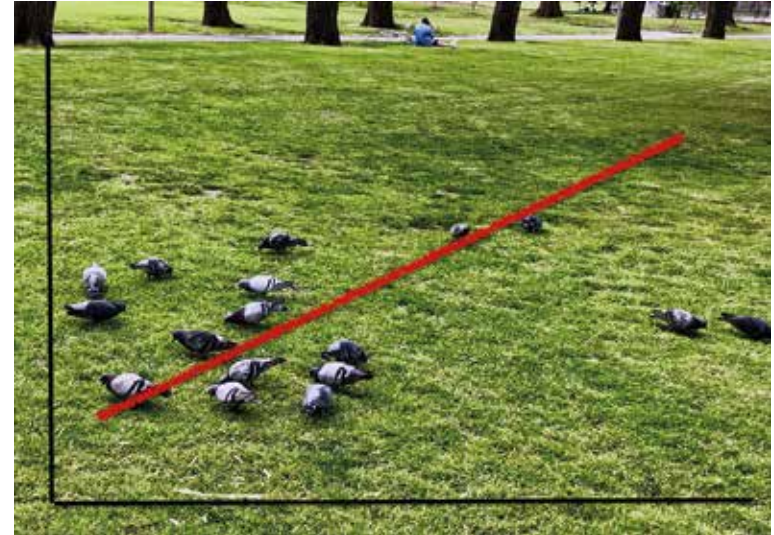
*#medicalStaffareLegends #noVisitors #COVIDtestFirst
#cantGoInWithHim*



Pandograph #36: Essential travel – Part 1

A distant city bar chart showing how faraway Melbourne feels right now, even when you're finally allowed back in it, but only because you're holed up waiting for someone to be operated on. This bar chart does not capture how the pandographer cried when they went to a deserted and closed-up Lygon Street to try to get a coffee after they dropped him off at the hospital.

*#essentialTravel #ringOfSteel #hopeHesOkay
#missingPrePandLife #theCityisSadandLonely
#strangeDays*



Pandographs #38: Essential Travel – Part 2

An Edinburgh Gardens scatter graph mapping the inspirationally ambivalent and carefree attitude of pigeons to the unusual emptiness of the normally crowded park; the pandographer's anxious wait for a call from the hospital; and the pandemic in general.

*#birdsDontCareAboutLockdowns #emptyParks #waiting
#metalPlateandScrews #PhewHe'sOKay*



Pandograph #44: The smell of good times

A barbequed sausage bar chart documenting elevated levels of joy around the first barby in months after the easing of lockdown restrictions.

#theSmellofSausages #twoVistorsAllowed #beenSoLonely

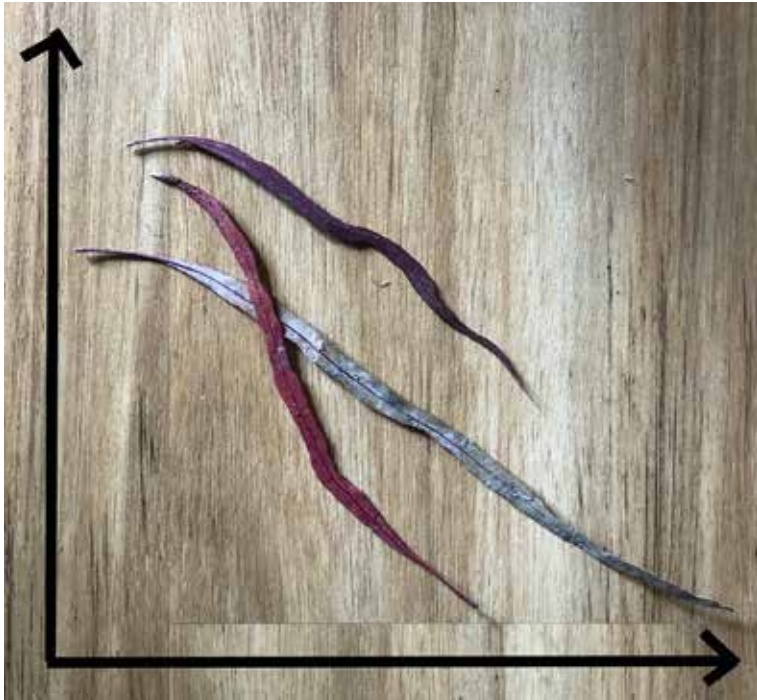


Pandograph #47: When the shit hits the fan

A binary decision diagram about how, when the shit hits the fan, it's all you can do to choose what tea to drink. While an increased use of teapots and loose-leaf tea emerged in lockdown 1.0, a prevalence of teabags has been recorded for lockdown 2.0. Despite these differences, the research affirms that "having a cuppa" remains one of the top emotional coping mechanisms for enduring isolation. *#shitHappens*

#NoMatterWhatPutOnThePot

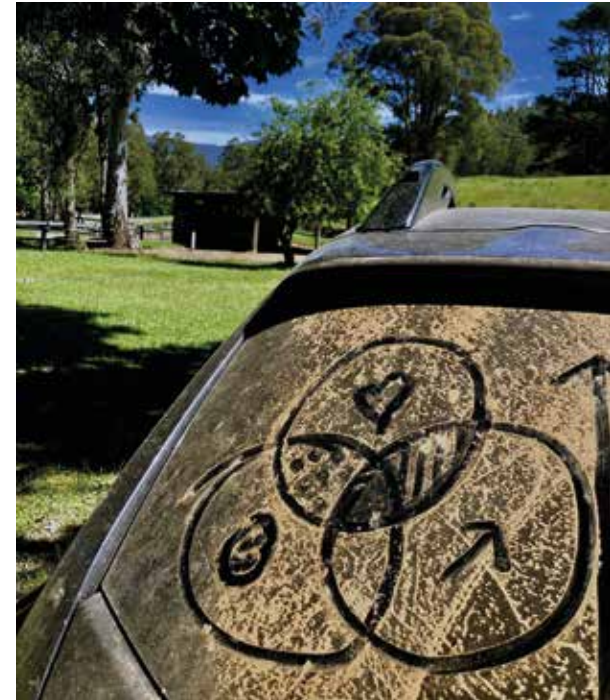
#F@%kitTeabagsAreEasier #bungtheKettleOnWillya



Pandograph #49: Reaching oo

A linear leaf graph reflecting the wonderfully downward curves of Victorian media pandemic graphs. The pandographer notes that these delicate eucalyptus leaves were found on the same pathway as the feathers that created the very first pandograph back when things began to get grim all those months ago.

*#doubleDonutDays #onyaMelbourne #onyaVic
#lockdownSuckedButItWorked*



Pandograph #51: The restorative impact of nature

A dusty bush windscreen Venn diagram about the bliss of being free to travel around, and the restorative power of nature.

*#goingBush #NoMoreRingOfSteel #pleaseWashMe
#noDont*



Pandograph #57: The beach as a rich source of data

A linear graph detailing the vast array of significant data relating to restoration of the soul, available on a given beach on the first proper holiday after lockdown.
#shellShocked #breathingOut #recoveringBytheSea #restorativePowersofPandography



Pandograph #68: Give peas (and beans) a chance

A broadbean bar chart and pea linear graph documenting attempts to stay positive and healthy by focusing on fresh homegrown pando produce rather than being anxious about emerging clusters and new cases.
#givePeasaChance #shellYourOwn #IgrewThese! #dadLovedBroadbeans #hope #pleaseNoMoreLockdowns

Thanks to my mother, whose unique creativity inspired the first pandograph.

THE HISTORY (AND FUTURE) OF PANDOGRAPHS

The full suite of pandographs document one person's experiences and feelings of the 2020 pandemic, including over 100 days when "Stage Four" lockdown restrictions prohibited people in the state of Victoria from moving between the city of Melbourne and regional areas. The Victorian lockdown restrictions have been recognised as some of the hardest, strictest, and longest lockdowns in the world, enforcing widespread business shutdowns and home-based work and education, as well as restricting people to a 5km radius of their homes. Exceptions were made only for essential approved reasons. It was the first time that state borders in Australia were closed and the first time most Australians experienced having their movements and capacity to freely travel restricted. At the time of writing, small clusters and cases resulting from overseas arrivals continue, and though community transmission is now almost non-existent, "snap" localised lockdowns continue to be enforced. Despite the positive results, life "as we knew it" is greatly altered and the pandographer responsible for the collection and presentation of the data contained within, intends to continue recording the lesser measured statistics of the current global pandemic, from both their regional and city-based perspectives, until there is an official declaration that the pandemic has ended.

Instagram: @alternative_pandographs

Glossary

Barby – barbeque

Bung – put

Cuppa – cup of tea or coffee

Dart – cigarette

Double donut day – a day on which there are zero cases of community transmission and zero deaths from COVID

Essential Travel – permitted, but conditional movement between the city of Melbourne and regional areas, for example for medical care

Footy – football (Australian Rules)

Going bush – travelling to the countryside/out of the city

Iso – isolation

Nan – grandmother

Netball bib – a cloth apron, worn over sports clothes, showing team position and held in place with light elastic straps

Ockie strap (octopus strap) – a stretchable rope with hooks on both ends used for securing items such as luggage to car roof racks

Onya – good on you / well done you

Pando – pandemic

Redgum – a type of Australian eucalyptus hardwood

Ring of Steel – the media term for the police and army checkpoints placed around the city of Melbourne to prevent regional travel and stop the virus spreading to country areas

Shit on the liver – irritable, grumpy

The Pot – teapot

Undies – underpants/underwear

Places

Victoria/VIC – a southern state of Australia

Melbourne – capital city of Victoria and second biggest city in Australia – known as Naarm by the Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung First Nations Indigenous peoples of the area

Alice Springs – a remote desert town in the middle of Australia known as Mparntwe by the Eastern Arrernte First Nations Indigenous peoples of the area

Edinburgh Gardens – beautiful public gardens in Melbourne’s artistic inner-city suburb of Fitzroy, renowned for parties, picnics and skateboarding

Lygon Street – a much loved, usually vibrant strip of cafes, restaurants, bars, cinemas and bookshops, in Melbourne’s inner-city suburb of Carlton

Jane Leonard is a writer, artist and educator living between Melbourne and north-east Victoria, Australia after many years of living and working in arid Central Australia. She has had work published in various anthologies, journals and newspapers around Australia. She also cowrote a play about Australian Rules Football called *Barracking* with Indigenous writer and performer Steve Gumerungi Hodder that toured the remote NT. More recently, her writing has appeared on the *Stereo Stories* website, and in the anthology entitled *2020 Vision: Stories from Melbourne’s Lockdown*. In addition to her writing, Jane has had art exhibited in Melbourne, Sydney and Alice Springs. In 2019, Jane gained a studio residency at Writers Victoria’s Glenfern residence.

Pandography: making sense of a bewildering world
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Published by Timglaset Editions, Malmö, Sweden
www.timglaset.com

Printed by Grafo Tryck, Limhamn, Sweden
First edition, 99 copies, March 2021

isbn 978-91-985539-6-3

Designed by Joakim Norling
Editing by Lyn Yeowart

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Pandograph #33: Graph it

A multigraph pando-painting about using graphs to try to make sense of a bewildering world.

#doesntalwayismakesense

#whatdoesitallmean #fridaynightiniso