

Commissioned artworks for Exhibition 18 Oct- 18 Dec 2018
Hume Global Learning Centre and Library, Gee Lee Wik Gallery Craigieburn

Heather Hesterman

Title: TREE PROJECT

"We seem to understand the value of oil, timber, minerals and housing, but not the value of unspoiled beauty, wildlife, solitude, and spiritual renewal". Bill Watterson

This project aims to examine the built and natural environments as sites for investigation and documentation within the City of Hume, exploring new residential housing, commercial and suburb developments as they form and encroach into native grasslands and woodlands, creating intermediary zones where sections of the landscape are in a state of flux.

Blocks and corridors of land wait discreetly behind fenced veneers of colour-bond presenting a clean aesthetic of new and modern housing development to all who drive by. These are spaces in progress, transitional zones that are temporarily forgotten until developed. Many are repositories of excess soil, building detritus, rubbish left to be cleaned up at a later date. Perhaps these *interspaces* conceal the real wealth of the suburb, within the depths of the soil.

Housing affordability and the dream of home ownership creates a single repetitive formula, 'single house + garden plot' as a popular and dominant model for new housing developments in Australia and around the world. The City of Hume is no exception with many recent immigrants arriving in Australia seeking a better life with home and land ownership a part of that equation.

The creation of new suburbs and housing developments demands valuable resources in the form of building materials, new infrastructure and services, carving up farming land and grasslands with native bush into economical plots.

Post-colonization, bush and grasslands are commonly valued from a western perspective of ownership and maintenance with little spiritual recognition. An acknowledgment of Indigenous perspectives and cultural reciprocity is crucial to understanding the landscape as a lived experience rather than as an abstract notion.

Recipients of Australian citizenship ceremonies often receive an Australian native plant as a symbol of establishing new roots in their adopted country. As cities around the world become more homogenous it the distinct flora and fauna that provides experiential difference.

TREE PROJECT embodies a practice of fieldwork; collecting data and immersive techniques of 'being in a place' and observing a site. The role of the physical and human geographer is to question and record our environments, to notice how climatic forces have shaped the lands and how this impacts on our present and future ecological habitation.

Adapting to a changing climate puts stress on environments. Trees are particularly vulnerable as they are unable to draw up roots to relocate to more favourable conditions. This exhibition is the result of observing within the City of Hume, presenting both ordinary and poetic perspectives.

I would like to thank the following people for their assistance with this project: Tobias Hengeveld, Anna Clabburn, Jo Russell, Harley Taylor-Marshall, RMIT University Print Studio, Classic Colour Copying, Garth Henderson, Sarah Tomasetti, Maurizio Toscano, Scarlet Sykes Hesterman, Roger Sykes and my girls.

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Title: MOBILE FOREST

media: Pine, formply, acrylic, soil, plants

size: 75cm x 1.5m x 2.4m

2018

Fabrication Harley Taylor-Marshall

This mobile timber structure is built using *Pinus radiata* and Formply (utilised in the construction of many residential houses), and filled with native plants and trees. As a living sculpture it will reflect its environment and reminds the viewer of a landscape lost, and that perhaps in the future we will need to take our landscape and oxygen supply with us. The irony and melancholia inherent in the precariousness introduced by climate change is not lost on the artist's imagination. *MOBILE FOREST* highlights Indigenous flora as a valuable resource whilst evoking the transitory nature of migration. Acknowledging that many of the City of Hume's residents have relocated to this area for employment and housing, and employing psycho-geographical methods, this forest will go for a walk, relocating from place to place- a memory of a native bushland now replaced by development. As the forest moves throughout suburbia it will be a point of engagement with community, as a performative object it is both incongruous and whimsical.

Title: Map

Media: paper, crayon, graphite and string-line

Size: variable

2018

This artwork involves creating a map with of the girth of a 1:1 ratio of the *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, River Red Gum, many trees predating colonization within The City of Hume. Created onsite, these records not only capture the size of the tree at this moment in time but also each contributors name and age at the point of publicly recording the girth through rubbing/frottage.

These will form an installation of works on paper. This artwork captures and forms a living memory with a snapshot of a moment of time through participatory actions. By immortalising the surface of the tree on paper - both tree and human activity is preserved. Acknowledging the names of everyone who participated as part of the artwork recognises the contribution and efforts of everyone that has invested in creating this project at a local level, as well as the members of the living community of Craigieburn.

Images of both Mobile Forest and Map will form an on going collection to be exhibited in the Gee-Lee Wik Doleen Gallery.

Title: Witness

Media: screenprint onto stained hardwood plywood

Size: 94cm x 4.3m. multiple panels, each panel 40cm x 60cms

2018

Images of predominantly River Red Gums and other *Eucalyptus* trees species appear as positive and negative images, ghost-like; these species once flourished amongst the grasslands within the City of Hume. These trees were removed for clearing paddocks for farming with the timber utilised for firewood and construction. Straight trunk trees were sourced and harvested, leaving inferior graded trees with their twisted limbs and gnarled trunks to grow. These River Red Gums are survivors and are a reminder of a past before our times.

Title: Fieldwork

Media: digitally printed aluminium composite board

Size: variable, each panel 14.8cm x 21cm

2018

Fieldwork is a photographic journey through the City of Hume, a documentation that investigates the intersection of place, community and ecology. The aluminum cladding references surfaces employed in housing construction acting as a counterpoint to some of the more idyllic depictions of landscape. Mounds of dirt removed for constructing housing are a visual reminder that all metals were once buried deep within the earth's rocky structures. This geology is the foundation for the specific native flora found within the City of Hume. *Fieldwork* is both a narrative and observation of a changing landscape, focusing a lens onto construction sites, environmental reserves and romantic depictions of land.

Title: Reeds

Media: Single channel HD video loop, 2mins: 32secs

2018

Reeds presents an idyllic setting that encompasses introduced and native plant species, primarily Blackberry and River Red Gum. Blackberries spread prolifically due to their reproductive and adaptive abilities, deliberately aided by the former director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens (1857- 1873), scientist Ferdinand von Mueller. Von Mueller cultivated blackberries at the Botanic Gardens and spread the seeds throughout the bush of Victoria. In assisting with their dispersal Von Mueller was unaware of how wildly they would disperse and flourish. Establishing European plants during colonial Victoria provided a link to a culture on the other side of the world. The babbling brook, blackberry and reeds amongst the backdrop of the mighty River Red Gums creates a picturesque setting with suburbia located at a distance although encroaching. One is reminded of how nature and landscape can be regarded equally through a romantic and colonial lens, viewed as both pleasant and a site to be conquered.

Title: Opportunity

Media: digital prints

Size: 42cm x 29.7cm

2018

Opportunity depicts an image of the open hills and countryside within the City of Hume complete with homestead in the distance. A landscape undulating with grasses and trees dotted in the background following possible watercourses. This site with its open plains and deep geological history is at the edges of encroaching housing developments, both necessary as Victoria's population increases with demands for housing and yet to maintain open spaces is an on going pressure for Council. There are many competing stakeholders, agriculture, green open space, preserving habitats for native species and creating new opportunities for housing is a difficult balance to achieve. Yet this landscape presents an alternative view of green space filled with potential. It remains an open question, repeated with a stack of images that slowly diminishes as visitors remove each image one print at a time from the gallery to a new location. The viewer is complicate in the act of removal. *Opportunity* privileges a non-ocular perspective, a sensory work with papers rustling as hands touch and remove the prints from the volume of the stack. This is a reductive action. The volume of the stack is a series of collective moments of actual time composed of the past, present and future and yet it is not infinite. The stack, as a geological and environmental stratum slowly diminishes a sheet at a time, barely noticeable, however each individual action connects to an impact on the whole volume.