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Thesis Title:
In the Shadow of Van Diemen’s Land: A Visual Investigation into Phenomenological, Ontological and Experiential Representations of Places and Their History

Abstract

This project investigates modes of representing the experience of a historically informed experience of place, through firsthand engagement with the Tasmanian Central Plateau by a subjective viewer. It explores the potential of printmaking practices of large-scale multi-plate intaglio engraving to represent this engagement, using the culturally charged symbolism of the endangered Miena Cider Gum trees of the Tasmanian Central Plateau.

The project’s context lies in the expanding theoretical literature around place, the historical record of the Tasmanian Central Plateau and associated Indigenous/European history surrounding the Cider
Gum tree, *Eucalyptus gunnii*, and a local and international artistic discourse which includes the work of Mike Parr, Raymond Arnold, Michael Schlitz, and Orit Hofshi. The theoretical discussion of the project is woven through concepts expressed in the writings of, among others, Peter Hay, Simon Schama, Jeff Malpas, Maria Tumarkin, Edward Relph, Roslyn Haynes and James Boyce, along with an examination of the historical documentation of the Cider Gum tree, particularly within that of the journals of George Augustus Robinson.

The project concludes that the connection between people and place is inherently interwoven, underpinned by historical knowledge, and fundamental to cultural identity, and seeks to represent this engagement through poetic expression of a distinctly Vandemonian subjectivity. This research has produced a body of artwork born out of subjective personal experience, expressed in a contemporary print-based installation, that makes use of the multiple and the layering possibilities of the medium to explore through elegy, analogy, and anthropomorphic form, notions of cultural and experiential saturation in place.
Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction to the Research Project
Page 4. Project Parameters
Page 8. Preface

Chapter 2. Philosophical Context
Page 13. Towards a Vandemonian Place

Chapter 3. Historical Context
Page 42. The Melliferous Cider Tree
Page 69. My Head on a Spit for the Price of a Passage to England
Page 75. Gunnii
Page 77. Plateau Traumascapes & Post-Apocalyptic Terrain

Chapter 4. Contemporary Art Context
Page 84. Paths Towards Representations in a Contemporary Art Context

Chapter 5. How the Project was Pursued
Page 114. Straddling the Great Void of Forgotten Memory and Unwritten History
Page 116. Early Work and Initial Experimentation
Page 121. An Indelible Experience Translated
Page 129. Gunnii Prints
Page 146. Ink and Sweat
Page 154. Shed Printing and the Mojo-pin

Chapter 6. Conclusion
Page 160. Concluding Thoughts

Bibliography
Page 168. Bibliography