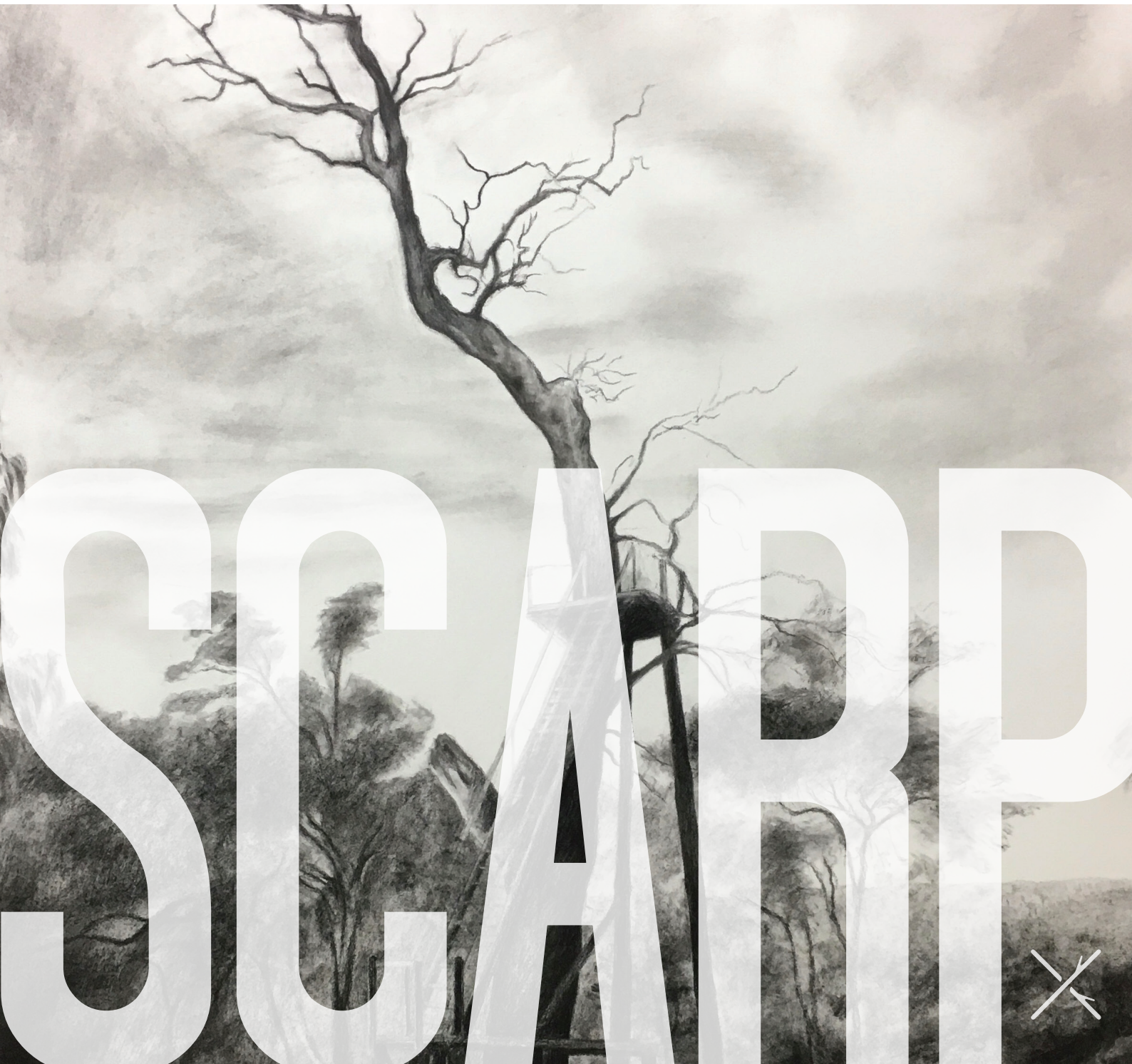


THE ALTERNATIVE ARCHIVE

*SCARP: The landscape, history and
experience of areas along the Darling Scarp.*



“I began to wonder about the kinship between place and the arts - not so much how certain places seem to encourage art, or how the arts have influenced the way we perceive place, but how the arts themselves are places - virtual places.” - Yi-Fu Tuan

Introduction by Fran Sullivan-Rhodes

The area of the Darling Scarp, stretching from Bindoon to Pemberton, encompasses sites of historic significance, of cultural importance to the Indigenous peoples who have lived here from time immemorial, along with sites of astonishing bio-diversity and of a richness of natural resources. This is a site of complexity and interconnection of stories, stories that the artists in SCARP have responded to or reimagined in their works. In this reimagining of stories SCARP effectively contributes to the Alternative Archive Project.

The Alternative Archive creates a composite view of creative practice, and concerns regarding places and histories, of regional artists across Western Australia. Artists were invited to consider the nature of archives and of histories, representing invented and actual stories and information encouraging a playful appropriation of strategies for organising and presenting information. Some of these strategies evoke other archives, like cabinets of curiosity, that present artefacts as part of some obscure collection. The exhibitions that comprise the Alternative Archive from Karratha to Esperance have been as diverse in their interpretations of the brief as are the artists involved.

Scything across the state, marking the bounds of the coastal plain, the Darling Scarp's wealth of mineral and timber resources have seen a succession of settlements and mills springing up and clinging to the land, many of them being erased by bushfire. Traces of these sites and the people who lived in and worked them and attempted to home themselves, persist and poke through the bush that has re-established itself in the wake of fires.

SCARP sees the revivifying of stories and details of the landscape and histories of the Darling Scarp, from the ground and plants and tales of the area. Katrina Virgona commemorates the legend of Moondyne Joe, through materials that are tied to the same landscape in which Brett Canet Gibson's still-life photographs find their subjects and that provide the tapestry of light through and over leaf and branch, which Sarah Thornton-Smith's intricate paper works and Jenni Doherty's paintings encourage us to recall and to delight in.

Carmen Tyrer creates a Wagga Rug as a way of retelling a story of loss, one that resonates with the erasure of settlements through fire

and presents one of the personal histories of beautiful endeavour in harsh circumstances that resonate with the land around Holyoake and Dwellingup and elsewhere through the forests of the Scarp. These themes of loss and longing also run through the auto-biographical paintings of Sue Leeming. Helen Seiver and Jan Mullen's use found objects evocatively, calling up memories of other places through echoes of memory.

Catherine Higham brings to life the lives of creatures that share this landscape, her work and that of Patricia Hines capture traces of the creatures that are endemic to the areas of the Scarp and coastal plain, a habitat that is increasingly threatened. David Rees represents the cycles of destruction and regeneration that form part of the nature of this place, creating a sculptural synthesis of landscape. Monique Tippet and Julie Cox work with materials that speak of this area and its histories, through their use of timber and bracken fern the found-remains of endemic species. Their works are pieces of the place to which they respond and that are inquisitive about the non-human lives that form part of the complex web of this landscape.

Sites of colonial impact on the landscape, that pierce hillsides or punctuate the bushland with watchtowers populate Rob Gear's paintings, relating a history of forceful emplacement in the region of the Scarp. Sites of a more violent impact on the indigenous people of the area merge with baroque images of disaster in Fran Sullivan-Rhodes' paintings. Stories of this landscape's significance within Nyoongar culture, of the Wagyl, and of being in and with the land, run through Sarah Mills' sculptural works and Maitland Hill's pyrographs.

With Lost Eden Creative, Dwellingup, Monique Tippet has provided a space for exhibitions that focus on curated contemporary art. This space is situated in the context of a regional town with a history of resilience and tenacity and a reliance on and vulnerability to nature, with its resources, its fragile ecosystems and fire. Poised on the edge of the Scarp, which gives its name to this group exhibition, Lost Eden is a point of connection to draw together the works of all the artists represented into this Alternative Archive exhibition, at once a testament to aspects of places, and also a coalescing of fragments that become their own place .



Brett Canet-Gibson

The drowning noun, 2019
Printed on canvas/framed.
60cm x 40cm.

Where is it memory resides?
Can inanimate objects hold active memories?

The drowning noun is a series of still life photographs and poetic fragments re-authoring discarded possessions. Inspired by the 'Great Doubt' that resides deep within the Zen Buddhist koan, the drowning noun offers neither answer nor certainty and invites individuals to engage in a personal truth—to navigate the narrative of now, punctuated by thoughts of then. Made with footpath found piano wire, canvas, wood, string, toy, book and flora, the drowning noun is a marriage of memory and make-believe, debating alternate storylines.

We see. We seek. We speak. We lie.
Our identities are anything but single-storied—no one story can sum us up. We are multi-storied. We are the drowning noun.



Julie Cox

Mending, 2019, Bracken fern and cotton thread, 150cm (h) x 100cm (w)

My artwork has always contained a sense of fragility and delicacy. My creative processes are simple, repetitive and meditative. Materials are natural and familiar.

I aim to keep my work as natural as possible, and to present simple objects in a different context. My work often features the cross symbol, and has represented togetherness (addition), first aid (healing), religion, death, and 'X' marks the spot.

Our family farm in Roelands is situated at the base of the Darling scarp. Its southern boundary is the Collie River. A number of years ago I received government funding to rehabilitate the riverbank. The result is an amazing transformation – a wilderness. It has become a place of stillness and inspiration. I try to source materials for my art from our farm, the seasons dictating choice and availability. For this autumn/winter piece, I was drawn to the lacey appearance of Bracken fern (Pteridium esclentum) and its colour range throughout its lifespan (glossy green to dull silver).

A little piece of the environment mended, so it can heal us in return. To exist in harmony with nature, I believe, is essential for survival.



Jenni Doherty

The Comfort of Green, 2019
Diptych, 120cm (h) x 90cm (w) each

My Studio and my life are in the Ferguson Valley. It is where I work on my art, teach and learn. It is very green. The forest is old. I am held in the comfort of green. It has been there always, a lot of the time taunting me, a city girl, to find a way in through my art. Each window is filled exclusively with leaves.

Our move here has been in the later part of our lives, and the last part of my mother's. Her days are now altered with Alzheimer's.

“What is it like to witness such unraveling, what is it like to experience it? As if to answer our question leaves flew in the wind, there was a scattering, a loss of coherence.”
Sophie Cunningham, City of Trees 2019

The veil that covers her world weighs heavily on us all. There is nothing we can do for her unraveling but love. There is a lot we can do to prevent the remaining green leaving our unraveling world. It too will take love.

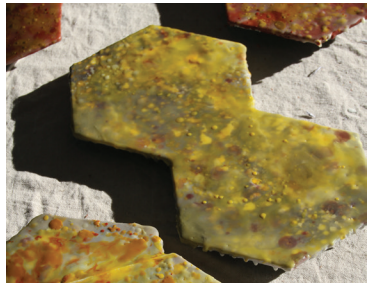


Rob Gear

Atonement, 2019
Charcoal on Aches
76cm (h) x 56cm (w)

My recent work responds to colonization and how Europeans considered this land to be an “empty” continent after it was discovered. I believe that the landscape, with its bountiful yet seemingly elusive resources, defined two cultures. Each so completely unlike the other, each invalidated by the other. One culture’s spirit and beliefs were embroidered in the landscape. The other’s embroidered on the landscape.

Ever since I was a young boy, I have wondered what this continent would have been like before it was forcibly taken from the original custodians. The Darling Scarp drawings and paintings are largely reimagined works that reference archival photos found in the Battye Library. They consider what the Scarp was like before and after settlement. They allude to a sense of paradise lost.



Catherine Higham

Wild Thing, 2019
Laser cut plywood, encaustic ground,
beeswax/caster wax, pigment.
Dimensions: Variable

‘Wild Thing’ is my first endeavor with encaustic media, with beeswax provided from the hives of a professional beekeeper on our farm. I like being able to integrate materials in paint provided by bees I know. I like it a lot. Thankyou bees.

You make my heart sing.

Revealing some of the prime movers and residents of the Darling Scarp, an assemblage of honey coloured hues record the industry of bees. Endemic Jarrah and Marri forest ecologies of the Darling Scarp are indicated in a range of honey tones. These tones refer not only to honey the viscous material, but also microscopic pollens suspended within it.

Humans are not the only species on the planet to archive information. Pollens from different flowering plants carry DNA, the ultimate archive storehouse: Living, ancient and adapting to unknown futures.

You make everything groovy.



Maitland Hill

Songlines, 2019
Plywood and pyrography
176cm (h) x 60cm (w)

Many people will consider the body of land that covers the Perth hills to be the Darling escarpment. It has a much richer and deeper significance to Nyoongar people.

We know it as the Songline and as an Ancient Dreaming Trail, that was formed by our spiritual creator the Wagyl.

The cultural landscape is very important to Nyoongar people. So, this art work is dedicated to the Indigenous history of the traditional Dreaming trail; and for the sharing of Dreaming knowledge.

Expression of culture has always been important to Nyoongar people through ceremony, art and dance. Knowledge was transmitted from generation to generation in that way. The artwork is a revival of cultural identity and portrays ‘the emu dance’, and the Dreaming tradition of Nyoongar people.



Patricia Hines

New Holland Honeyeater - Cast
2019
Bisque fired paper clay, slip
120mm x 160mm

“SCARP, FRAGMENT, SCAT, GRAVEL, TRACK, ASH, REPTILE, FELL, STONE, URAVEL, IMPRINT, PAD, MAMMAL, TIMBER, FERAL, MINE, INSECT, SCRAPE, BARK, TRACE, ESCAPE, FEATHER, BURN, PAST, LAND, BIRD, CLAW, FUNGI, HUMAN ANIMAL, REMNANT, FUTURE, LITTER, STEP, REGENERATE, NECTAR, WATER, END, INTRODUCE, SCOUR, BEGIN, BLOSSOM, FOOD, HELP, SOURCE, FARM, WAY, FOREST, BONE, FIRE, STEP, USE, FOSSIL, SCARP.”



Sue Leeming

Beenyup: Place of water, 2019
Oil, latex and ink on linen
80cm x 100cm

These paintings are autobiographical in nature and respond to internal stories of loss and remembrance, of a yearning for connection and longing for places that now live only in my memories, in the stories I pass on and in the stories that can’t be told. They speak of the loss of loved ones before their time, of futures that will never be realised.

Notions of sense of place and belonging and nostalgia for the past are ongoing themes that continue to inform the development of my practice. These paintings are intrinsically link to my art practice and the ongoing development of a body of work exploring the fluidity of process, medium and the human psyche. They speak of a spiritual connection to the land and acknowledge those evocative places in my local environment that trigger my bodily memories of home thus connecting past and present experiences of what it is to have a place to belong.



Sarah Mills

Extinct, 2019
Installation – size variable
Sticks

Extinct represents the snake-like mega-fauna known as the Wagyl whose extinction was due to the native practice, fire-stick farming. Noongar people believe the Wagyl created the Darling Scarp’s hills and was the keeper of its lakes. Carved and waxed branches of the Scarp’s abundant ghost gum – which housed animals in its burnt hollows during farming – signify ghostly sheds of snake skin. This skin speaks of spiritual archives that cast important memories on the landscape for non-indigenous Australia to acknowledge.

Using materials and methods adhering to pre-colonial research, this work is a contemporary experiment mirroring indigenous practices, knowledge and culture. It fills a space between the indigenous beginnings and post-colonisation, also reflecting the ghost towns which now remain.

Snakes shed skin for growth. Extinct may encourage different races who have created alternative archives within the scarp to grow together to create a remodelled archive for future histories of this place.



Jan Mullen

Sweet Black Tea, 2019
Crockery, linen and silk, gouache
Various sizes.

The Dwellingup fires of 1961 - the town and the bush were devastated.

One of the three buildings left standing, The Pub, became the town's shelter and spirit. The kitchen supported those on the front line, and those waiting were kept busy.

An essence of normality maintained with the making of a sweet black tea.



David Rees

Reclamation of Ligneous, 2019
Wood, plaster, found objects, synthetic polymers, 58cm x 70cm

'Reclamation of Ligneous' is an attempt to express the arbory spirit of decay and rebirth in three dimensions. Fire and stone are elementary in the process of forming the woody veneer that blankets the scarp. Biology and geology fuses together, liquefied by seasonal rain, turning rivers into arteries and creeks into veins wetting the forest of another dimension.

Roots penetrating deep into the laterite earth, recoil with ominous prediction of simian plague. 'Reclamation of Ligneous' in its human postured form, is ascending and descending, lamenting the rise of the anthropocene death of a mega flora that stood for a thousand years, finally succumbs, surrendering life giving nutrient, accommodating the rise of colonies of moss, lichen and the unknown.

Regurgitated from detritus of a once immense tree, a universe is set forth from the primordial crucible.

A ubiquitous scenario that's ever at play.

Entropy is the end game ...



Helen Seiver

A Hot Cold Case, 2019
Installation of various objects

Words create impressions, uphold expectations and have the ability to influence how we think and live. This installation explores the power of words and their juxtaposition with certain objects to give context and uphold a particular perspective. The individual words have been taken from West Australian Archives of early colonial documents and diaries affirming a particular (paternalistic/ colonial) attitude. In terms of contemporary use, some are still used to sustain a similar privileged viewpoint in spite of the passage of time since colonisation. With conscious consideration and use of contemporary terms, words can influence the foundation of a more equitable and inclusive Australian society.



Fran Sullivan-Rhodes

Les Fleurs du Mal I. 2019w
Banksia seed case, gold-leaf, antique glass millinery ornament, copper wire and sheet, wood and glass dome.

In responding to the idea of an Alternative Archive, I have focused on the interconnection of cultures that is written in the landscape, through plants and artefacts and stylistic traces that refer to other places and on imaginary pasts and futures that might help to support an empathic engagement with place and peoples.

The collision of European aesthetics and flora and fauna of the Scarp, particularly the area between Dwellingup and Pinjarra, have led to my Fleurs du Mal, a series of impossible, imaginary plants that are hybrid in their combining of natural and found materials. A Blooming Violence includes a series of paintings that appropriate images of massacres from European history and juxtapose these with traces of documentation of massacres from Western Australia and aims to question the limits of empathy and the use of fiction for highlighting gaps in history.



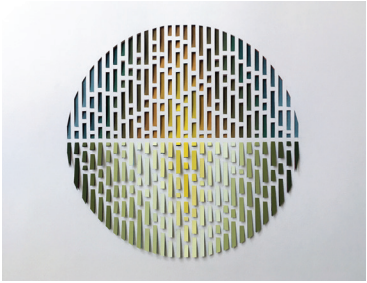
Monique Tippett

Inner Secrets, 2019
Jarrah, ink, gold leaf, copper and brass
255cm (h) x 72cm (d)

The genesis of this work arose from watching early footage of a sleeper cutter using hand tools to split an entire log along its length; "*the log was reluctant to yield its secrets*", was the filmmakers narration; watching this I thought, 'what secrets does a tree hold'? It holds a hidden record of the environmental conditions it has grown in, concentric layers laid down in rainfall and good years, in fire and drought.

With the threats that lay upon this rare biodiversity hotspot; bauxite mining, timber harvesting, introduced pests and disease, all on top of human induced climate change, I wonder what dire history is now being written in their hearts.

The egg is a potent and universal symbol of life; and yet it is also a metaphor for fragility. The golden egg, a further metaphor for untold value. In this work the egg is held between the two halves of a split log. It's position is tenuous, the slightest movement will see it crushed or dropped to the ground and destroyed. A 2 degree temperature rise seems so insignificant, a slight movement, but it will be enough to irrevocably alter the natural world as we have known it.



Sarah Thornton-Smith

Now, 2019
Gouache on paper, framed
60cm (h) x 60cm (w)

In May 1922, here in Darlington, DH Lawrence first formed an impression of the Australian bush. Heartened by Lawrence's writings, this suite of works is inspirited with my own.

Using cuts/folds in the paper to express the patterns and forms in the landscape whilst manipulating colourwaves to emulate nature's colours; symbols in the form of shapes came to represent an internal dialogue about how the landscape is experienced.

"Kindred" attempts to capture the mystery Lawrence writes about, the ovum-like shape symbolizing the immortalization that words and artworks can perpetuate, the palette representing the fragility, mystery and quietness of the Australian bush.

"Now" is an embodiment of my own experience - full of colours, light and shadows. "Hope", in the shape of the cross, with all its celebratory colours; exemplifies the juncture in our time today where the environment is under threat - a reminder to give pause to what we stand to lose.



Carmen Tyrer

"Mostly it is loss that teaches us about the worth of things", 2019, Various materials

My artistic life has been a continuous search for space, light, environment, people, feelings, healing, acceptance, etc.

A deep soul search for unity and stability that has been so absent from my life, have influenced an erratic sometimes disorganized development in my artistic endeavor.

I now realize that my need for expression has not changed but materials and techniques I have used and soon discarded for new ones follows in the same way that my life has evolved with its many twists and turns and ups and downs.

My creative process involves an intellectual, a sensory and a spiritual aspect.

A multitude of materials have passed through my hands and have given me different ways to express myself through the years.



Katrina Virgona

*Broad Arrow, 2019
Felted wool with horsehair & Moondyne rock, 25cm (h) x 26cm (w) x 4cm (d)*

Sifting slowly through various anecdotes, narratives and fabrications that shape the socio-cultural history of the Darling Scarp, I kept returning to the spirited escapades of local legend Moondyne Joe. It was the horse tales and jail breaks that prompted me to create a series of rock-based tributes to mark his feisty ways.

In her arts practice, Katrina works three dimensionally with a diverse range of materials including wool, wire, wood, fur and hair. Her work has been exhibited and published locally, nationally and internationally.

Curators:
*Anna Louise Richardson, Monique Tippet
Fran Sullivan-Rhodes*

LOST X EDEN

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