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## **PRINTMAKING AND THE LANGUAGE OF VIOLENCE**

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to the memory of my dearest friend  
Olga Vlasova,  
the late Curator of Prints, Russian Museum, St Petersburg.  
Printmaking brought us together in a lasting friendship  
that began in Tomsk, Siberia in 1990.

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the project is to demonstrate that the traditional processes of printmaking, in particular etching, are relevant as a medium for artistic engagement with the subject of violence. My research investigates how printmaking has developed its own unique visual language as a means of addressing violence in our society, and specifically how artists have depicted violence using the medium of printmaking.

To provide a context for my own practice, I examine artists from the past such as Jacques Callot, Francisco Goya, Käthe Kollwitz, Otto Dix and Pablo Picasso, all of whom engaged with the medium of etching to convey violence, as well as the work of contemporary artists Leon Golub, Nancy Spero, William Kentridge, Diane Victor, Sandow Birk, and Jake and Dinos Chapman which addresses issues such as war, social unrest and abuse of political power. The tradition of socio-political printmaking in Australia is also briefly examined, revealing a relative lack of contemporary artists in this field dealing with the theme of violence. This research informed the directions for my own work.

My own work began by addressing global violence issues. Experimentation with unconventional materials and processes formed an integral part of the journey. The resultant effects from this experimentation were layered into and became part of the work. The focus of my final work is on social violence in Australia, in particular the Cronulla riots of 2005. Thousands of people were involved in these riots, making them the largest racially motivated riots in Australian history.

The major work, *The Cronulla Riot*, is a large etching completely covering the gallery wall. My intention is to emphasise the chaos of the riot, imparted through the layers of figurative imagery, imbuing a sense of time. The scale of the work enables the viewer to feel immersed in the violence. The work challenges traditional printmaking boundaries by virtue of scale, methodology and subject matter.

The power of etching, using a painstaking autographic process, has given new life to the theme of violence; an issue not explored in the medium in relation to the Cronulla riots by any other contemporary Australian artist. The core technology of etching may be ancient, but it continues to present the contemporary artist with a powerful and dynamic medium for personal artistic expression.

## INTRODUCTION

As an artist I have always been concerned with producing work that reflects my feelings in relation to events that shape our world. In the past my work has explored themes such as war, political upheaval and ecological issues. On reflection, I can identify that there has been a violence undercurrent running through many of these works; not only in their subject matter but also in the way I have used my materials.



1. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Unknowable Land*. 1989.  
Oil on canvas, 90 x 140 cm.



2. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Crowd Scene*. 1993. Oil on canvas, 175 x 165 cm.

In my painting [1-5], I have always physically connected with and immersed myself in the process of making, a desire formed early in my art training when I was introduced to the working methods of the Abstract Expressionists. I was immediately emotionally attracted to these methods. My painting process employs layers of expressionist mark making in conjunction with extreme physical actions that disrupt the surface of the paint, such as erasing, scraping, and gouging.



3. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Battlefield of Love*. 1992.  
Mixed media, 107 x 75 cm.



4. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *The Spectator*. 1992.  
Mixed media, 107 x 75 cm.



5. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Acid Rain*. 1992.  
Mixed media, 107 x 75 cm.



This approach to painting has directly influenced my printmaking [6, 7] in which I have always employed and strived to use unconventional processes and materials, towards creating prints that possess a tactile and evocative feel. In contrast to traditional printmaking, my works are unique state prints; they are not editioned. Most are multiple panel assemblages, envisaged as a unified whole.



6. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *I Saw X and X Is Human*. 2003. Collagraph, etching, 225 x 180 cm.



7. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Wail of the Feegee*. 2007. Etching, silkscreen, 120 x 160 cm.

My project was given initial direction by a visit to the Museum of Political History<sup>1</sup> in St Petersburg [8] which houses a huge collection of Soviet propaganda art, memorabilia and photography.



8. Museum of Political History, St Petersburg, Russian Federation.



9. Museum of Political History, St Petersburg: Propaganda posters.



My eyes were immediately drawn to the propaganda posters [9, 11]. Composed using images of faces, aggressive body gestures and accusatory slogans, these posters are graphically powerful, exciting, insightful, and contextually disturbing. Printed using traditional printmaking methods, they are eye catching through their use of bold and intense colours.

<sup>1</sup> The Museum of Political History at 4 Ulitsa Ksheshinskaya, St Petersburg, Russia was in previous times the headquarters of the Bolsheviks, and the place where Lenin often gave speeches from the balcony. I visited the museum in October 2007 around the time of commencement of my project research.





10. Museum of Political History , St Petersburg: Tabloid stage set.



11. Museum of Political History, St Petersburg: Political posters.

Also included were strange displays promoting the good life in the Soviet Union; tabloid staged sets of objects [10], memorabilia, propaganda and dressed dummies juxtaposed in a kind-of Wunderkammer arrangement. The displays were quirky, and could be mistaken for contemporary art installations.



12. Museum of Political History, St Petersburg: The dimly lit room.

One dimly lit room [12] particularly stays in my mind. World War Two black and white photographs were displayed on its walls, in a single line wrapping around the whole room: disturbing images of human suffering and death, the consequences of war at its worst. Looking at the photographs [13], I drew a connection between Goya's *Disasters of War* (1810-15) etchings, created over two hundred years ago, and these photographs of the disasters of modern warfare. The photographs conveyed a similar message.



13. The Museum of Political History, St Petersburg: Photographs of human suffering and death

On my return from Russia, I reflected upon the disturbing museum photographs and Goya's etchings. Both evoke nightmarish visions of violence; their power is etched on my mind. I thought about the violence that permeates society and the way the media projects an awareness of the violence. The history of socio-political printmaking reveals a recurring theme in times of war and social unrest, that of violence. The medium of the print has been used both in an overtly propagandistic way to promote certain political views as well as by artists responding to political events. I locate my work in the context of the latter group though some of my formal pictorial strategies have been influenced by the tradition of the Russian political poster.

There has been a strong tradition of socio-political printmaking in Australia. Pursuing the theme of violence offered the opportunity to contribute to that tradition.

Out of all this thinking, the theme of violence emerged as the theme for the project.

The project aims to demonstrate the relevance of the traditional processes of printmaking, in particular etching, as a medium for artistic engagement with the subject of violence.

My research investigates how printmaking has developed its own unique visual language as a means of communicating violence in our society. The research explores

- The historical role of fine art printmaking as a tool for socio-political comment
- How contemporary artists have depicted violence using the medium of printmaking
- Experimental printmaking techniques appropriate to depicting violence

This research and experimentation serves as a point of departure for embarking on my own work, culminating in addressing violence in contemporary Australian society. In an evolving personal journey, as discussed in chapter three, the final thematic focus rests upon the Cronulla riots in 2005. To enable evaluation of the significance of the final work in context, the research includes

- An outline of socio political printmaking in Australia
- Discussion of the significance of the Cronulla riots in Australian history

In the light of the above research, my central research questions are:

- Is the power of etching, as evidenced in historic and contemporary printmaking, an effective medium for conveying violence?
- How might the work of these historical and contemporary artists inform my approach to discovering a personal language for my own work?
- What experimental techniques may further contribute to the power of my etching?

This exegesis is divided into three chapters and a conclusion.

Chapter One provides an overview of the central argument along with background discussion related to the choice of violence as a central theme. Violence and the power of etching is discussed in relation to the historical artists Jacques Callot, Francisco Goya, Käthe Kollwitz, Otto Dix and Pablo Picasso, all of whom engaged with the medium of etching to convey violence, and used figurative compositions based on the violence of war. Discussion follows in relation to social violence in Australia, with particular focus on the events at Cronulla in 2005, the scene of the worst race riots in Australian history. There follows an overview of socio-political printmaking in Australia, providing the context for evaluation of the significance of my work and its contribution to the field.

Chapter Two explores the work of contemporary artists who engage with violence in their work. Issues such as war, social unrest and political power are addressed in the work of Leon Golub and Nancy Spero. The historical influence of Callot, Goya and Dix is explored in the work of William Kentridge, Diane Victor, Sandow Birk, and Jake and Dinos Chapman. I then discuss how they have informed my approach to my own work.

Chapter Three describes how the studio work was pursued. This is broken up into sub headings that plot the progress of the work. I discuss how my work for the project evolved, progressing from the use of photo mechanical processes of reproduction, to experimenting with a range of mark making techniques, to surface effects created from unconventional and hazardous materials. Contemporary artists working with similar materials and processes are discussed briefly within this context. The latter part of the chapter explains in detail how my major work, *The Cronulla Riot*, was realised.

The Conclusion provides a summary of how the project realised its aim.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE CENTRAL ARGUMENT

### Towards violence

The history of printmaking embraces the history of human violence.

*Our world, as we all know, is an extremely violent one. Like everything else in the world, this violence has a history and this history has been documented by printmakers since the invention of the printing press.*<sup>2</sup>

Violence has always been a central theme in art and literature; a simple reflection of the unfortunate realities of the world. The great artists Lorenzo Ghiberti, Peter Paul Rubens and Pablo Picasso were all drawn to violence for the same reason. It was a means to see more, feel more, and know more.<sup>3</sup>

Picasso, the master of peace, painted some of the most compelling anti-war images in history.

*Picasso hated violence, but he also knew it intimately. He loathed it, but he needed it, least on canvas. And the reason he could paint precise, truthful denunciations of war was because he acknowledged the creative violence of art. Violence is not marginal to the history of European high art - it is at the core of the great tradition.*<sup>4</sup>

We are constantly exposed to violence, through both personal experience in reality and through the mass media. War, racial riots, gang brutality, road rage and alcohol fuelled violence are all on the daily agenda. This constant exposure may well have the effect of inuring or desensitising us in our reaction to violence, or on the other hand becoming addicted to it.

But it is also likely that our fascination with violence satisfies some basic human needs. Adrenalin rush, stimulus to the imagination, fantasy, and the lure of adventure are all contributing factors which explain why millions of non-violent people, including myself, enjoy violent entertainment. I watch violent films and I find myself wanting to watch more. Inarguably much film and television and many computer games show simulated violence not reality; experiencing and seeing real violence is a totally different experience. Kata Kulakova observes that:

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<sup>2</sup> Chicago Maroon. *The Student Newspaper of the University of Chicago*.  
< <http://www.chicagomaroon.com> > Viewed 1 April 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, Jonathan. 'When the master of peace did violence'. *The Guardian*, 25 October 2003.  
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2003/oct/25/1?INTCMP=SRCH>> Viewed 30 May 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Jones, Jonathan. *Ibid*.

*To interpret violence, however, in the context of its representation in the arts (artistic images of violence) is hardly a usual act because violence in the 20<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has familiarized with art. What is going on? If it is true that violence is a sign of identification of the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> centuries, if it is true that violence is the dominant information of the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> centuries, if it's true that violence increasingly obsesses 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century art, if it's true that the theoretical and research praxis of the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> centuries increasingly focus on the topical compound of violence, then violence is unambiguously the dominant form of reality and civilizational par excellence.<sup>5</sup>*

Violence in the mass media, film, and in computer games is highly aestheticised, giving it an allure that heightens the visual experience. In the 1930s Walter Benjamin reflected on our experience of violence:

*Humanity that, according to Homer, was once an object of spectacle for the Olympian gods now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it is capable of experiencing its own destruction as an aesthetic enjoyment of the highest order.<sup>6</sup>*

This aesthetic enjoyment is reflected in the history of the film industry which reveals a strong tradition of themes about doomsday, apocalypse, nuclear war and the end of the world, in films such as *The Day The World Ended* (1955), *On The Beach* (1959), *Independence Day* (1996), *Armageddon* (1998) and *The Road* (2009).

Our culture is built on and dominated by images; we are increasingly becoming a world based on visual ideas. Writer and art critic Andrew Frost argues that our culture of images permeates everything, even the intimate and private parts of our lives. Frost also goes on to say that 'somehow our experience of the world is rendered unreal, fragmented and dislocated'.<sup>7</sup> So what makes art that engages with violence different to media representations of violence? I believe that art has the power to connect with viewers on a more personal level through the hand and the mind of the artist. As Andrew Frost puts it:

*The spectator feels at home nowhere, because the spectacle is everywhere ... The world is a fake and we know it. But when I look at the work of the artists who are recording our world, I feel something. The artists show us this world, they make us feel something. They give us an acute measure of where we are in this society of images. Their work is both a result of and a reaction to this world.<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> Kulakova, Kata. 'The Poetics and Hermeneutics of Violence'.  
<<http://www.interpretations.mk/tefst.asp?lang=eng&tekst=48>> Viewed 19 Jan 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin, Walter [1936]. Cited in Sassatelli, Monica. 'Aestheticized Life, An-aestheticized Art: The Case of Visual Artist Mona Hatoum. 2000'. <<http://www.parol.it/articles/sassatelli.htm>> Viewed 3 June 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Raynor, Kate. The Art Life: A Study Guide Episode 1: Out There ...  
<[www.abc.net.au/programsales/.../Art%20Life%20Study%20Guide.pdf](http://www.abc.net.au/programsales/.../Art%20Life%20Study%20Guide.pdf)> Viewed 19 November 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Raynor, Kate. Ibid.

The media representation of violence is a distanced observation captured by technological invention; any sense of the personal is often diminished by way of its repetitive mode of transmission. In contrast, the creative process is an interaction between the internal spirit of the artist and the physical act of production, thus giving a work of art its individual identity.

The words of contemporary American artist Sandow Birk succinctly encapsulate my own feelings on using traditional autographic printmaking processes to create art reflecting the world we live in.

*As an artist, I'm interested in how artworks function in the world we live in, the 21st century, and I'm interested in the times we live in. I want to make works that are about something that is interesting to me. I want to make works about our times and about the world. I'm continually interested in how making things by hand in the very slow, painstaking processes of centuries ago [printmaking] can still be relevant in the world today.<sup>9</sup>*

Birk's passionate dedication to 'making things by hand' in relation to the value of the 'hand' is reinforced by the thoughts of Anne Kirker:

*In the present age of ubiquitous digital technology, the 'hand' can add meaning to the creative process or be deemed superfluous. This is known as the 'autographic' in printmaking method terms. A further reading of the autographic may be that it offers a critical breathing space of random disorder in which life can emerge.<sup>10</sup>*

We experience the world around us through our senses. Visual experience plays an essential role and is a most effective method of communicating an idea. The language of vision determines, perhaps even more subtly and thoroughly than verbal language, the structure of our consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

Violence also has a language. On that language Lee summarises the thoughts of Mabel Morana:

*Violence is not just an act or series of events but a language that can be understood through its expression in literature and the arts, and by its impact on history and culture. Violence always tries to say something using an encoded and symbolic language.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> Row, D K. Interview with Sandow Birk on the Iraq War and beyond'. *The Oregonian*, 5 November 2009. <[www.oregonlive.com/art/index.ssf/2009/11/interview\\_sandow\\_birk\\_on\\_the\\_i.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/art/index.ssf/2009/11/interview_sandow_birk_on_the_i.html)> Viewed 18 May 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Kirker, Marjorie Anne. *Printmaking as an Expanding Field in Contemporary Art Practice: A case study of Japan, Australia and Thailand*. PhD submission Queensland University of Technology, 2009. <[eprints.qut.edu.au/29746/1/Marjorie\\_Kirker\\_Thesis.pdf](http://eprints.qut.edu.au/29746/1/Marjorie_Kirker_Thesis.pdf)> Viewed 8 May 2011, p181.

<sup>11</sup> Preble, Sarah and Duane. *Art Forms: An introduction to the visual arts*. Harper Collins, 1989, p38.

<sup>12</sup> Lee, Gretchen. 'Focus on Latin America Expands'. *Washington University In St.Louis Magazine*, Spring, 2010. <<http://magazine.wustl.edu/Spring10/Mabel%20Morana.html>> Viewed 2 July 2010.



My pursuit is to discover that language so that my printmaking, in the medium of etching, might give voice to my personal concerns in relation to violence. In voicing my concerns I am, however, mindful that:

*An artist should be a person who has deep feelings about what's going on in the world. But he also should realise that his role is not to be a political force; that, on the contrary, like the poet, he is related to the medieval clown. He makes free statements, says things that nobody else perhaps would dare to say, and does it with the force that comes from control of his medium. But he should not expect anything to happen as a result ...*<sup>13</sup>

Art can however provoke debate and discussion towards changing people's perception about what's going on in the world. As a 'medieval clown', I am optimistic in that my work may play a part in this regard.

### **Violence and the power of etching**

Printmaking as an artistic medium has always played a role in representing socio-political issues, violence being one of them. The act of printing requires forms of pressure to release the image from its matrix onto another substrate, thus creating an imprint of the original image. I have chosen to use etching<sup>14</sup> to create my images, a technique that deeply imprints an image into the surface of paper, an action that has a sense of permanency. As a process it offers endless possibilities for experimentation and manipulation of an image. In my printmaking I am always aware of the dangers of becoming too controlled and constrained by the process when it becomes just a means to an end. I believe this can have the effect of blurring the potency of the content and submerging any intended message. Jose Roca states:

*Printmaking is a tool, a powerful one, and only by acknowledging that its intrinsic qualities make it useful to say something that cannot be said equally well in other media, can it be reclaimed from technique-as-content and be understood as content through technique.*<sup>15</sup>

Throughout history artists have engaged with the language of violence in their work, however none more so than printmakers working with the medium of etching. There is something violent, volatile and wounding about the etching process. The etcher can take great delight in disfiguring a metal plate but must then await the outcome of the acids corrosive actions after it is inked and then printed. Unlike painting, in which a

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<sup>13</sup> Rosenberg, Harold. *The Case Of The Baffled Radical*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1976. p140.

<sup>14</sup> Macquarie Dictionary defines '**etching**' as "**1.** a process of making designs or pictures on a metal plate, glass, etc. by the corrosion of acid instead of by a burin." and "**2.** an impression, as on paper, taken from an etched plate."

<sup>15</sup> Roca, Jose. 'Printmaking: A Colony of the Arts'. *Working States Philagrafika*. <[www.philagrafika.org/workingstates1.html](http://www.philagrafika.org/workingstates1.html)> Viewed 15 March 2011.

painter might use a glaze to soften things, an etched image glares with a directness; nothing is softened, those dark blackened lines and tones are an imprint of the acid's biting action on exposed metal. The resistance of the metal plate challenges the artist. Tools are used to scrape, gouge and incise, and flames to scorch, and fuse resin dust and lava like substances. All of this can perhaps display the actions of an impassioned artist who uses the metal plate as a substrate for an emotional release. Words used in the creation of etchings such as foul bite, bleed, pull, needled, all relate physically and psychologically to the actions of violence.

The origins of etching have a strong connection to the violence of war. In fifteenth century Europe metal craftsmen used specially made tools such as the burin<sup>16</sup> to engrave decorative designs and coats of arms on body armour and helmets. The technique of etching was later used as an alternative to engraving. This new technique made the craftsman's task less arduous; the strength of acid substituted for the strength of the engraver's hand. Engraved and etched armour served to make warriors resplendent in their apparel, reflecting their social status and personal wealth. The serious drama of war required costumed players to act out their violence in style.

Artists first used hand printmaking processes to create prints on paper in the early sixteenth century, attracted 'by the richness and variety inherent in the various techniques'.<sup>17</sup> The etching process in particular offered the potential for producing a range of tonal values, as well as allowing the artist to be more fluid and spontaneous with the drawn line. The plate and etching tool became the substitute for the paper and pencil. Nineteenth century French etcher Maxine Lalanne emphasised the importance of an artist's individuality in producing an etching:

*The artist understands that the etching has that which is essentially vital, it is the force of his past and the guarantee of his future, which, more than any other manner of printing on metal, carries the mark of the artist's character. Etching personifies and represents him so well; it identifies so much with his idea, that, in the process, it often seems to cause the artist to be reduced to nothing in favour of this idea. Rembrandt gives us a striking example.*<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Macquarie Dictionary defines **burin** as "1. a tempered steel rod, with a lozenge shaped point and a rounded handle, used for engraving furrows in metal."

<sup>17</sup> Saff, Donald & Sacilotto, Deli. *Printmaking: History and Process*. Holt Rhinehart and Winston: New York, 1978, p3.

<sup>18</sup> Maxine Lalanne. Cited in McQueen, Alison. *The Rise of the Cult of Rembrandt*. Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam, 2003, p219.



14. Rembrandt van Rijn. *The Three Crosses*. 1653. Etching, 43.8 x 38.1 cm.



15. Giovanni Battista Piranesi. *The Drawbridge*. 1761. Etching 54.5 x 41.5 cm. From *Imaginary Prisons* series.

Artists Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) and Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1707-1778) were visionary in realising how spontaneous etching could be, through drawing directly onto metal plates and working the image up through stages. Their etchings of crucifixions and prisons display a depth of tone achieved with progressively etched lines [14, 15]. Most significantly, their etchings display something that many at that time did not possess: emotional expression.



16. Jacques Callot. *The Miseries and Misfortunes of War* (*Les Miseres et Malheurs de la Guerre*). 1633. Series of eighteen etchings, each 8.2 x 18.7 cm approximately.

The first serial narrative on war using the medium of etching was produced by artist Jacques Callot (1592-1635). Callot etched a series of images titled *The Miseries and Misfortunes of War* (1633) as a patriotic protest against the invasion of his home province of Lorraine by French troops [16]. Callot's little tableaux of violence are not depicted on desolate battlefields as often seen in other historical artworks. His prints are set in the context of village-based communities showing ordinary people struggling to survive the onslaught of a barbarous army. This brings the violence close to home, thus making it more personalised and more emotionally charged.

Callot invented an oval shaped engraving tool that he called the *echoppe*<sup>19</sup>, a sharp tool with a curved tip. With the *echoppe* he sliced into copper plates with images that show human viciousness at its worst. When exposing these plates to acid, Callot experimented with progressive biting of the plates in order to create a complex tonality

<sup>19</sup> Grabowski, Beth and Fick, Bill. *Printmaking: A Complete Guide To Materials And Processes*. Laurence King Publishing: London, 2009, 230. Defines '*echoppe*' as "a specialised intaglio tool that makes lines with varied width by working the tool at different angles. Also called a cat's tongue."

to his drawn lines. In this process the exposure time in the acid solution was critical in order to achieve the depth of bite required to realise the weightiness of the subject matter and the intended message that goes with it.



17. Francisco de Goya. *The Disasters of War* (*Les Desastres de la Guerra*). c 1810-15. Series of eighty etchings, each 15.5 x 21 cm approximately.

The Spanish artist Francisco de Goya (1746-1828) further developed the potential of etching as a medium for expressing violence. The French invasion of Spain in 1808, where acts of barbarous behaviour on the rebellious Spanish populace occurred, moved Goya to create a series of etchings titled *The Disasters of War* (*Les Desastres de la Guerra*) (1810-15) [17]. Influenced by Callot's earlier etchings, Goya depicted detailed scenes of violence and destruction. And like Callot, these violent scenes were what he himself must have witnessed. Goya's line drawing style, his use of light and shade, and his compositional arrangements display similarity with Rembrandt's etchings. Isadora Rose-de Viego cites art historian Otto Benesch as describing Rembrandt's presence in regard to technique in Goya's *The Disasters of War* prints as '... a dense warp of fine parallel lines without any cross hatching, this way of building up light and shadow, and this ... fluid language of the etching needle is a brilliant revival, and continuation of ... Rembrandt.' <sup>20</sup>

Goya's etched images push the violence right in your face; the overall dark tonality of the prints, the energetic rendering of line, and the focus on few figures in barren landscapes all serve to accentuate the horrific violence that the French soldiers inflicted on the Spanish people.

*We can speculate as to the many possible reasons Goya intended to print these images rather than to paint them. For one, the print medium was particularly suitable to Goya's strong anti-war message because of its unique directness. Etchings can retain the direct sketchy qualities of drawings while also achieving a crisp and clean effect that remains even after a plate is reworked many times. Etching allowed Goya to perfect the expressive economy of line that became his signature.* <sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Rose-de Viego, Isadora and Cohen, Janie. *Etched on the Memory: The Presence of Rembrandt in the prints of Goya and Picasso*. V+K Publishing: Netherlands, 2000, p60.

<sup>21</sup> Beaman, Annaliese, & Young, Roxanne. *The Medium for the Message: Printmaking and the Disasters of War*. <<http://grinell.edu/falconergallery/goaya/essays/medium.htm>> Viewed 25 June 2010.

The grainy background tones in Goya's etchings were produced by a technique called resin-ground aquatint.<sup>22</sup> The artist usually credited with the invention of the resin-ground aquatint process is Frenchman Jean Batiste Le Prince (1734-81) who, in the 1760s, experimented with the aquatint etching technique in order to imitate the painterly effect of the ink wash. Aquatint and its textural subtleties, however, remained largely unexplored as an artistic medium until adopted by Goya.

Goya mastered the technique and made it his own powerful artistic medium. He found that he could produce the blackest of blacks to the most subtle of greys. Goya created his aquatints in a specially designed box, filled with resin and then spun like a top. The spinning action caused the resin dust to fly upwards and then filter down to settle on a plate at the bottom of the box. This process could be dangerous from the risk of sparks igniting the volatile dust, causing an explosion. He then used heat to fuse the resin particles to the surface of the metal plate; the acid could only etch around these particles, being impervious to its corrosive action. In Goya's time many printmaking workshops are known to have burnt down by fires caused by this hazardous process. This danger could be seen as psychologically enhancing the emotions of violence that Goya was representing.



18. Francisco de Goya. *The women give courage*. c 1810-15. Etching, 15.5 x 21 cm.



19. Francisco de Goya. *And are like wild beasts*. c 1810-15. Etching, 15.5 x 21 cm.

In the etchings titled *The women give courage* [18] and *And are like wild beasts* (1810-15) [19], Goya has used the grainy aquatint effects to create a gritty backdrop, as if in a barren no man's land. Focus is on the figures embroiled in violent actions. Art historian Claude Roger-Marx writes of Goya's compelling etchings:

*All the virulent and corrosive qualities implicit in the words etching, needle, biting; all the quality of blackness implicit in the word ink, combined to serve a passionate temperament obsessed with man's and woman's cruellest and darkest powers.*<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Macquarie Dictionary defines 'aquatint' as "1. a process imitating the broad flat tints of ink or wash drawings by etching a microscopic crackle on the plate intended for printing." and "2. an etching made by this process."

<sup>23</sup> Shikes, E Ralph. *The Indignant Eye: The Artist as Social Critic in Prints and Drawings from the Fifteenth Century to Picasso*. Beacon Press: Boston, 1969, p97.



20. Francisco de Goya.  
*One cannot look at this (No se puede mirar).*  
c 1810. Etching, 15.5 x 21 cm.



21. Francisco de Goya. *The Third of May 1808: The Execution of the Defenders of Madrid.* 1814.  
Oil on canvas, 255 x 345 cm. Museo de Prado

In the etching titled *One cannot look at this (No se puede mirar)* (c 1810) [20] Goya depicts a heart rending scene of an execution of Spanish civilians by French soldiers. This etching compares contextually to his *Third of May 1808* (1814) painting [21] except that we do not see the soldiers of the firing squad only the bayoneted ends of their rifles, which makes it look and feel more sinister. The inscription is a powerful one and it is hard to look at, but you still do, as Clifton states:

*Goya asserts in the inscription, "One cannot look at this" (no se puede mirar), which may well hold for the entire series, but Goya's imagery is utterly compelling and affecting, and of course, one does look.<sup>24</sup>*

German artist Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945) created powerful etchings based on themes of revolt, poverty, the desire for freedom for the oppressed, social injustice, motherhood and death. Her etchings possess the same emotive expression and energy that are experienced in Goya's prints. And like Goya there is sense of personal inner torment that pushes itself out of the deeply etched lines and tones. Kollwitz's etchings reveal her mastery of drawing; the line work appears like electrified wires that literally jump off the paper with sensations of cold, harshness and pain.

Kollwitz's series of prints titled the *Peasant War* (1902–08) was based on social revolution. This set of prints was based on the historic sixteenth century struggle of the peasants in southern and central Germany. She depicts the peasants rallying to fight their oppressors for more equitable living conditions, and documents the tragic effects of their defeat. This dramatic visual reinterpretation by Kollwitz shows the peasant's fight for human rights against a stronghold of imperialist power. The prints titled *Uprising (Aufbruch)* (1899) [22] and *Charge (Losbruch)* (1902-03) [23] show the power of people agitating en masse to achieve social justice. The power of this riot comes through the darkly etched expressive lines, combined with dark areas of aquatint, giving weight to the intensity of message. Kollwitz's energetic etched lines seem to

<sup>24</sup> Clifton, James and Scattone, Leslie M. *The Plains of Mars: European War Prints, 1500-1825.* From the collection of the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation. Yale University Press: Houston, 2009, p144.



emulate the sound of the crowds marching and shouting; powerful scenes that speak of “power to the people”. Kollwitz once told her friend, cataloguer and biographer Otto Nagel, that she had portrayed herself as the woman leading the rioters in her print *Charge*. Nagel wrote in his biography of Kollwitz that ‘She wanted the signal to attack to come from her.’<sup>25</sup>



22. Käthe Kollwitz. *Uprising (Aufruhr)*. 1899. Etching, drypoint and aquatint, 28 x 30 cm.



23. Käthe Kollwitz. *Charge (Losbruch)*. 1902-03. Etching, drypoint, aquatint and soft ground, 50 x 58.5 cm.

In these etchings, Kollwitz expressed her emotions through the use of deeply etched gestural lines that captured the violence of the revolt. Like in Goya's etchings, there is the same use of dramatic light and shade produced by varying the depth of the etching line and aquatinting. These etchings are powerful message bearers; human revolt can change oppressive regimes. The combined fury and will of many has produced the power to change the course of history time and time again.

Artist Otto Dix (1891-1969) lived in the same turbulent times as Kollwitz. He volunteered as a machine gunner to fight in the Great War of 1914-1918, and survived the war to create a series of fifty-one etchings titled *Der Krieg (The War)* (1924) which he modelled on Goya's *Disasters of War* prints. Dix, like Goya, used a powerful combination of deeply etched lines and aquatint to show stark depictions of the violence and depravity that occurred in the trenches of World War One. His etching plates became the battlefield upon which he recreated the violence he had witnessed.

*[Otto Dix] thereby exploited the enormous potential of etching to produce messy, disintegrating, apparently haphazard and quite dirty effects; creating an impression that the plates themselves have been attacked, bayoneted, shot at and muddied with the mud of Flanders. What people denounce as ugliness is a visual equivalent of the acidic corrosiveness of his war experiences.*<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Nagel, Otto. Cited in Cookland, Greg. Our Feed. *New England Journal Of Aesthetic Research*. p129. <<http://www.gregcookland.com/journal/page/129/?bset=0005>> Viewed 20 December 2011

<sup>26</sup> Forward, Roy. *Otto Dix Der Krieg*. Catalogue essay, National Gallery of Australia, 2007



24. Otto Dix. *Stormtroops advancing under a gas attack*. 1924. Etching, aquatint and drypoint, 19.6 x 29.1 cm.

Dix's etchings possess a universal quality; they are images that transcend time and place. Their pathos can easily be interpreted across to any contemporary war situation. His violence in the etched lines and the gritty aquatint convey the destructive energy of human viciousness.

In the etching *Stormtroops advancing under a gas attack* (1924) [24] Dix has created a menacing image of gas masked soldiers. Like strange alien beings they fill the picture frame with their aggression. John Matthews has likened the gas-masked heads to skulls:

*Otto Dix's Stormtroopers (Assault Under Gas) [sic] benefits from the level of control that allows the bone white paper of the gas masks shine through and remind us of skulls, whilst the slightest scrape across the surface of the printing plate evokes the seep of gas.*<sup>27</sup>



25. Otto Dix. *Wounded soldier*. 1924. Etching and aquatint, 19.7 x 29 cm.



26. Otto Dix. *Night time encounter with a madman*. 1924. Etching, aquatint and drypoint, 26.2 x 19.7 cm.

Other prints in the *Der Krieg* series such as *Night time encounter with a madman* [26] and *Wounded soldier* [25] reveal the madness and despair on the faces of men emotionally traumatised from war. These haunting faces possess the same tormented look seen in photographs of survivors of the atomic blast at Hiroshima in 1945, or the madness on the face of a soldier in the Vietnam War.

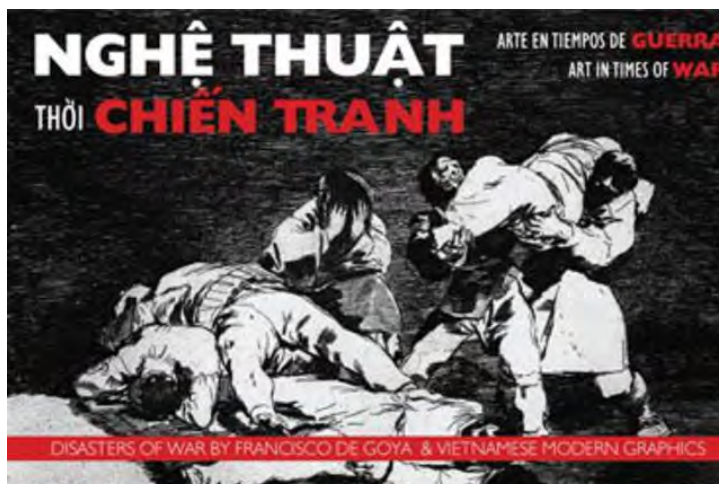
<sup>27</sup> Matthews, John. *On The Mad Square @ AGNSW*. Sunday 25 September 2011. <<http://artkritique.blogspot.com>> Viewed 20 December 2011.



27. Pablo Picasso. *The Dream and Lie of Franco* [2]. 1937. Etching and aquatint, 31.6 x 42 cm.

Pablo Picasso also employed etching to express the violence of his subject. When the Spanish Civil War broke out in the late 1930s Picasso was living in Paris. Newspaper reportage of the war in Spain provided horrific details of the violence and destruction, inspiring Picasso to create the print series titled *Dream and Lie of Franco* (1937) [27]. Two plates were involved, each containing nine rectangular scenes in etching and aquatint. Picasso portrays the violence of war in a surreal comic strip sequence using images of animals, strange creatures, distorted heads, a screaming woman and the lifeless body of a woman to symbolically tell the story. Some of the scenes in this print sequence relate to Picasso's studies for his famous painting *Guernica* (1937); his most powerful indictment of the human cost of war.

A further testament to the continuing relevance of etching as a medium to express the language of violence is an exhibition, held at the Vietnam Fine Arts Museum in Hanoi in 2008, which commemorated thirty three years since the end of the Vietnam War [28].



28. *Art In Times Of War*. 2008.  
Exhibition poster. Vietnam Fine Arts Museum, Hanoi, 2008

The exhibition, under the title *Art In Times Of War*, featured 46 etchings of Goya's *Disasters of War* (1810-1820) supported by 37 works by Vietnamese artists dealing with the subject of war. It is not hard to make visual links between Goya's images of man's inhumanity with what happened in the Vietnam War.

*The series Disasters of War ... resulted in Goya creating a very critical and innovative reflection on war, on its causes, brutal signs and consequences. The art of Goya has gone beyond time, and therefore Disasters of War are sadly up-to-date, and current armed conflicts make these prints come to life again with all their intensity. That ability to show the horror of any war makes Disasters one of the most powerful pleas against violence ever done. Given the universality and timelessness of the series Disasters of War, the presentation of these etchings by the Spanish artist for the first time in history in a country like Vietnam that has so often been affected by war will have a special relevance and their critical and moral message, beyond their aesthetic value, will surely have a clear resonance.*<sup>28</sup>

Goya's powerful humanity provided him with the courage to speak out in images and refuse to be party to the death and destruction.

*In our image maddened society today, we can learn a lot from the man who made these images two centuries ago. Goya, a man who could not hear himself [after some kind of encephalitis robbed him of his hearing and nearly drove him mad in the early 1800s] still has the ability to stir us to hear the cries of war-inflicted suffering.*<sup>29</sup>

The artistic legacy of the artists discussed substantiates the power of etching as a potent and powerful medium for artists striving to give expression to their concerns, and to speak the language of violence in their work. The power of their expression bears a fundamental relationship with the medium.

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<sup>28</sup> Hanoi Grapevine Blog. *Art In Times Of War*. October 2008.

<<http://hanoigrapvine.com/?s=Art+In+Times+Of+War>> Viewed 22 September 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Artblogbybob, 31 March 2008 < <http://artblogbybob.blogspot.com.au/search?q=Goya>> Viewed 12 December 2011.



## The Cronulla riots

When I began investigating the theme of violence I was initially drawn to global socio-political issues such as the plight of refugees and Australia's involvement in the war in Afghanistan. My focus shifted from these world events to those closer to home; attention was directed towards violence in Australia and related aspects of human behaviour seen as of greatest concern to Australian society: drunken violence, gang violence, and racist violence. While living in Western Australia, I personally experienced racially motivated violence, and witnessed racial discrimination and abuse directed towards Aboriginal people. This has long concerned and angered me.



29. The Cronulla Riots December 2005. Internet photograph.

Racism has always been a controversial issue in our society. Unfortunately, many people find it hard to admit that racial discrimination still exists in Australia today. The racist violence that exploded in the Sydney suburb of Cronulla in December 2005 is of great significance [29]. The importance of this event sparked furious debates on multiculturalism and racism, forcing reflection on the notorious reputation of our country and its racist history, and how as a nation we deal with the problem.

Historian Henry Reynolds describes Australia as a peaceful place that has experienced relatively few incidents of major social violence.

*Politically and industrially Australia has been peaceful ... it has been the quiet continent ... lacking civil war, revolution, coups d'état, assassinations, torture, even the level of industrial violence experienced in the United States. Great issues were contested and resolved without violence, power changed hands over and over again and both winners and losers accepted the rules of the game. And yet Australians were far from peaceful in their personal lives. "Real men" were expected to be tough, to be handy with their fists and ever ready for a fight.*<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Reynolds, Henry. 'Australian Violence: Contemporary Perspectives'. <[www.aic.gov.au](http://www.aic.gov.au)> Viewed 15 April 2011.

This makes the occurrence of the Cronulla riots a particularly shocking event. The riot started from a minor skirmish with just a few males fighting on the beach. This small fight escalated into one of Australia's worst examples of racially motivated mob violence. The Cronulla riots hit the news globally sending shock waves of disbelief. As a nation recognised as being tolerant of people from a range of cultural backgrounds, the Cronulla riots would have created much debate internationally. Waleed Aly, a lecturer in politics at Monash University, described this event as a national disgrace.

*We are neither sufficiently powerful nor sufficiently strife-torn to command global attention. Our Prime Minister can slip in and out of a foreign country – even a major trading partner such as Japan – without arousing more than a trickle of media coverage. There are exceptions, but they are scarcely flattering. Consider the recent events that have thrust us forward for international contemplation. Sport aside, two moments stand out: the Cronulla riots and Kevin Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generations. One was a moment of national disgrace, while the other elicited admiring editorials in the international press. But they shared a common theme: racism.<sup>31</sup>*

The beach suburb of Cronulla in New South Wales forms part of the Sutherland Shire Council, referred to by the locals as 'the shire'. Within its boundary lies Kurnell, the place where Captain James Cook first landed on Australian soil, marking the beginning of colonisation in Australia. Cronulla [30] is a predominantly middle-class Anglo Australian community with the total population of almost 17,000: half a percent Indigenous and about 17% born overseas, mostly from English speaking countries such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom.



**30.** Cronulla Beach. Aerial photo.



**31.** South Cronulla Beach.



**32.** North Cronulla Beach

Cronulla Beach (sometimes referred to as South Cronulla Beach) [31, 32] is a patrolled beach on the coastal edge of the shire. A long stretch of sand runs north of the patrolled area. The name is derived from the Aboriginal word Kurranulla meaning 'place of the pink shells'. The beach is a popular tourist attraction and draws many beachgoers from all over Sydney. It became popular in the early 1900s after the inauguration of the Sutherland to Cronulla steam train service.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Aly, Waleed. 'Racism, Australian-Style'. *The Monthly*, The Nation Reviewed, August 2009.

<[www.themonthly.com.au/nation-reviewed-waleed-aly-comment-racism](http://www.themonthly.com.au/nation-reviewed-waleed-aly-comment-racism)> Viewed 11 March 2011.

<sup>32</sup> <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cronulla\\_Beach](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cronulla_Beach)> Viewed 21 November 2011.



On Sunday 4 December 2005 two volunteer lifesavers were bashed on Cronulla beach after an altercation with young Australians believed to be of Lebanese background. This incident was labelled as a racial conflict and was followed by strong condemnation that an 'Aussie icon' had been attacked. This attack was described as being 'un-Australian' in character.

*The lifesaver represented the virtues of humanitarianism, mateship, able-bodiedness, service, self sacrifice and a commitment to public well-being. To attack this icon was to commit a very provocative act.*<sup>33</sup>

The Cronulla riots sat within a wider discourse to do with the beach. Apparently, there were occasional text messages that made connections between the fight to reclaim the beach and the plight of the Australian digger fighting the Turks on the beaches of Gallipoli during the First World War. This somewhat unlikely link appears to be based on fear, race and religion. Given 9/11, the Bali bombings, and the London underground bombings, it is conceivable that for some the beach was a battle line against a continuing war on terror.

Following this incident, disturbing mobile phone text messages were sent out to thousands of people urging all 'Aussies' to gather at Cronulla the following Sunday in order to wage 'war on lebs and wogs', and to protest against attacks on the 'Australian way of life'. Protesters were further rapidly mobilised through the social media, as also seen in recent events in Syria and Egypt. There was no real appeal for calm from political and community leaders; things started to get out of control.

Sydney's popular talk-back radio station 2GB openly promoted Sunday's event. The station's well known breakfast announcer Alan Jones of 'I'm the person that's led this charge'<sup>34</sup> fame, was subsequently accused of 'fanning the flames' and promoting a 'call for arms'. Jones, notorious for his outspoken and inflammatory comments, repeatedly referred to the text message calling Cronulla residents to defend their territory.



33. The Cronulla Riot 2005.



34. The Cronulla Riot 2005. Internet photograph.

<sup>33</sup> Pearson, Clive Robert. 'Alienated Neighbours: Interpreting the Cronulla Race Riots for Christ's Sake'. <[www.forumonpublicpolicy.com/summer08papers/.../pearson.pdf](http://www.forumonpublicpolicy.com/summer08papers/.../pearson.pdf)> Viewed 2 November 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Marr, David. 'Alan Jones: I'm the person that's led this charge'. *The Age*: Sydney, 13 December 2005. <<http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/alan-jones-im-the-person-thats-led-this-charge/2005/12/12/1134236003153.html>> Viewed 20 November 2011.

Exactly one week later on Sunday 11 December, over 5,000 Australians, mostly of Anglo Australian background, gathered at North Cronulla beach [33, 34]. Their protest was against Lebanese and Arab young people whom they accused of engaging in anti-social behaviour, including harassing locals and sexually intimidating women at the beach and taking up large spaces on the beach to play soccer or other games. They came together to 'reclaim their beach' and to take matters into their own hands. In this 'battle for the beaches' the spark that set off the riot was widely recognised as having been ignited by the transmission of racist and violent 'calls to arms' via mobile text messages, Twitter and Facebook dialogues. This was not a riot that had been organised weeks previously, instead it had literally evolved within hours.

There is, however, the view that whilst technology's enabling of easy and fast dissemination of information was a contributing factor to the previously unheard of numbers who gathered at the beach that day, there is another consideration. As Linda Radfem writes:

*[the riot] is consistent with the Le Bon (1897) theory of the "psychological crowd" which posits that a crowd can begin to swarm without the presence of individuals in one geographical location. Cronulla is an excellent example of this theory, as the psychological "crowd" had clearly been gathering within public consciousness in the lead up to the riot, with people publicly responding to Alan Jones' (and the sly whispers of a certain ex-prime minister) urges to take action against this perceived threat, as well as sensationalist headlines in the mainstream print media. The 5000 strong army of righteous warriors, pumped to fight the abstract menace of political correctness, was already "swarming" days before the physical, face to face violence occurred.<sup>35</sup>*

The riots were captured by many with their mobile phone video cameras which were then put on to YouTube. They showed ugly scenes of an alcohol charged crowd, many of whom were draped in the Australian flag. Some sang the national anthem and chanted racist slogans such as: 'get off our beach', 'this is our land' and 'go back to your own country' aimed at anyone of Middle Eastern appearance.

The violence did not end on the beach at Cronulla; it spread across Australia with incidents described by Dr Tom Calma:

*The violence continued for days as text messages were sent "in a call for Arabs and Muslims to protect themselves and seek revenge." The violence and hatred from both sides spread across suburbs and states throughout Australia. A Christian church was burnt down, and an attack on a family of Middle Eastern descent in Perth in Western Australia and an Australian Lebanese taxi driver in Adelaide in South Australia were linked to the Cronulla riot. Victoria police*

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<sup>35</sup> Radfem, Linda. *Cronulla Riots: five years later*. Posted 22 January 2011. <apublicblogging.wordpress.com/2011/.../Cronulla-riots-fiveyears-lat> Viewed 1 March 2012.

*successfully intercepted text messages calling for race riots in Melbourne. Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania were also reported as having anti-Arab text messages being circulated, calling for a “show of force”.*<sup>36</sup>

Apparently there were further calls for arms made by Lebanese youths who were urging for further reprisal attacks at Cronulla on the following weekend, again through text messages.

There is a history of riots in Australia that show racial tensions but Cronulla was the largest. Commenting on the violence, a Sydney assistant police commissioner said,

*What occurred on December 11 are the likes of what this country has never seen before. Indeed, while there have been race riots in the past targeting Chinese on the goldfields in the 19th century and Italian and Slav workers in Western Australia in the 1930s, as well as numerous incidents involving the indigenous population, these riots have always strongly reflected competition for economic resources such as jobs and land.*<sup>37</sup>

There is still a racial problem in Australia. Its flaring up on occasions such as Cronulla brings home this realisation. In his 2012 Australia Day address, Dr Charles Teo spoke out about his concerns with racism in Australia. Dr Teo pointed out that ‘It still disturbs me when I hear some of our politicians reassuring overseas governments that it doesn’t exist at all’. He then referred to the experiences of those who have suffered racist abuse by saying ‘It is incorrect and naive to say that there is no anti-Arab or no anti-Indian sentiment, just ask someone of Middle Eastern or Indian appearance’.<sup>38</sup>

The Cronulla riots were extreme in every way. Debates were sparked on whether it was racism or drunken hooliganism that had caused the riots. It now has become part of the history of Australia and as Clive Pearson describes, ‘embedded in personal and cultural memory’.

*The dilemma riots like Cronulla present is that the violence, hatred and bad blood become embedded in personal and cultural memory, as well as the folklore of the city. The most graphic acts of violation and humiliation remained captured on websites: the photojournalism of printed and television media made accessible a stunning gallery of brutal encounters. They can complement personal experience.*<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Calm, Tom. *Cronulla: Could it happen here?* July 2006.

<[www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/.../race/.../cronulla\\_NZ\\_200607.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/.../race/.../cronulla_NZ_200607.html)> Viewed 24 June 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Inglis, Christine. *On the Beach: Racial Confrontation in Australia*. University of Sydney, Feb 2006. <[www.migrationinformation.org](http://www.migrationinformation.org)> Viewed 15 November 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Pratt, Elizabeth. ‘Dr Charles Teo calls for united effort to eliminate racism’. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 January 2012.

<[www.smh.com.au/.../teo-calls-for-united-effort-to-eliminate-racism](http://www.smh.com.au/.../teo-calls-for-united-effort-to-eliminate-racism)> Viewed 26 January 2012.

<sup>39</sup> Pearson, Clive Robert. Op, cit.

Considering the national and international significance of the event, I was surprised to find that so few artists have been inspired to create work that engages with the riots. My research into other Australian artists addressing the Cronulla riots produced only a short list: photographer Andrew Quilty, and artists Vernon Ah Kee and Phillip George.



35. Andrew Quilty. Untitled Cronulla photograph. 2005

Photographer Andrew Quilty (b 1981) won critical acclaim for his photographs of the Cronulla riots [35]. In black white, they starkly show the ugliness of mob violence in compositions that highlight the racial tensions that fuelled the emotions of those involved in the riot.



36. Vernon Ah Kee. *Chant Chant*. 2007. Installation, mixed media.

Indigenous artist Vernon Ah Kee (b 1967) created an installation titled *Chant Chant* (2007) [36] in response to the Cronulla riots. Ah Kee saw the Cronulla riots as an incident which exposed the racism which he believes is at our cultural core and turned a peaceful iconic beach into a battlefield. His title sardonically refers to the chanting of the (mostly white) rioters 'we grew here you flew here' which Ah Kee apparently regarded as an 'insincere excuse for racial violence'.<sup>40</sup> The work explores ideas of Australia's national identity and questions racial issues by way of subverting the notions of the 'Bronzed Aussie' surf culture stereotype. Ah Kee also makes reference within the work to disturbing post-colonial issues such as violence and prejudice.

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<sup>40</sup> Jones, Garry. 'Vernon Ah Kee: Sovereign Warrior'. *Artlink*. Vol 30 No 1, 2010. p46.



37. Phillip George. *Borderlands*. 2008. Installation, mixed media.

Moved by all the fear and misunderstanding that came out of the Cronulla riots, artist Phillip George (b 1956) created an installation made up of surfboards titled *Borderlands* (2008) [37]. For George, 'the surfboard and surfing culture is iconically Australian'.<sup>41</sup> His surfboards are embellished with decorative patterns that he documented from his trips to mosques in Middle Eastern countries such as Iran, Syria, Turkey, and Iraq. By decorating the surfboards with decorative designs derived from Islam and Arabic culture George has changed their symbolism associated within Australian surfing culture. In doing so he challenges expectations of a white Australia that too often goes unchecked and unchallenged. George's Islamic patterned surfboards are meant to try and bridge the gap between the clashing cultures involved in the Cronulla riots.

I have not found any examples of printmaking that addresses the Cronulla riots.

My major work focuses on the Cronulla riots. I was not there at Cronulla and have had to rely on the electronic imagery of this 'stunning gallery of brutal encounters' <sup>42</sup> to inspire my imagination. The life span of these images is temporary, as are all things on the internet. Images are always being constantly shuffled like a card game. What is news today takes precedence; the past becomes absorbed, eventually disappearing to give way to the new.

Traditional printmaking techniques such as woodblock, lithograph, engraving and etching do not play a dominant role in communication today. Printmaking cannot compete with the mass media but nonetheless still has an affective power. Josh MacPhee states:

*Yet these printmaking methods remain vital, maybe even because of their anachronistic existence. We rarely see any evidence of the human hand in our visual landscape, just digitally produced dot patterns and flickering electronic images. This gives handmade prints affective power.*<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> AFP: *Three years after beach race riots, art bridges Sydney divide*. 14 Dec 2008.

<[http://phillipgeorge.net/essays/artBridgesCulturalDivide\\_AFP\\_2009.pdf](http://phillipgeorge.net/essays/artBridgesCulturalDivide_AFP_2009.pdf)> Viewed 15 November 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Pearson, Clive Robert. Op, cit..

<sup>43</sup> MacPhee, Josh. *Paper Politics: Socially Engaged Printmaking Today*. PM Press: USA, 2009, p6.

## Socio political printmaking in Australia

To place my work in an Australian context, I have investigated Australian printmakers working with a socio-political theme. In the past there have been influential printmakers whose work has embraced social issues, but today there are very few Australian printmakers dealing with issues such as violence.

The Great War of 1914-18 prompted artists Lionel Lindsay (1874-1961), Will Dyson (1880-1938) and John Shirlow (1869-1936) to create prints using a variety of techniques responding to the devastation and human suffering attributed to the war.



**38.** Lionel Lindsay. *The Martyrdom of Belgium*. 1914. Etching, 17.4 x 12.1 cm.



**39.** Will Dyson. *Watching the barrage from Mount Kemmel*. 1918. Lithograph, 37.6 x 52.6 cm.



**40.** John Shirlow. *Das ist verboten [That is forbidden]*. 1918. Drypoint, 22 x 14.6 cm.

Lionel Lindsay's *The Martyrdom of Belgium* (1914) [38] is a symbolic recreation of Christ's crucifixion which effectively encapsulates the fear and loathing felt at that time towards the brutal actions performed by German soldiers as they invaded the neutral country of Belgium. Considering the disastrous consequences of the Great War on Australian society, very few artists created prints that expressed the violence and resultant emotional trauma. Propaganda posters proliferated more than other forms of printmaking. As Roger Butler states, 'the most recognised printed images of the time in fact were concerned with the divisive issue of conscription and recruiting'.<sup>44</sup>



**41.** Noel Counihan. Cover. July 1932. Linocut, 27.8 x 21.6 cm.



**42.** Eric Thake. Bookplate design. 1931. Linocut.



**43.** Roy Dalgarno. *Waterside worker*. 1931. Woodcut, 10.6 x 7.6 cm.

<sup>44</sup> Butler, Roger. *Printed images by Australian artists 1885-1955*. National Gallery of Australia: Canberra, 2007, p209.



In the 1930s Australia sank into a devastating economic depression. Massive unemployment in the cities drove men into the countryside in search of work as poverty and despair spread. Artists such as Noel Counihan (1913-86), Eric Thake (1904-82), and Roy Dalgarno (1910-2001) considered themselves as art activists, and created prints that revealed the social struggle of that time. Etching gave way to the linocut process, a medium that has always been associated with protest and dissent. Their linocut prints [41, 42, 43] show the stirrings of protest, the emergence of the heroic worker and the social divide between the rich and the poor. Linocut was an inexpensive and relatively easy medium to use and to print; its bold graphic quality was successfully used in previous times by social activists in Russia and by the German Expressionists.



**44.** Erwin Fabian. *Coffin*. 1941. Monotype, 25.8 x 20 cm.



**45.** Bruno Simon. *Hitler Still Speaks (Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth)*. 1945. Monotype, brown ink, 25 x 38 cm.

In 1939 Australia was yet again plunged into a war in Europe; peace did not come for another five years. The artists Erwin Fabian (b 1915) and Bruno Simon (b 1913) were German internees sent from England to Australian detention camps in 1940. They created prints with materials they found within the camps [44, 45]. Using substances like boot polish and paint they made printing ink, while window panes or the smooth side of a piece of Masonite became the printing plate. With these materials they produced monotype prints expressing their personal feelings of anger, isolation and frustration.



**46.** Alan McCulloch. *Death of Venus*. 1940. Etching, 11.8 x 12.9 cm.

Influenced by the prints of Otto Dix, artist Alan McCulloch created a number of prints that reflected his feelings and thoughts on the violence as a consequence of the German invasion of France in 1940. McCulloch's etching titled *Death of Venus* (1940)

[46] has the same linear drawing qualities seen in Dix's *Der Krieg* prints. A German soldier is aggressively posed as he is about to bayonet the armless figure of Venus, possibly symbolising all the innocent casualties of war. McCulloch's image also echoes the emotional pathos seen in Goya's *Disasters of War* etchings.



47. Noel Counihan. *Who Is Against Peace*. 1950. Linocut, 26.1 x 20.5 cm.



48. Noel Counihan. *Here Peace Begins*. 1950. Linocut, 20.5 x 30.3 cm.

Public demonstrations in many of Australia's capital cities in the 1950s against unemployment, low wages, worker's rights for an eight hour day and nuclear disarmament, inspired Counihan to create the print *Who Is Against Peace* (1950) [47]. Derived from his own experience of these demonstrations and what was happening overseas, Counihan used the stark quality of the linocut to depict a demonstration in which marchers are being suppressed by the police at a May Day march [47].



49. Teisutis Zikaris. *Anguished Figure*. 1955. Lithograph, 56.4 x 38.3 cm.



50. Ken Whisson. *Hound Of Fear*. 1952-53. Lithograph, 25.4 x 20 cm.

The atomic bomb attacks on Japan at the end of World War Two created a new anxiety for people, one of global extinction; the Cold War era had begun. In the 1950s artists such as Charles Blackman (b 1928), Ken Whisson (b 1927) and Teisutis Zikaris (1922-91) used the medium of lithography to create anguished images that speak of some kind of inner personal torment [49, 50]. Their prints expressed emotions with an expressive drawing approach, in contrast to the social realist style employed by Counihan.

Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War from the early 1960s up to 1973 was the longest and most controversial in Australian military history. Research into printmakers addressing the war in their work brings up very few examples. As Butler states:

*With the exception of Noel Counihan, Australian printmakers from the 1950s till the 1970s tended to ignore political and social issues. One of the few responses to the horrors of the Vietnam War was The Broadsheet produced in Melbourne by artists and writers. Although in poster format, it masqueraded as 'fine art' and was sold in a limited edition.<sup>45</sup>*



51. *The Broad Sheet*. October 1967. Front page.



52. Udo Sellbach. *The target is man*. 1965. Etching, 20 x 25 cm.

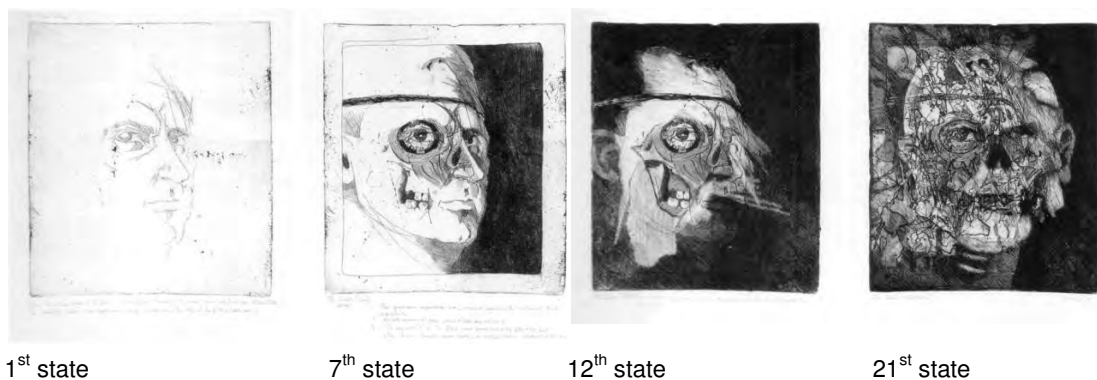
*The Broadsheet* [51] was conceived by artists Udo Sellbach, Noel Counihan and writer / Labor Party activist Ian Turner. Their aim was to produce a traditional newspaper style broadsheet, cheap to produce, containing critical writing, poetry and illustrations that debated on vital current issues. The front page of *The Broadsheet* featured relief prints by many well known Australian printmakers. The first issue featured the Vietnam War.

Udo Sellbach (1927-2006) used the emotive and expressive physical qualities of etching in his series titled *The target is man* (1965) [52]. Created as a personal response to the war in Vietnam, his etchings possess the visual qualities seen in historic prints. They possess "the bite", a distinct visual quality given to etchings with a socially intended message. Sellbach described the series: 'as a political work, not in the narrow party political sense, but more in the tradition of anti-war engagement'.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Butler, Roger. *Contemporary Australian printmaking: More than just technique*. 1982. <<http://www.printsandprintmaking.gov.au>> Viewed 11 March 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Butler, Roger. *A discussion with Udo Sellbach*. 1995. <[www.printsandprintmaking.gov.au](http://www.printsandprintmaking.gov.au)> Viewed 30 January 2012.





53. Trevor Lyons. *Journeys in My Head*. 1987. Etching and aquatint, series, each 34 x 30 cm.

Artist Trevor Lyons (1945-1990) used the medium of etching to simulate the scouring and blasting actions that transformed and disfigured his face after being blown up by an anti personnel mine in the Vietnam conflict in 1968. *Journeys in My Head* (1987) is a series of prints based on his horrific experience [53]. From just one plate, he created twenty two etching states depicting his initial injuries and the various stages of surgical reconstruction he endured. Roger Butler describes Lyons' process as reading like a record of a medical procedure:

*While etching his memories on the zinc plates, Lyons annotated his struggles and progress. The image was etched, aquatinted, scraped back and reconstructed to create the portrait, and his descriptions read like a record of a medical procedure.*<sup>47</sup>

They begin with a delicately drawn and lightly etched profile of Lyons' face before the explosion, to his final image that portrays his face as a decaying skull like head. The sunken eyes show little emotion. 'It is death staring you in the eye'.<sup>48</sup> The cumulative effects of scratching, burnishing and acid biting are translated through the image and into the surface of the printing paper. It is a disturbing image that makes psychological connections between the violent qualities of the etching process and the physical trauma experienced by Lyons a possibility.

During the 1970s and 1980s, poster collectives such as Earthworks, Red Planet, Redletter and Another Planet made prints centred on such issues as the Vietnam War, feminism, Aboriginal land rights, racism and nuclear disarmament. Their posters effectively used image and message to promote debate on these issues [54, 55, 56]. Like the tradition of Russian political posters, to get their message to the people they displayed their posters at any public location they could find.

<sup>47</sup> Butler, Roger. *Trevor Lyons (1945-1990)*. Essay in: Wilkins, Lola (Editor). *Artists In Action: From the collection of the Australian War Memorial*. Thames and Hudson: Fishermans Bend, 2003, p140.

<sup>48</sup> Butler, Roger. *Ibid*, p140.



54. Tanya McIntyre. *Police Bashings*. 1985. Silkscreen, 76 x 51 cm.



55. Chips Mackinolty. *Land Rights Dance*. 1977. Silkscreen, 74.6 x 49.6 cm.



56. Chips Mackinolty. *Hiroshima Day Anti-Uranium Rally*. 1977. Silkscreen, 88 x 55.8 cm.

*Exhibited in plain sight – pinned up in community centres, stapled onto telegraph poles and glued onto hoardings – the intensity and passion of these voluble posters remains undiminished more than twenty years later.*<sup>49</sup>

In the 1980s and 1990s political and social issues were addressed in the prints of Ann Newmarch (b 1945), Marie McMahon (b 1953), Bea Maddock (b 1934) and Mike Parr (b 1945).



57. Anne Newmarch. *For John Lennon and my Two Sons*. 1981. Screenprint, 85.8 x 59.8 cm.

The increasing problem of private gun ownership prompted artist Anne Newmarch to create a screenprint titled *For John Lennon and my Two Sons* (1981) [57], based on the fatal shooting of John Lennon in December 1980. It reflects Newmarch's concern with the prevalence of guns and violence in contemporary society. Cut-out newspaper articles, advertising jargon and an image of Newmarch's son brushing his teeth with a toothbrush fashioned as a gun, reveal her concerns at anti social behaviour displayed by boys who become obsessed with playing with toy guns. Julie Robinson describes her thoughts on the print: 'The text along the base of this print sums up Newmarch's feelings on this issue: "homicide, genocide become household words ... news becomes entertainment and toys teach a disrespect for humankind".'<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Noordhuis-Fairfax, Sarina. 'The story of Australian printmaking 1801-2005'. *Australian Printmaking*, June 2007. <<http://www.nga.gov.au>> Viewed 17 January 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Robinson, Julie. *Lawyers, Guns and Money*. Australian Experimental Art Foundation, 1997. <<http://aeaf.org.au>> Viewed 12 January 2012.

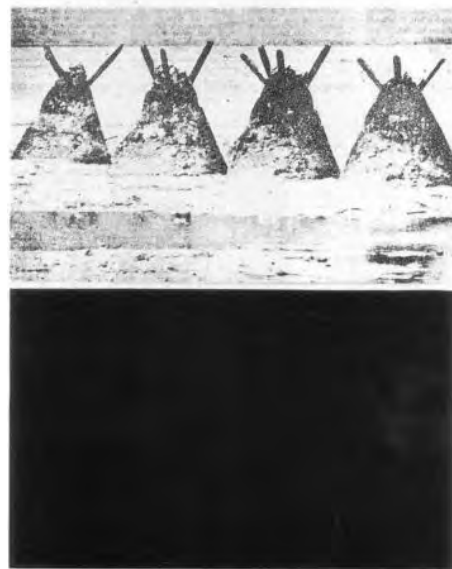


58. Marie McMahon. *The Two Walyers*. 1988. Colour lithograph, 69 x 48.6 cm.

In the lithograph print *The Two Walyers* (1988) [58] Marie McMahon makes a strong statement about the effects of white colonisation on the Aboriginal people of Tasmania. Text surrounds the image of the two Walyers; words such as the 'black war', 'died in custody', 'islands of the dead', evoke memories of the plight of the Tasmanian Aborigines in colonial history.



59A. Bea Maddock. *Fall*. 1976.  
Photo-etching, aquatint and burnishing, 60 x 39 cm.



59B. Bea Maddock. *Now-here*. 1974.  
Photo-etching and aquatint, 66.8 x 50 cm.

Bea Maddock appropriates media images in her prints to reflect her own feelings of uncertainty and hopelessness in a world dominated by a nuclear culture. The photo-etching *Fall* (1976) [59A] and *Now-here* (1974) [59B] show iconic images that give Maddock's underlying message a more universal quality.





**60.** Mike Parr. *Pool of Blood Series*. 1985.  
Etching, soft ground and aquatint, 99.5 x 70.3 cm.

Mike Parr's etchings of the late 1980s and 1990s dismantled the tradition of self portraiture [60]. Parr draws his own face on the etching plate, distorting and transforming it with violent and aggressive mark making. He treats the plates like he does with his own body in his self mutilating performance art. However, whilst Parr exploits the violent nature of etching in his prints, they are primarily self portraits. His more political work has tended to occur in his performance installations.



**61A.** George Gittoes. *The captured gun*.  
1998. Etching and aquatint, 45 x 40 cm.



**61B.** George Gittoes. *Descendence*. 2009.  
Etching,

By contrast, George Gittoes (b 1944) exploits the violent nature of etching as the medium to create powerful prints based on the violence of war. In *The captured gun* (1988) [61A] he captures with frenzied etched marks the rawness and brutality of the conflict in Nicaragua in the 1990s, which he personally witnessed.

*Descendence* (2009) [61B] is a nightmarish vision of a bomb shelter like tunnel in which dead bodies are scattered. Gittoes has created a vision of a limbo land of death in which winged mutilated bodies try to ascend the purgatory of their surroundings. It hauntingly echoes the nightmarish scenes in Goya's *Los Caprichos* etchings.



**62A.** Gordon Bennett. *Penetration*. 1994.  
Etching, lift ground and aquatint, 78.6 x 59.6 cm.



**62B.** Gordon Bennett. *Terra Nullius (As far as the eye can see)*. 1993. Etching, 20 x 29.4 cm.

Two more recent politically oriented artists are Gordon Bennett (b.1955) and Neil Emmerson. Indigenous artist Gordon Bennett's printmaking in the 1990s explored Australia's colonial past, including issues associated with the dominant role that white, western culture has played in constructing the social culture of the nation [62B]. In the print titled *Penetration* (1994) [62A], Bennett combines both traditional Aboriginal and Western art styles in an image that recalls the violence of invasion.



**63A.** Neil Emmerson. *I was his... I.* 2005  
Etching, 25 x 20 cm.



**63B.** Neil Emmerson. *I was his... II.* 2005.  
Etching, 25 x 20 cm.

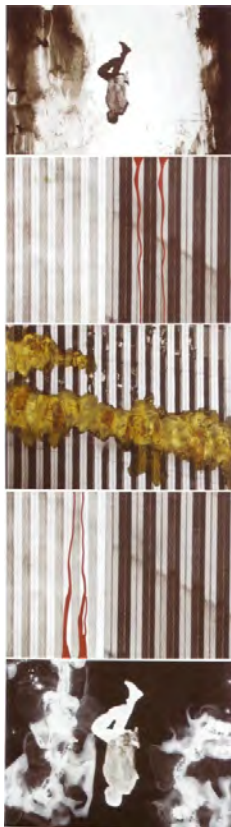
Neil Emmerson (b.1956) has taken the well known and controversial media image of an anonymous victim of abuse at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and used it in his etching series titled *I was his...* (2005) [63A, 63B]. The words of the title resonate with some of the pessimistic words used by Goya in the *Disasters of War* prints. Emmerson's title leaves us thinking of what torture the victim might have had to endure; perhaps it was sexual abuse, known to have occurred in the Abu Ghraib prison of horrors.





In his more recent work Callaghan moved from screen printing to digital technology, exemplified in his prints titled *Operation Iraqi Freedom 2009* [65A] and *Suicide Bomber? 2009-10* [65B]. In creating these prints Callaghan employed English and Arabic text, media slogans, flags, bombers, blood splatters and borrowed photographic imagery to communicate the realities of the war in Iraq and the potential threat of terrorist suicide attacks.

The long tradition of the print as a medium for disseminating social and political commentary continues. In a recent exhibition<sup>51</sup>, the works of Australian artists Peter Lyssiotis (b.1949), Theo Strasser (b.1956) and Guiseppe Romeo (b.1958) rekindled the memory and legacy of the disastrous September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001.



**66A.** Peter Lyssiotis & Theo Strasser. *Burning Tower, Untitled #1-5*, 2011, Synthetic polymer paint and ink on giclee print, 73.5 x 102 cm (each)

In the exhibition Lyssiotis and Strasser collaborated on the work *Burning Tower* 2011 [66A]; a vertical assemblage of five images in which the top panel shows the figure of a falling man. The falling man appears again in the bottom panel but as a negative, like an x-ray. This terrible image reminds us of the choice made by some people trapped in the burning towers in order to escape a fiery death.

<sup>51</sup> *Eyes Wide Shut*. Exhibition, Maroondah Art Gallery, September 2011.



**66B.** Peter Lyssiotis & Theo Strasser. *Eyewitness Tower*, detail: *Dog Eat Dog*, 2009. Lithograph and synthetic polymer paint on paper, 74.2 x 102 cm.

Their other collaboration, titled *Dog Eats Dog* 2009 [66B], features an American dollar note covered with aggressive splattered marks juxtaposed against the words Dog Eats Dog and an explosive looking black splash. It is an image that provokes thoughts on the power of capitalism, death and corruption.



**67.** Giuseppe Romeo. *Blind Faith #1-A*, 2006-09. Lithograph and ink on photocopy, each sheet: 40 x 57 cm, overall dimensions variable, Maroondah Art Gallery, 2011

Also featured in the exhibition is the work of artist Giuseppe Romeo. His work titled *Blind Faith* 2011 [67] explores through photographic imagery of religious iconography, notions of ritual and acts of remembrance. Romeo's black and white prints possess a film noir quality that gives the installation a disturbing feel.



Reviewing the history of socio political printmaking in Australia offers an insight into some of the approaches and techniques explored by artists in creating prints that address a diverse range of controversial issues. Up until the latter part of the twentieth century artists mainly relied upon autographic printmaking methods such as etching, woodblock, linocut and screenprinting. Access to digital technologies in the latter part of the century has created a whole new area of choice for medium of artistic expression, which is now embraced by many printmakers.

British art critic Richard Noyce explains

*Printmaking has had a long history and has rightly earned its proper place within the world of cultural achievement. The traditional skills and techniques will not be lost; indeed they will develop, and will likely take on new forms as they do so. The fascination with the creation of such forms will continue to absorb the interest of students, often to the point of obsession. But at the same time the new techniques will continue to develop at a rapid pace and will take their place alongside such traditional forms. There is likely to be a continuing cross-fertilisation of ideas and fusions of technique and this will be to the good for printmaking, adding new ways of making a multiple image and strengthening those processes that already exist.*<sup>52</sup>

There remain however many artists, myself included, who place strong emphasis upon direct physical engagement with the process of mark making.

As Anne Kirker sees it

*In the present age of ubiquitous digital technology, the 'hand' can add meaning to the creative process.... it offers a critical breathing space of random disorder in which life can emerge.*<sup>53</sup>

My aim in this project is to demonstrate that the traditional medium of etching continues to be a potent vehicle for the expression of violent subject matter.

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<sup>52</sup> Noyce, Richard. *Printmaking at the Edge*. A and C Publishers Ltd: London, 2006, p21.

<sup>53</sup> Kirker, Marjorie Anne. Op, cit. p181.



## CHAPTER TWO: THE CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT: RELATED ART PRACTICES

The contemporary artists discussed in this chapter make art about violence. While there are few Australian printmakers dealing with this theme there are significant international contemporary artists addressing this issue. Their work can be confrontational, shocking and violently dark. Artists who depict violence choose a dark road to travel down. Their work is often labelled by critics as too contentious, and public reaction can sometimes lead to removal from public display. These artists work as social critics; their eyes seek out the violent underbelly of human life. Their art exposes the causes, actions and consequences of violent human behaviour.



Leon Golub's printmaking and painting processes are violent and unconventional. Nancy Spero uses her printing blocks as a personal vocabulary which she hand prints onto paper or stamps directly onto walls. Sandow Birk uses one of the oldest autographic printmaking processes, the woodcut, to create large images of war. William Kentridge employs mark making and erasing actions in his charcoal drawings. His passion for drawing drives his printmaking. He works innovatively with a combination of printmaking techniques. He often draws over and uses hand colouring. Diane Victor, and Jake and Dinos Chapman employ line drawing in the traditional etching medium, using a figurative style to depict real and surreal images of violence.

All of these artists have been inspired by the visions of violence created by the historic artists Jacques Callot, Francisco Goya, Otto Dix and Käthe Kollwitz. In examining art that captures events of the past we can reflect upon what is happening in our own world today. In searching for my own visual language to speak the language of violence, I also found inspiration in the work of these artists.

This research is framed by the following questions:

- How successful have these contemporary artists been in conveying violence?
- How do their processes of their art making support my central research questions?

## LEON GOLUB

Leon Golub (1922-2004, Chicago) always used his art as a voice to condemn violence. The idea of political power underpins Golub's work, from the subversive operations of governments to urban street violence. His works are based on the violence of war, torture and persecution, mercenaries, race riots, seedy bars and brothels. The work is controversial, confronting and extremely disturbing.

*I'm not going to change our country ... I'm not trying to influence people as much as trying to make a record. I like the notion of reportage. I hope that in 50 or 100 years from now my work will still be telling a record of what Americans were doing in terms of force, domination, world interest. It's not a large part of history, but it's a crucial part.*<sup>54</sup>

Golub never set out to create 'art for art's sake'. His disturbing imagery exposes what is socially rotten in the world. Arts writer/curator Stuart Horodner discusses Golub's work:

*For five decades Leon Golub has examined the socio-political world of power and powerlessness by picturing public and private violence: battles, brawls, combat, torture, interrogation, and assassination. His works (in painting, drawing, printmaking, and photo based installations) articulate the dark, destructive fantasies of human endeavour with complex arrangements of practiced smiles, darting eyes, weighted bodies, and itchy trigger fingers.*<sup>55</sup>

Drawing from a vast repository of images sourced from magazine and newspaper pictures, hardcore pornography and soldier training manuals, Golub composes larger than life figurative compositions that blatantly flout aesthetic conventions. These works confront the spectator with a bleak and uncompromising visual theatre of cruelty in a similar manner to Goya. Golub, like Goya, does not make the violence of war noble or heroic. Instead he captures what is often beyond words.

My own desire throughout the project has been to create images that confront the viewer. My decision to make etchings at a large scale was inspired by Golub's larger-than-life figurative paintings. This was realised in my major work, *The Cronulla Riot*. Like Golub, I wanted my large scale images to create an immersive experience, as if the viewer could enter into and be part of the violence.

Golub's statement describing why he used such a large scale format in his work inspired me when I began my first large drawings for the Cronulla works:

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<sup>54</sup> Sozanski, Edward J. Leon Golub quoted in 'The Killing Feel'. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 14 June 2004.

<<http://montages.blogspot.com.au/2004/07/leon-golubs-disasters-of-war.html>> Viewed 16 August 2011.

<sup>55</sup> Horodner, Stuart. *Leon Golub While the Crime is Blazing*. Bucknell Art Gallery Publication: Lewisburg, USA, 1999, p4.

*I'm trying to pick up the spectator, the voyeuristic spectator who's also myself, shove him inside the canvas, right in there with what's going on. The figures have stepped out of the canvas into the room, a fractured instant of stopped (incipient) action, tense interplays, frozen grins, sidling glances, slippages, and borderline cueing and miscuing between the "actors" on scene.<sup>56</sup>*

His transformation of mass media images into figurative compositions was also inspirational. Frozen images of violence have to be given life by the visual artist and this can often be problematic in the process of reinterpretation. Creating my life size figurative drawings from small internet photographs proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of my work.



68. Leon Golub. *King and Queen*. 1948-49. Lithograph, 12.5 x 18 inches.

Golub worked with printmaking early in his artistic career, experimenting with the more traditional etching and lithography processes. The surface of any substrate in printmaking is normally meticulously prepared, cleaned, and smoothed in preparation for receiving the artist's mark. In contrast, Golub challenged this tradition with an unconventional physical printmaking approach. He attacked lithographic stones with strong nitric acid and sharp tools in order to viciously erase and gouge the surface. These actions produced a more rubbed out and eroded quality to the resulting print.

*My printmaking in the late forties was much rawer and maybe more original than my painting was. It was physically more intense as well as psychologically more intense. I found a process where I would work on something and wouldn't like the damn thing, and I would rework it and rework it. Originally it was a way of retrieving what was lost, but like erosion it showed the effects of what it had gone through. It was historically already, three days older! It took me to 1950 to do in painting what I had done in printmaking. I caught up with it. I developed a technique which I have been using ever since.<sup>57</sup>*

<sup>56</sup> Siegel, Jeanne. 'Art talk: The early 80s: Leon Golub: What makes art political?' *Artwords 2*, UMI Research Press: London, 1988, p60.

<sup>57</sup> Allen, Lynne. 'The Skin the World: Leon Golub and Nancy Spero'. *The Tamarind Papers*, Volume 15. Tamarind Institute and University of New Mexico Press: Albuquerque USA, 1994, p59.



69. Leon Golub. *Three Heads*. 1949-50.  
Etching on wove paper, 20 x 29.9 cm.



70. Leon Golub working on a  
canvas in the 1960s.

In the print titled *Three Heads* (1949-50) [69] faces appear like mummified effigies that have been excavated from underground. The original drawn image on the etching plate appears as if it has been nearly corroded away by the acid. Traditionally etching plates were treated with reverence; Golub instead has treated the smooth surface of the metal as something to do battle with.

Golub would often work on the floor of his studio [70], working on the canvas as if in a physical training routine, his body held up by one arm while the other was drawing and painting. His figures begin to emerge out of the layered and scraped back paint in a process not too dissimilar to that of intaglio printing in which printing ink is not always applied softly, but is pushed and scraped into the grooves and then wiped away so that the etched marks start to appear.

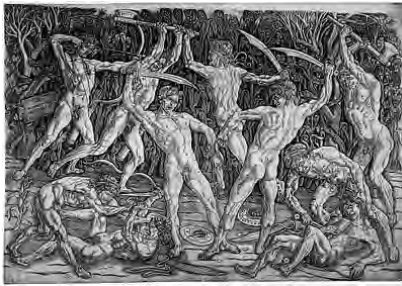
I work on my etching metal plates in a similar way: on the ground, sitting or standing on the metal, drawing and gouging. I feel the need, like Golub, to be physically connected with my materials and the surface I am working on. As with Golub's aggressive painting approach, I attack the surface of the metal with vicious tools, scraping and making them suffer the effects of acid, fire and bullets. Harold Rosenberg argues that 'Golub's images are battered and corroded and, as we can infer from their original state of wholeness, we read paint as signs of interference'.<sup>58</sup>

In the 1950s and 1960s Golub explored the theme of masculine violence, beginning with a series he named the *Gigantomachies* [72]. The large paintings in this series measure at least ten feet high and up to twenty four feet long, and were based on ancient Hellenistic stone friezes and Greco-Roman sculptures showing men in battle. This thematic can also be traced to multi-figure compositions from the Renaissance,

<sup>58</sup> Alloway, Lawrence. Golub exhibition catalogue essay. Allan Franklin Gallery: Chicago, 1957.  
Cited in Bird, John. *Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real*. Reaktion Books: London, 2000, p22.



such as Pollaiuolo's *Battle of the Naked Men* (c 1465-75) [71] or the frescoed *Fall Of The Giants* (1532-34) by Giulio Romano at the Palazzo de Te, and in French Romanticism with Gericault's *Raft of the Medusa* (1818-19).



71. Antonio Pollaiuolo. *Battle of the Naked Men*. 1465-75. Engraving, 42.4 x 60.9 cm.

John Bird argues that:

*Classical art is taken by Golub as the means to a powerful act of essentialising, stripping away refinements and specificities that would interrupt his sense of the continuum of violence.*<sup>59</sup>



72. Leon Golub. *Gigantomachy I*. 1965. Oil on linen, 305 x 731.5 cm.

As well as historical reference, Golub used news media photographs of males playing football or rugby, providing a more realistic anatomical guide for drawing the figures. His stony men wear no uniforms and carry no weapons; they cannot be identified into any time frame or place, a void in which the violence is unending and unsolvable. Taken as a whole, the sequence dramatises virile aggression with men locked in a kind of ritualistic savagery. The all-over freedom and roughness evident in Golub's handling of paint provides a surface tension that helps energise the violence of the scene. 'The increased number of participants allowed Golub to comment on the nature of modern warfare and its potential for destruction.'<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Bird, John. *Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real*. Reaktion Books: London, 2000, p36.

<sup>60</sup> Gumpert, Lynn and Rifkin, Ned. *Golub*. The New Museum of Contemporary Art: New York, 1984, p29

Art critic Jonathan Smit regards Golub's *Gigantomachies* paintings as possessing a universal message which goes beyond the realm of art. He argues that 'Violence is a universal language: we have all experienced it. Most likely, we have all engaged in it. And in Golub's paintings, we are implicated in it'.<sup>61</sup>

In 1968, Golub was co-organiser of an unsuccessful attempt to persuade Picasso that the bombing of Vietnam could be equated with that of the Spanish town of Guernica and, consequently, that he should withdraw his painting of the event from New York's Museum of Modern Art in protest against the bombing of Vietnam by the United States.<sup>62</sup>



73. Leon Golub. *Vietnam I*. 1972. Acrylic on linen, 305 x 853.5 cm.

As a personal act of protest Golub created his *Vietnam* (1972-74) series of paintings [73], exposing the cruelty and violence of what he considered to be a morally unjustifiable war. He sourced photographic war reportage for imagery. Painting on huge unstretched and at times creased canvases, Golub recreated the violence of war showing tense groupings of soldiers, anguished civilians, and the distorted bodies of the dead. He turned to news photographs to model his figures, instead of sports images and ancient sculptures. The use of oversized figuration in his paintings is provocative. The viewer has a sense of being able to walk into the violence and be a part of the action. The giant figures lurch out from the ground and literally drag you with them as they enter into the picture frame.

The raw and expressive nature of Golub's painting technique makes human skin look bruised, wounded, bleeding and somehow polluted with the stench of violence. His actions of cutting, tearing, creasing, scraping and gouging into the canvas can also psychologically remind us of physical trauma and pain.

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<sup>61</sup> Smit, Jonathan. 'What More Can You Ask of Painting? Leon Golub Did It!'

*The Brooklyn Rail*, October 2008. Exhibition review, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts: New York, 2008.

<<http://brooklynrail.org/2008/11/artseen/what-more-can-you-ask-of-painting-leon-golub-did-it>> Viewed 21 June 2011.

<sup>62</sup> Bird, John. *Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real*. Op. cit. p47.





74. Leon Golub. *Vietnam II*. 1973. Acrylic on linen, 305 x 1,219 cm.

In *Vietnam II* (1973) [74] yelling GI's aim their weapons at women, young men and children, screaming as they struggle to escape from a burnt-out village. It could be a scene from the My Lai massacre, which was given much photographic exposure at the time. The uniforms and weaponry, civilian clothing, facial expressions and gestures all reveal the extent of Golub's meticulous eye for detail in making his characters real. The canvas has been sliced into and brutally ripped; a violent action psychologically connecting to the pain and suffering of the victims in the scene.



75. Leon Golub. *Napalm IV*. 1969. Acrylic on linen, 305 x 396 cm.

The scorched bodies of napalm victims feature in Golub's *Napalm* series (1969) of paintings. These works serve as unforgettable condemnations of napalm<sup>63</sup>, one of the most horrendous weapons used by the US forces in Vietnam. *Napalm IV* [75] conveys the damaging effects of napalm on the human body. The painting's unstretched canvas is creased and misshapen, rather like an animal hide. The tactile nature of the paint visually replicates the look of scorched flesh; pared back, muscles and sinews exposed. The dark dried blood colour of the background adds to horror of this image. The figures are fleeing, one has stumbled, some hands and feet are missing, and their

<sup>63</sup> The Macquarie Dictionary defines 'napalm' as 1. an aluminium soap, in the form of a granular powder, which is a mixture of oleic, naphthenic and coconut fatty acids; mixed with petrol it forms a sticky gel, stable from -40 °C to 100°C, used in flame throwers and fire bombs. 2. the gel made by the addition of napalm to petrol.

escape finishes abruptly at a jagged edge. That edge is where Golub has cut the canvas, an action he describes in an interview:

*The cuts made in the Vietnam canvases were relatively arbitrary. Once such a cut is made, a piece of canvas removed, it becomes a kind of unalterable fact not only structurally but psychologically and perhaps narratively and draws attention both to itself and to what is around it.*<sup>64</sup>



76. Leon Golub. *The Burnt Man*. 1979. Screenprint, 97.2 x 127.3 cm.

The crouched figure of a man first appeared in Golub's early paintings of the 1950s. It reappears in his screen-print titled *The Burnt Man* (1979) [76]. He uses the words 'Men Are Not For Burning' to reference the Vietnam War, and specifically to highlight the use of napalm and mass explosives as powerful and destructive weapons.



77. Leon Golub. *Vietnam III*. 1974. Acrylic on linen, 305 x 853.5 cm.

*Vietnam III* (1974) [77] shows a scene of disenchantment with the perceptions of masculine identity in a war in which the self image of young men and their patriotic duty was often based on war heroes in Hollywood films. Gung-ho soldiers, their weapons resting on their shoulders, stand around the bodies of the dead Vietnamese. Their green uniforms stand out; their body language and vacant facial expressions reflect callous disinterest in the plight of their victims. The bland washed out background reveals nothing of the location, a visual strategy directing the eye to focus onto the figures and the violence being perpetrated.

<sup>64</sup> Procuniar, David. 'Interview with Len Golub'. *Journal of Contemporary Art*. <<http://www.jca-online.com/golub.html>> Viewed 21 October 2011.

The grainy featureless backgrounds in Goya's *Disasters of War* etchings create a similar sensation. These paintings also bear moral similarities to Goya's art, as described by art historian Jon Bird:

*Unlike traditional historical painting, in which the historical referent frames and conditions the viewer's understanding, Golub's historical project is closer to that of Goya or Courbet, whose political 'message' problematizes historical responsibility.*<sup>65</sup>

In the 1980s Golub started working on other controversial violent themes such as mercenaries, interrogators, white racial squads, street violence and riots. Again, these paintings were huge with figures looming up from the ground at nearly twice life size.

Eva Wittocx comments that 'Leon Golub takes this violence as his subject, on such a scale that his works seem to hit you in the face'.<sup>66</sup>



78. Leon Golub working on the painting *White Squad* in 1986. 305 x 432 cm.

These paintings are vast, ungainly and effectively disturbing [78]. He physically manipulates pigment powder and paint by scraping and distressing them across and into the surface of the canvas. This creates a parched look, crudely raw like the subject matter he was painting.

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<sup>65</sup> Bird, Jon. Op. cit. p57.

<sup>66</sup> Wittocx, Eva. *Leon Golub: Paintings & drawings 1988-1999*. Catalogue essay. SMAK Gallery: Ghent, Belgium, 2000. <<http://www.smak.be/tentoonstelling.php?id=56&la=en>> Viewed 15 July 2011.



Golub's intense physical engagement with materials and process is described by art historian Robert Hughes:

*Their paint was like no one else's. Coat after coat was laboriously scraped back with the edge of a meat cleaver and then scumbled again until it looked weirdly provisional, a thin caking of color in the pores of the canvas.*<sup>67</sup>



79. *Soldier of Fortune*. Magazine covers. 1970s and 1980s.

In order to create the characters for the *Mercenaries* series of paintings, Golub used images from an illustrated magazine called *Soldier of Fortune* [79]. From these magazines he appropriated faces and figures in order to create the 'characters' of his dark narratives. We see the macho men, Rambo style soldiers, armed mercenaries in dark sunglasses, smiling assassins - the so called 'guns for hire'. All are players in Golub's visual theatre of cruelty.



80. Leon Golub. *Mercenaries I*. 1976. Acrylic on linen, 305 x 406.5 cm.

Golub's painting *Mercenaries I* (1976) [80] shows two 'guns for hire' holding a pole between them, with a bound victim dangling from it. The mercenaries, flattened figures against the flat pale ochre background, are pushed aggressively to the foreground, and we, the viewer, are dwarfed by the massive size of Golub's canvas. The paint surface seems raw and nasty. The flesh looks particularly repulsive, both on the cruel faces of the mercenaries and on the tortured victim. The colours are jarring and acidic.

<sup>67</sup> Hughes, Robert. *American Visions; The Epic History of Art in America*. The Harvill Press: London, 1997, p610.



**81.** Leon Golub. *Interrogation III*. 1981.  
Acrylic on linen, 305 x 421.5 cm.



**82.** Roman floor mosaic. Third century AD.  
Tunisia Archaeological Museum.

The painting *Interrogation III* (1981) [81] depicts a seated blindfolded naked woman being pushed and taunted by two interrogators. The bare light coloured background creates visual focus on the composition of figures, and is reminiscent of Roman tile mosaics that depicted chilling scenes of Christian persecution [82]. And in the same thematic Golub's portrays the defenseless victim as if resigned to her fate.

Power and the threat of violence is expressed most forcefully in Golub's paintings of mercenaries, interrogations and the so called 'White Squads'. Apparently, he based these paintings on the covert military actions of the American Government in Central America at the time. His aggressive images are charged with immediacy and brutality. The monsters are real, not metaphors; they are the men acting as mercenaries, thugs and henchmen dragged out from the underbelly of power.



**83.** Leon Golub. *White Squad III*. 1982.  
Acrylic on linen, 305 x 440 cm.

In the painting *White Squad III* (1982) [83] a Pompeian red oxide background, reminiscent of dried blood, pushes the life-size figures of policemen forward from the stained surface and into the viewer's space. The male victim lies on the ground, hands tied behind his back, while the policeman aims a pistol at his head. The tension Golub creates is nerve racking; we are the ones left wondering if the policeman is going to pull the trigger or not.



84. Leon Golub. *White Squad*. 1987. Lithograph. 75.6 x 106.4 cm.

Extreme psychological tension is captured in Golub's lithograph print *White Squad* (1987) [84]. The heads of the victim and sadistic persecutor push forward in the picture frame, making the scene highly confrontational. Golub apparently relied on sado-masochistic pornography from magazines to create the figurative compositions for these works and by doing so he has infected them with a sense of voyeuristic curiosity. These are dirty secrets and they are being revealed to us.

In the 1990s Golub's subject matter moved from depicting the violence and maltreatment perpetrated by government power groups and individuals to paintings that portray a disenchanted world full of fierce dogs, skeletons, bodies and graffiti like text. These works seem to voice his disenchantment with humanity and its future. Art theorist Jon Bird describes Golub's direction in the 1990s paintings:

*It is as if the traumatized body has withdrawn into a representational space suffused with darkness, a decorporealized and shadowy presence scuffed over surfaces fatigued and worn by time circumstance. Forms grope towards semi-visibility as if history's memory was being traced in haphazard conjunctions and sinister associations in a world where dogs scavenge, skeletons strut, lions roar and apocryphal texts blur the boundary between the visual and the discursive.*

<sup>68</sup>

At the same time Golub was also experimenting with having some of his enlarged figures and other details from his paintings photographically screen printed onto clear sheets of vinyl [85]. These were hung from the gallery ceiling throughout the exhibition space in configurations that allowed the viewer to experience changing visual relationships while walking around them.

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<sup>68</sup> Bird, Jon. Op, cit. p143.





**85.** Leon Golub. *World Wide*. Installation at the Brooklyn Museum, 1991.

Golub's final paintings are much blacker than previous works. Perhaps it was a self realisation of his own mortality with things coming to an end; a slow entering into the blackness. He uses motifs of snarling dogs, skulls, skeletons and distorted bodies that emerge through the streaky and scraped-back paint. Black is used in a more solid and defined way compared to his earlier works. Scrawled words appear as crude captions against these motifs; like graffiti covered walls in an urban wasteland.



**86.** Leon Golub. *Disappear You*. 2001. Acrylic on linen, 77 x 165.9 inches.

The painting *Disappear You* (2001) [86] shows a black square that contains a narrow window from which a man looks out. The man is contained and protected as in an armoured tank. Dogs snarl as if ready for a fight but the man is distanced from these hostile actions. The title is elusive, one could interpret it in many ways: who or what wants to disappear you?



87. Leon Golub. *The Black Does Not Interrupt The Killing*. 2002. Oil stick on bristol, 10 x 8 inches.



88. Leon Golub. *Hell's Fires Await You*. 2003. Oil stick, acrylic and ink on bristol, 10 x 8 inches.

In the painting *The Black Does Not Interrupt The Killing* (2002) [87] black paint appears to be trying to obliterate the violent male struggle. The black encroaches but does not fully cover the figures. The focus is on the face of the man holding a gun, aimed at the victim's head, execution style. What is the meaning behind this painting? Maureen Murphy describes her thoughts on this painting:

*The painting The Black Does Not Interrupt the Killing, in which a pistol-wielding military man grabbing the arm of an unseen figure is partially blocked out by black paint, reminds us that media blackouts and ignorance of international affairs don't mean that such violence ceases to exist.*<sup>69</sup>



89. Leon Golub. *Dog and Skull*. 2004. Acrylic on linen.

<sup>69</sup> Murphy, Maureen Clare. 'Pictures of War: Conflicts and dates may change, but the imagery and inhumanity stay the same'. *The Electronic Intifada*, 20 May 2004. <http://electronicintifada.net/people/maureen-clare-murphy?page=7> Viewed 30 October 2011.

Before his death in 2004 Golub painted *Dog and Skull* (2004) [89], a work that alludes to events associated with the war in Iraq. The skull is a *momento mori* of death and human failures, whereas the vicious dog may allude to man's savagery. The man featured in *Disappear You* reappears on the horizon of the barren landscape, like a sentinel.

The violence of the war in Iraq has been well represented by the mass media. In spite of this, Golub's painting still has the power to shock. As Robert Hughes states, 'In the end, there are perhaps some tasks that painting can do and photography cannot, even when the painting is partially based on photography'.<sup>70</sup>

The work of Leon Golub, I believe, stands alone in the genre of socio-political art. His art shows the violence we all know about but do not want to think about too often. I strongly identify with his violent process of painting. I connect his paint surfacing effects, and the significance of his performance in creating them, with my own approach to print creation. Golub's use of borrowed mass media imagery to create his figurative compositions informed my own approach in creating the Cronulla works.

Golub uses negative spaces to emphasise the dynamic relationships between his figurative characters. I employed a similar strategy in the major *Cronulla* work, consciously leaving negative areas in order to emphasise certain areas of fighting, and to create a depth of field within the work.

I recall a statement by Golub, who once said about his work: 'I'm trying to invite you into scenes where you might not want to be invited in.'<sup>71</sup> In creating my own work, I too am inviting the viewer into a scene that they might not want to be in.

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<sup>70</sup> Hughes, Robert. *American Visions; The Epic History of Art in America*. The Harvill Press: London, 1997, p611.

<sup>71</sup> <[www.art\\_for\\_a\\_change\\_com\\_Newsletters\\_August\\_2004](http://www.art_for_a_change_com_Newsletters_August_2004)> Viewed 12 October 2011.



## NANCY SPERO

American artist Nancy Spero (1926-2009) used feminist thought and action in her art to protest against torture, injustice, and the abuse of power. Violence, and particularly violence against women, was a subject that predominantly concerned her. Her spirit and her imagery can be compared to Goya, Dix, and Daumier who, as fearless artists, combined indignation with artistry. Nancy Spero was married to Leon Golub, her partner in both life and art. Both were anti-war activists and both used their art as unflinching critiques on world violence.

Affected by the proliferation of mass media images showing the horror of the Vietnam War, Spero created a group of gouache paintings on paper titled *The War Series* (1966-71). She worked on this series for five years. In these works, Spero not only expressed her rage at the violence and oppression of the war, but also introduced many of the political events of the Vietnam War, images and themes that would continue to reappear in her work throughout her career. *The War Series* are small works on paper, expressively painted with gouache and ink that capture the sense of the violent actions of war.



90. Nancy Spero. *Female Bomb*. 1966. Gouache and ink on paper. 34 x 27 inches. 91. Nancy Spero *Male Bomb*. 1966 War Series. Gouache on paper, 32x 27 inches.

Her work *Female Bomb* (1966) [90] shows a female form standing like a tree. The head is spewing out snake like limbs. Attached are heads with tongues stuck out like phallic weapons. An arched brushstroke of purple paint creates the distinguishing arch of a mushroom cloud, an emblem of death and destruction. *Male Bomb* (1966) [91] shows a male figure with a huge penis, the head of which is ejaculating blood. The top of the figure is exploding into a mushroom cloud that is ejecting lethal looking male sperms.



92. Nancy Spero. *Bombs and Victims*. War Series 1966. Gouache on paper, 78.5 x 95.5 cm.



93. Nancy Spero. *Untitled*. War Series 1966. Gouache and crayon on paper, 48.26 x 60.96 cm.

In *Bombs and Victims* (1966) [92] Spero depicts a chaotic scene of death and destruction sprawling across a seemingly endless barren landscape; only the mushroom cloud from a bomb explosion stops the eye from travelling further. *Untitled* (1966) [93] takes the violence into the sky as helicopters hurtle and dive out of control, dropping bombs made from human heads. Spero stated that 'Most relevant to the Vietnam War was the helicopter. So I started thinking about the Vietnamese peasants; what they would think about when they saw a helicopter and how to visualise this.' <sup>72</sup>

Cumming describes Spero's series thus:

*What strikes is that these victims may have been perpetrators themselves. Spero's vision is not one-sided. Bombs may be female, as well as male, likewise helicopters and war planes, letting down an undercarriage of breasts. These images are unforgettable and they are made to be so. They represent Spero at her strongest: a conscience making art to an unerring purpose, lest we ever forget the horrors of war.* <sup>73</sup>

In this series Spero has gendered and sexualised her machines of war, implying that everyone can be implicated in the violence of war. I felt a strong connection with the immediacy of Spero's painting marks; my own painting and drawing approach is the same. The need to infuse my mark making with energy and passion is important to me.

Spero's art frequently highlights female victims of violence; she brings alive a subject that is often swamped by the powerful violent struggles of men. Her concern with the violence being perpetrated against women in South America in the 1970s prompted her to create a series titled *Torture of Women* (1976) [94]. This series acts as a searing

<sup>72</sup> Bird, John and Asaak, Jo Anna and Lotringer, Sylvere. *Nancy Spero*. Phaidon Press Ltd: London, 1996, p12.

<sup>73</sup> Cummings, Laura. 'Nancy Spero exhibition review: Serpentine Gallery'. *The Observer*, 6 March 2011. <[www.guardian.co.uk/.../2011/.../nancy-spero-serpentine-azur-review](http://www.guardian.co.uk/.../2011/.../nancy-spero-serpentine-azur-review)>. Viewed 22 October 2011.



indictment on the political incarceration and torture of women in South America. The work comprises of fourteen panels and measures one hundred and twenty five feet in length. The work is documentary in style. The words and images inform us of the harrowing experiences of women, victims caught up in the violent power games of Latin American dictatorships.



94. Nancy Spero. *Torture Of Women*. 1976. Plates 3 and 10 of 14 plates. Hand printing, typewriting and collage on paper. Overall 51 x 2810 cm.

In creating this series, Spero drew upon and appropriated source material such as images of ancient female goddesses, mythical animals and monsters. These are juxtaposed against passages of typed and handwritten text taken from first hand witness testimonials: Amnesty International reports, news items on missing women, and the lists of those presumed dead. The work addresses a subject that is controversial and highly politically sensitive, often censored and left unspoken. By creating this work, Spero sheds light on this controversial subject, leaving us with a grim visual reminder of our history of inhumanity.



95. Nancy Spero. *Thou Shalt Not Kill*. 1987. Lithograph, 60.1 x 45.3 cm.

In *Thou Shalt Not Kill* (1987) [95] the image of the fleeing mother holding her child appears to take precedence over the text running across the base of the print. As one of the Ten Commandments, 'thou shalt not kill' is a powerful command, but Spero's mother image comes across as more powerful.



96. Nancy Spero. *Mourning Women / Irradiated*. 1985.  
Hand printing and collage on paper, 50.8 x 134.6 cm.

Spero created *Mourning Women / Irradiated* (1985) [96] as a dedication to all women who have suffered as victims of violence. A trail of textured hand printed impressions creates a smoky presence from which the women-like spirits emerge. The image is composed from her collection of metal relief plate 'characters', the various plates combined together to compose the image. By hand printing the plates onto paper Spero enjoys the flexibility of arranging the images into many combinations.



97. Nancy Spero. *Mourning Women / Irradiated*. 1985.  
Hand printing and collage on paper, 50.8 x 134.6 cm.

When artists create their own plates there is a strong physical connection with the matrix which can be felt in the finished print. By having her plates commercially made, Spero removed herself from any direct contact with their making [97]. By employing the hand-printing method Spero makes her physical connection felt in the work. It is through this action that we feel Spero's physical touch in the work. Joanna Walker states:

*Hand-printing is peculiarly bound to and separate from the hand and it affords the freedom and physical engagement that one finds in painting and drawing. While the printing plate cannot relay the physical or conceptual directness of the drawn or painted mark, the hand is in constant contact with the plate, rubbing it, moving it, and pressing down on it.*<sup>74</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Walker, Joanna S. 'The Body is Present Even if in Disguise: Tracing the Trace in the Artwork of Nancy Spero and Ana Mendieta'. *Tate Papers*. Spring Issue 11, 2009.  
<<http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/09spring/joanna-walker.shtml>>  
Viewed 20 October 2011.

Spero's work is charged with a compulsion and desire to get images out into the world in order to effect change. Her works retain the informality of their making. Paul Coldwell describes her process:

*Her working method is to translate images into outline drawings on zinc or rubber plates, which can then be used to print directly on to the walls of her installations or on to paper scrolls. She has assembled an 'alphabet of hieroglyphics' numbering over 500, comprising images taken from magazines, newspapers and art books, from which she draws upon to form a personal vocabulary. This connects printmaking with its most basic manifestation, the printing block or the rubber stamp—tools for multiple printing and infinite variation.<sup>75</sup>*



98. Masha Bruskina hanging with the placard proclaiming that she is a partisan. Minsk, Belarus, 1941.

Masha Bruskina was a Jewish volunteer nurse and a leader of the resistance in Minsk, Belarus during World War II [98]. At age seventeen, she disguised herself as a non-Jew and went to work in a local hospital, helping wounded Soviet prisoners escape.

In 1993 Spero created a series of works titled *Masha Bruskina / Gestapo Victim* inspired by stories of Masha Bruskina and other Jewish women who had suffered violence and persecution [99, 100]. As a Jewish American, creating these works was an important project for her. The first part of the series is based on Nazi brutalities on Jewish women in World War Two. She appropriated images and text from books to provide the narrative for the works. Some of these historical images can be extremely shocking. This is a deliberate strategy to hook in the viewer. Spero describes this:

*Throwing in a horrific 'human subject' in a photograph has the effect of provoking in the viewer a moment of disarray, an ambiguous mix of revulsion and attraction. The reader's immediate reaction is to move away, looking for something to hang onto, something capable of exorcizing threat.<sup>76</sup>*

<sup>75</sup> Coldwell, Paul. *Printmaking: A Contemporary Perspective*. Black Dog Publishing: London, 2010, p111.

<sup>76</sup> Bird, John and Asaak, Jo Anna and Lotringer, Sylvere. Op, cit. p104.





99. Nancy Spero. *Masha Bruskina / Gestapo Victim*. 1993. Hand printing and printed collage, 48 x 66 cm.



100. Nancy Spero. *Masha Bruskina*. 1993. Hand printing and printed collage, 20 x 24.5 cm.

One of the prints in the series depicts a purple stained figure of a woman [99]. Her body has been tightly bound with rope that flattens and cuts into her breasts. Spero's bound victim is not Masha, it is another Gestapo victim. 'Masha' is actually in the background, the woman holding the placard. The woman's nakedness arouses an erotic charge; her white head band and shoes suggest the look of a subservient maid.



101. Nancy Spero. *Masha Bruskina*. 1995. Acrylic on linen, 310.5 x 372.1 cm. Installation at The Jewish Museum, New York.

The work *Masha Bruskina* (1995) [101] consists of three unstretched canvasses affixed to the wall with pushpins. The roughly torn out canvasses have a look that is immediate, more suggestive of home-made political banners. Spero intersperses images and texts onto the canvasses in a narrative that describes Bruskina's story. The text Spero uses in the work is based on a 1941 newspaper article that described Bruskina's execution. This is incorporated with text from a 1960s article that revealed the discovery of Bruskina's Jewish identity. In her native Belarus, Bruskina is still unrecognised; the woman in the original black and white photographs is identified as 'unknown'.





**102.** Nancy Spero. *Jewish Women Being Arrested*. 1995. Hand printing on paper, 25.4 x60.96 cm.

Spero continues to explore the theme of Jewish women in World War Two in a series of photo transfer prints inspired from archival photographs showing Jewish women being arrested by the Gestapo [102]. She juxtaposes and overprints some of these images in arrangements that produce a visual narrative, in which certain images are repeated like a cinematic sequence.



**103.** Nancy Spero. *Maypole Take No Prisoners II*. 2007. Steel, silk, wood, nylon, monofilament and hand printing. Installation at the Serpentine Gallery, London in 2011.

Spero was radical in exploring new ways of showing prints within the gallery space. *Maypole Take No Prisoners II* (2007) [103], one of her final works before she died, is a print and sculptural installation configured into a maypole structure. The work formed the centre piece of the Italian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale of 2007. From the top of the pole hang red and black ribbons that loop down in a scalloped fashion. Attached at the end of each ribbon are hand-printed severed heads cut out from aluminium, attached by monofilament to the ceiling. The mask-like heads are screaming, shouting, spitting, crying; some have their tongues protruding. Spero describes why some of her faces have protruding tongues

*Well, yes they are, they're kind of screaming, the tongues sticking out, I think that has to do with language and also obviously with being tortured, it's like vomiting, just the body in a dire situation. But it's also about a language, about sticking one's tongue out at the world ... I've always wanted my art to be something that would not be acceptable in the usual daily, ordinary, polite way of communicating.*<sup>77</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Madame Pickwick Art Blog. *Protest Art & Feminist Critique: Interview with Nancy Spero*. Posted by Dave, 25 October 2009. <madamepickwickartblog.com> Viewed 26 August 2011.



**104.** Nancy Spero. *Maypole/Take No Prisoners II*. Work in progress.



**105.** Nancy Spero. *Maypole/Take No Prisoners II*. Finished printed heads.

Spero's 'alphabet' of printing plates were used to create the various heads in this work. Apparently she also has some printing plates made which showed her own face. Placing an image of herself in her work was something she had not done before [104]. She and her studio assistants hand printed directly onto the cut-out metal heads, varying the pressure from their hands to create uneven textural effects; a surface quality that is unique to this type of printing and unattainable with other mediums [105]. In doing so, Spero has created a visual surface effect that appears more brutal and grisly. It is appropriate in heightening the sense of violence that the shouting heads exude.

Spero's installation encapsulates the continual suffering of victims of war, torture and persecution around the word. All of the heads are screaming in unison; one large noisy shout of rage and despair, perhaps Spero's last shout at the world.

Spero uses printmaking in combination with drawing and collage to create her images. Her prints possess an immediate and painterly feel. I too endeavour to imbue my prints with an evocative surface quality. I think of my printing plates in a similar way as Spero. They are never discarded but put aside for further use. I have etching plates, woodblocks, linocuts and silk-screens with images and surfaces effects on them which I often reuse in some way when creating a new printed work. Spero's installation works are an example of how printmaking can be expanded beyond its traditional format. In my printmaking I strive to make large scale works that, like Spero, challenge recognised traditions of the printed image.

## SANDOW BIRK: The Depravities of War

Sadow Birk (b.1962) is an American artist whose printmaking and painting engages with social themes such as inner city violence, graffiti, national and international political issues, war and prisons.

*As an artist, I'm interested in how artworks function in the world we live in, the 21st century, and I'm interested in the times we live in. I want to make works that are about something that is interesting to me. I want to make works about our times and about the world. I'm continually interested in how making things by hand in the very slow, painstaking processes of centuries ago can still be relevant in the world today.<sup>78</sup>*

My research pointed to Sadow Birk's prints early in the project. At the start of my project, I was interested in the power of the printed medium to convey political messages, exemplified in the poster art of countries such as Russia and Mexico. Political poster art was often created from woodblock and screen printing methods because of the bold graphic qualities inherent in these processes. Birk's large woodblock prints possess the same visual qualities. Inspired by Birk, I too wanted to gouge out images; to feel the tools slicing in. In my early works I did this on large pieces of linoleum to produce images of Australian soldiers in Afghanistan and of child violence.

Birk's preparatory drawings for his prints were small in scale. These were then greatly enlarged on a copying machine and then traced onto his plywood panels. The enlargement process can change the feel of small drawings. According to Birk 'The sketchiness of the small-scale drawings became bolder and the gestures more apparent, the figures more "blocky" and stylised'.<sup>79</sup> The same thing occurred when I enlarged my small Cronulla drawings with an epidiascope onto the wall of my studio.

Birk's series of wood block prints *Depravities Of War* (2007) [106] addressed the USA war in Iraq. The series was inspired by and specifically based upon the visual elements in Jacques Callot's *Miseries and Misfortunes of War* (1633), also known as *The Large Miseries Of War*, a suite of eighteen miniature etchings that depicted the atrocities committed by marauding armies during Europe's Thirty Years War (1618-1648). In common with the work of Callot, Birk's imagery is brutal and grotesque.

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<sup>78</sup> Row, D K. 'Interview with Sadow Birk on the Iraq War and beyond'. *The Oregonian*, 5 November 2009. <[http://www.oregonlive.com/art/index.ssf/2009/11/interview\\_sadow\\_birk\\_on\\_the\\_i.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/art/index.ssf/2009/11/interview_sadow_birk_on_the_i.html)> Viewed 18 December 2010.

<sup>79</sup> Jones, Leslie. *Sadow Birk: The Depravities of War*. Doc record 2009, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). <[http://collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=sadow\\_birk.asp;type=410](http://collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=sadow_birk.asp;type=410)> Viewed 26 December 2010.



106. Sandow Birk. *Depravities of War*. 2007.  
Morbid Curiosity: The Richard Harris Collection, Chicago Cultural Centre, 2012.

Whereas Callot had used an etching tool to intricately draw his graceful figures on metal, Birk used wood carving tools to carve out figures that appear solidly grounded. Wood block printing works on the subtractive: what is removed does not print, what remains does. But gouging and carving into wood can be violent and some artists express this in their prints through the ferocity of their mark making. The 'cut' in the woodblock can also be read, as Shikes states, as 'the language of attack'<sup>80</sup>.

Birk describes why he based his print series on Callot's:

*Simultaneously I'd been wanting to do a project about the war in Iraq. I saw that if I tied it to Callot, the project wasn't just about the war in Iraq, but it was also about the universality of warfare over these hundreds of years from Callot's time to Goya's time to our time. I wanted to make this project more universal in meaning.*<sup>81</sup>

However unlike Callot's print series, which are small and often requiring a magnifying glass in order to see what is actually happening, Birk produced his prints on a grand scale. They feature epic compositions printed with strong black ink, catching the eye with their vividness. Creating such large prints can challenge an artist and the printer. It pushes traditional printmaking boundaries making the work contemporary.

<sup>80</sup> Shikes, E Ralph. *The Indignant Eye: The Artist as Social Critic in Prints and Drawings from the Fifteenth Century to Picasso*. Beacon Press: Boston, 1969, p xxiii.

<sup>81</sup> Giles Gretchen. *War Stories*. <[www.bohemian.com/bohemian/09](http://www.bohemian.com/bohemian/09)> Viewed 15 March 2011.





107. Chinese Social Realist woodblock prints. 1940s.

Stylistically and technically, Birk's prints are reminiscent of Chinese Social Realist woodblock prints.

Unlike Callot, who witnessed the events directly from his home in the Lorraine, Birk extracted imagery from media coverage of the Iraq war. Birk's scenes are based on pictures taken by war photographers working on the ground with the troops in Iraq. Others come directly from television news footage or the Internet. Using these visual resources Birk has composed Callot-like scenes that tell the story of the tragic and seemingly endless Iraq war.



108. Sandow Birk. *The Depravities of War*. 2007. Title page. 48 x 96 inches.



109. Jacques Callot. *Miseres of War*. 1633. Title page.

In common with Callot, Birk includes a title page as a prelude to the narrative of the print series [108]. It bears the phrase 'The Depravities of War' chiselled into a crumbling monolithic stone monument. This is set against a war torn landscape. The monument is surrounded by gun holding American soldiers and Iraqi men praying; in the background black explosion clouds billow into the sky. His message in his title page speaks of war's destructive futility. Callot's title page works differently [109]; it shows a pristine monument, surrounded by theatrically posed figures in elaborate clothing. The scene is decorative, resplendent and triumphant, and appears incongruous to the words on the monument *Les Miseres et les Malheurs de la Guerre*.



110. Sandow Birk. *Obsession*. 2007. *The Depravities of War* series. 48 x 96 inches.



111. Jacques Callot. *Miseres of War*. 1633.

Like Callot's, Birk's visual narrative begins with the recruitment of anonymous young men and women, signing up to go to war. The invasion begins as soldiers arrive in Iraq.



**112.** Sandow Birk. *Invasion*. 2007.  
*The Depravities of War* series. 48 x 96 inches.



**113.** Sandow Birk. *Destruction*. 2007.  
*The Depravities of War* series. 48 x 96 inches.

In the print titled *Invasion* [112] our view of the horizon is blocked out with the billowing black smoke of burning oil fields. Line marks from the treads of invading tanks can be seen in the desert sand, as the military operation begins. Birk recreates the destruction of villages, cultural sites and people in *Destruction* [113], a scene of the bombing of a mosque in Fallouja. The heavy might of the Americans appears to be taking control.



**114.** Sandow Birk. *Incursion*. 2007.  
*The Depravities of War* series. 48 x 96 inches.



**115.** Sandow Birk. *Insurrection..* 2007.  
*The Depravities of War* series. 48 x 96 inches.

In the prints *Incursion* [114] and *Insurrection* [115] the sky fills with the black smoke of explosions as insurgents bomb American army vehicles along Baghdad's notorious Airport Road. Expressively carved lines evoke the movement and volume of the billowing black smoke. The sky is pitted with jagged marks; vibrating remnants of wood left after heavy gouging create a violent backdrop to a scene of death and destruction.

Marcia Morse describes the force of Birk's wood cutting marks thus:

*Each of Birk's prints, measuring a powerful, in-your-face four by eight feet, takes full advantage of the woodcut medium to capture the gritty, visceral nature of this latest war. The graphic black-and-white punch of the woodcut is invested with additional energy from areas articulated with marks from a Dremel tool—crazed lines and dappled passages of tone that evoke the smoke-and-debris-filled air, and even the scent of death.*<sup>82</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Morse, Marcia. 'Modern Depravity'. *Honolulu Weekly*, 29 July 2009 < [honoluluweekly.com/city-wise](http://honoluluweekly.com/city-wise) > p13. Viewed 10 December 2009.



Callot's series show human viciousness at its worst; soldiers using diabolical torture techniques, such as burning at the stake, mass lynching, strappado and the thrashing of a naked victim tied to a turning cartwheel. Birk picks up on Callot's images of torture and repositions them into the notorious Abu Ghraib detention centre in Iraq.



**116.** Sandow Birk. *Degradation*. 2007.  
The *Depravities of War* series. 48 x 96 inches.



**117.** Jacques Callot. *Miseries of War*. 1633.  
Torture.

When images of Abu Ghraib first appeared in the mass media they caused a massive public outcry. For the younger generation they probably had never seen anything like it. Birk's response to these terrible events are graphically recreated in the prints titled *Degradation* [116] and *Humiliation* which show Iraqi prisoners at the infamous Abu Ghraib detention centre. These images do not show the same diabolical torture techniques as seen in Callot's prints [117]. Instead they focus on prisoners being physically humiliated and degraded, highlighting the fact that these are flagrant abuses of twenty first century human rights conventions.

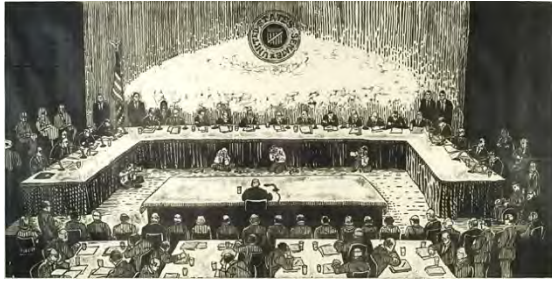


**118.** Sandow Birk. *Occupation*. 2007.  
The *Depravities of War* series. 48 x 96 inches.



**119.** Jacques Callot. *La Vie de Soldats*. 1633.  
From *Miseries of War* series.

In *Occupation* (2007) [118] a lonesome small dog watches on at the scene of death and destruction; a poignant reminder that man is the most violent of all animals. Or perhaps Birk is reminding us that dogs are used by man for hunting and rounding up prey ready for slaughter. Birk picks up on small details in Callot's prints, such as this dog [119], and surplants them into his own composition.



**120.** Sandow Birk. *Investigation*. 2007.  
*The Depravities of War* series. 48 x 96 inches.



**121.** Sandow Birk. *Execution*. 2007.  
*The Depravities of War* series. 48 x 96 inches.

*Investigation* (2007) [120] depicts a sombre court room scene in which persons are being tried for war crimes. In *Execution* (2007) [121] Birk depicts the very public execution of Saddam Hussein; his body hanging from the gallows occupies a dark, central place in the print.



**122.** Sandow Birk. *Repercussion*. 2007.  
*The Depravities of War* series. 48 x 96 inches.

The final print in the series, *Repercussion* (2007) [122], depicts the wounded veterans lined up seeking government assistance – amputees and men on crutches or in wheelchairs. This work speaks of personal loss as a consequence of war.

Marcia Tanner describes Birk's use of abstract nouns as the titles of his prints.

*The woodcuts' stark contrasts of black and white reflect the simplistic terms in which the war has been framed. And the abstract nouns of the titles—Obsession, Preparation, Incursion, Destruction, Desecration, Occupation, Insurrection, Detention, Degradation, Investigation, Execution, Repercussion—identify a recurring delusional pattern in this and other wars throughout history, inducing a sense of déjà vu, déjà vécu. "When will they ever learn?" asks the song. Birk's answer, apparently, is, "Not now. Maybe never".<sup>83</sup>*

Birk has infused his prints with his own personal energy and passion. Their aura evokes all of the passion and indignation that emanates when viewing some of the great historic war prints. The immense scale of his work reinforces and brings home to the viewer the reality of war.

<sup>83</sup> Tanner, Marcia. 'Depravities of War: Sandow Birk'. *Art Ltd Magazine*, Oct 2008.  
<<http://www.artltdmag.com/index.php?subaction=showfull...>> Viewed 10 December 2009.





**123.** Sandow Birk. *Destruction*. 2007. Print on a billboard in Prague, 2007-08. From *The Depravities of War* series.

One of Birk's prints from his *Depravities of War* series was selected for the project *Emerging Wor(L)ds* in Prague in 2007-08 [123]. Billboard spaces were used as sites for displaying text and image based work created by artists addressing a broad range of socio-political issues. This was an innovative and striking way of exhibiting the message-laden works to the public of Prague.

Birk has used a traditional printmaking process, the woodcut, to effectively convey the violence of war. He works at a monumental scale; a size in woodcut printing not often tackled by artists because it is such a time consuming and physically demanding process. The visual power of his work demonstrates that traditional printmaking can create dynamic contemporary art.

Birk sourced his visual imagery of the war in Iraq from television, the Internet, movies, newspapers and mobile phone snapshots. He made small drawings from these images and then enlarged them to create his war scenarios. It is a challenge to make drawings from distanced and fragmented photographic images appear energized and life like. I believe Birk successfully brings the realities of war to life in his powerful woodblock print series. The large scale of these works also contributes to effectively bringing home the reality of war.

My drawings for the large Cronulla works plates were also derived from the Internet, newspapers, mobile phone shots and videos. Like Birk, I was challenged to give life to my drawings, and chose to work at a large scale towards conveying my intent.

## WILLIAM KENTRIDGE

### Under pressure in South Africa

The art of William Kentridge (b 1955) focuses on the complex and violent history of his homeland South Africa. Working with a range of artistic media such as drawing, printmaking, film animation, sculpture and performance, Kentridge has developed a highly original and meaningful narrative style that explores themes such as oppression, social conflict, violence, loss, betrayal, death and regeneration. Many of his drawings, prints and animated films are based on his first-hand experience of witnessing the pre and post Apartheid era in South Africa. Through his art he expresses the importance of experiencing a sense of shock and horror at tragic and violent events. He wants the viewers of his art not to feel complacent but instead feel some responsibility for what has occurred.

Kentridge labels himself as a political artist but he does make some clear definitions as to where his art lies within this statement:

*I have never been able to escape. The four houses I have lived in, my school, studio, have all been within three kilometers of each other. And in the end, all my work is rooted in this rather desperate provincial city [Johannesburg]. I have never tried to make illustrations of apartheid, but the drawings are certainly spawned and feed off the brutalized society left in its wake. I am interested in a political art, that is to say an art of ambiguity, contradiction, uncompleted gestures and uncertain things. An art (and a politics) in which my optimism is kept in check and my nihilism at bay.*<sup>84</sup>

What shaped Kentridge's art could perhaps be explained from events early in his life. Firstly, he was born into a prominent Jewish family of lawyers in Johannesburg South Africa in 1955. Kentridge has described the household in which he grew up as 'progressive'; his family were known to be anti-apartheid supporters which undoubtedly promoted an awareness of the actions of the society around him. Just being a white child growing up in these times would have left some lasting impressions on a young mind.

Kentridge described the violence he witnessed as a child on the streets of his native Johannesburg during apartheid: 'I had never seen adult violence before seeing a man lying in the gutter being kicked by white men...violence had always been a fiction before that moment.'<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Christov-Bakargiev, Carolyn. *William Kentridge*. Societe des Expositions du Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles: Bruxelles, 1999. <<http://www.artbook.com/9074816096.html>> Viewed 18 October 2011.

<sup>85</sup> Taylor, Brandon. *Art Today: William Kentridge*. Laurence King Publishing: London, 2005, p206.

The journalist Mark Sievena writes about a young Kentridge seeing for the first time the shocking reality of a violent South Africa.

*At the age of 6, South African artist William Kentridge came upon photographs of the Sharpeville Massacre, the killings in 1960 that galvanized the anti-apartheid movement in his country. It was not just the facts of death-the bullet holes, the blood stained ground, the rag-doll corpses-that shocked him. The images also shattered the internal compass of the child: The world was not as he had thought.*<sup>86</sup>

Witnessing disturbing and violent events can shape an artist's mind and provoke a desire to use their art as a voice against such things. Being an artist in South Africa provides much to comment on: exploitation, violence, cruelty, human rights abuse, poverty and corruption. Despite some radical changes these problems still exist.

*I think that a lot of my work is trying to mine a childhood set of responses to the world. The first time you see a picture of violence there is a kind of shock that you don't get once you've seen thousands of pictures like this on television. There is an element of trying to go back to an earlier stage, of trying to recapture the sensitization.*<sup>87</sup>



**124.** William Kentridge. Drawing for *Other Faces (Protestors close up)*. 2011. Charcoal and coloured pencil on paper, 62 x 121 cm.

The energy of Kentridge's mark making in his drawings [124] possesses an immediacy; moments are not frozen on the paper but feel as though they are still happening. Kentridge describes that the mark '...has to be a mark of something out there in the

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<sup>86</sup> Sievena, Mark. 'Moral Minority'. *New York Magazine*, 12 Feb 2008  
< <http://nymag.com/arts/profiles/15946/>> Viewed 16 October 2011.

<sup>87</sup> Tone, Lillian. *William Kentridge: Stereoscope*. Exhibition brochure, The Museum of Modern Art: New York, 1999. <<http://artarchives.net/artarchives/liliantone/tonekentridge.html>> Viewed 16 October 2011.

world. It doesn't have to be an accurate drawing, but it has to stand for an observation, not something that is abstract, like an emotion.' <sup>88</sup>



120 x 160 cm.



104 x 152 cm

**125.** William Kentridge. *Johannesburg 2<sup>nd</sup> Greatest City after Paris*. 1989. Charcoal, pastel on paper,

In the drawing sequence titled *Johannesburg 2<sup>nd</sup> Greatest City after Paris* (1989) [125] Kentridge effectively conveys, through an expressionistic style, the anger and despair of those who struggle against oppression; using marks that are drawn, erased and re-drawn, moments in time are captured. Traces of erased marks are still visible; a faded memory of something that has been before.

Socio-political issues are strongly pursued in the work of many contemporary South African printmakers. Since the 1970s Kentridge has engaged with some of the more traditional printmaking techniques to create narratives that address some of South Africa's social problems. He explains: 'Printmaking has been not just an edge to or a side journey from the work that I've been making over the last 30 years or so, but is very much a key to it.' <sup>89</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Kentridge, William. *Ilse French Art Gallery: Biographical notes*. <http://www.ilsefrench.co.za/artist/bio/william-kentridge/> Viewed 17 October 2011.

<sup>89</sup> Hecker, Judith. *William Kentridge: Trace. Prints from The Museum of Modern Art*. The Museum of Modern Art: New York, 2010.





**126.** William Kentridge. *Double Shift On Weekends Too.* 1986. Etching, 50 x 38 cm.



**127.** William Kentridge. *Buying London with the Trust Money.* 1986. Etching, 50 x 38 cm.



**128.** William Kentridge. *Coda: Death On The Outer.* 1986. Etching, 50 x 38 cm.

Inspired by William Hogarth's narrative series *The Industrious Prentice* (1747), Kentridge created a series of eight etchings titled *Industry and Idleness* (1986) focussing on the lives of two socially contrasting individuals. He switches Hogarth's characters around and retells the story differently. The industrious man is doomed by circumstances beyond him; his class and his race are against him. *Double Shift on Weekends Too* (1986) [126] depicts the industrious man as a hard worker under pressure, not only from the weight of the bundle of things on his back but also by his burning desire to achieve a better life. He does not succeed in his endeavours and ultimately ends up a failed man. The other character, the idle man, is of a different race and privilege who ultimately ends up wealthy and successful despite his laziness. The idle character, seen in *Buying London with the Trust Money* (1986) [127], is a flabby debauched looking man, money in hand, a smirking toothy grin, corrupting the system and betraying his position of trust. Throughout this series Kentridge brings to life the characters through the energy of his drawn line and the blackness of the aquatint.



**129.** William Kentridge. *L'Inesorabile Avanzata 3: Massacre of the Innocents.* 2007. Sugar lift, aquatint, drypoint and engraving, 20 x 15 cm.



**130.** William Kentridge. *L'Inesorabile Avanzata 5: Mal d'Afrika.* 2007. Sugar lift, aquatint, drypoint and engraving, 28.5 x 19.5 cm.

In 2007 Kentridge created a suite of five prints titled *L'Inesorabile Avanzata: The Inexorable Advance* (2007) in response to the genocide that occurred in the Darfur region of Sudan. The series revisits historical accounts of invasion and aggression that occurred in Sudan and the neighbouring region of Ethiopia. In a text written about the series in 2007, Kate McCrickard explains:

*Kentridge draws comparisons between the atrocities committed in the Italian Fascist invasion of Ethiopia 1935-6, the inaction of the League Of Nations at the time, and our own observance of genocide currently taking place in Darfur.*<sup>90</sup>

*L'Inesorabile Avanzata 3: Massacre of the Innocents* (2007) [129] is based on Giotto's anguished mothers from the *Arena Chapel Massacre of the Innocents* fresco. The background has text interspersed with imagery likening it to a page in a newspaper.

*L'Inesorabile Avanzata 5: Mal d'Afrika* (2007) [130] depicts a gas mask on upended pylon legs striding across the landscape. This foreboding being appears as the witness of events; wizened eyes tell that they have seen much that have wearied them.



**131.** William Kentridge. *The Nose*. Series of etchings, prints 29 and 30. 2007. Sugar lift, aquatint and drypoint, each 13.75 x 15.75 inches.

In his *The Nose* series of etchings (2007) [131], Kentridge bases his narrative around Nikolai Gogol's 1836 novel of the same name. He uses Gogol's story to examine the communist government's repression of the Russian avant-garde, resulting finally with the violence used in Stalin's purges of the 1930s.

Kentridge uses drawing and printmaking to create highly personalised observations of violence. My interest in Kentridge's work goes back a long way. As someone who enjoys drawing I have always admired his expressive drawing style. I identify strongly with his passion for mark making which I also employ in my painting, drawing and printmaking. The brush, the stick of charcoal and the etching needle are the conduits through which I channel my emotions. I find inspiration in Kentridge's critical eye which scrutinises everything, from issues of global importance to the problems faced in everyday life. Kentridge is also one of the few artists today who employ drawing and printmaking to construct moral allegory in contemporary animated film making.

<sup>90</sup> <davidkrutprojects.com/.../william\_kentridge\_at\_edinburgh\_printmaker> Viewed 23 October 2011.

## DIANE VICTOR

Artist Diane Victor (b. 1964) works in drawing and printmaking; like Kentridge, she uses her art to expose the violent reality of living in contemporary South Africa. Victor's work has often been branded as extremely contentious and has even been removed from public display, despite the freedom from censorship laws in today's South Africa. She is passionate about drawing. Virginia MacKenny states:

*The act of drawing, over which she [Victor] has superlative technical mastery, is central to Victor's output. She uses drawing not only as a form of rendition but also as a process intrinsic to the creation and meaning of the work.*<sup>91</sup>

Victor's mastery of figurative drawing is further revealed when she followed Goya's lead and created a series of thirty etchings titled *Disasters of Peace* (2001-3). Her subject matter for this series was sourced from newspaper and television stories on various crimes being committed daily in South Africa. Victor described the series as capturing: '... occurrences so frequent they no longer raise an outcry, yet still constitute disaster in peacetime'.<sup>92</sup>

Victor's *Disasters of Peace* (2000-03) series of etchings, which she is still working on, are disturbingly graphic; the drawings are extraordinarily detailed with line, delicate cross-hatching and aquatint. Contentious issues such as murder, rape, child abuse and family killings, hijacks and HIV all feature in this harrowing series. These are biting indictments of a country still not in control of things. Virginia Mackenny describes the series as: '... a bleak view of human interactions with little that redeems society. As in Otto Dix's world, Victor sees our sins distort, ensnare and wound us'.<sup>93</sup>



**132.** Diane Victor. *Kom Vrou en Bring die Kinders*. 2000. *Disasters of Peace* series. Etching, aquatint and drypoint, 30 x 23 cm.

<sup>91</sup> Mackenny, Virginia. *Diane Victor*. Writing in, *10 Years 100 Artists: Art In A Democratic South Africa*. Bell-Roberts: Cape Town SA, 2004, p398.

<sup>92</sup> O'Toole, Sean. 'A Criminal Waste'. *Financial Mail*: Johannesburg SA, 3 October 2008. <<http://secure.financialmail.co.za/08/1003/life/elifelife.htm>> Viewed 24 September 2009.

<sup>93</sup> Mackenny, Virginia. *Diane Victor*. Op, cit. p398.

In the print *Kom Vrou en Bring die Kinders* (2000) [132] Victor portrays a domestic scene in which violence has occurred. The mother and her children appear as ghostly victims lined up against the stain covered wall. Through the opening beside them is a devastated landscape covered in tree stumps. The tension of this work is heightened by the angled stance of a distraught naked man; he leans backwards into an abyss like space that is black and gritty. One hand holds a gun at his head, the other rests on his penis. Maddened by his own actions he tries to execute himself.



**133.** Diane Victor. *Glue Boys*. 2000. Disasters of Peace series. Etching, aquatint and drypoint, 30 x 23 cm.

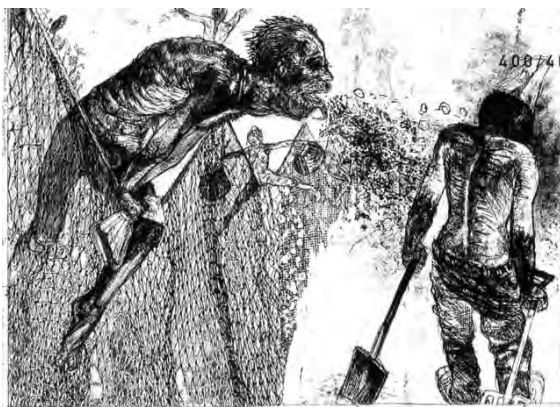
In *Glue Boys* (2000) [133] Victor depicts the problem of youths addicted to glue sniffing. A young child appears vulnerably poised next to a car. Large hands are shown beckoning the child to come into the car. What is in store for the child is left to our imagination. Is he becoming a glue sniffer or a victim of sexual abuse?



**134.** Diane Victor. *Give a woman enough ribbon*. 2005. Disasters of Peace series. Etching, aquatint and drypoint, 30 x 35 cm.

In *Give a woman enough ribbon* (2005) [134] Victor depicts a scene inside a shanty home in which two children, possibly girls, appear as if dead on their beds. The woman has her hand against her mouth, as if in shock. Through the doorway a group of onlookers appear curious about what has happened inside the house. White ribbons hang in singular loops behind the woman. In 1996 the white ribbon campaign was initiated in South Africa, a country with a high rate of violence towards women; white ribbon used as a symbol of hope in opposition to violence against women and girls.





**135.** Diane Victor. *Fence Sitters and Glass Houses*. 2003. *Disasters of Peace* series. Etching, aquatint and drypoint, 22 x 28.5 cm.



**136.** Francisco de Goya. *This is what you were born for*. 1810-15. *Disasters of War* series. Etching, 15.5 x 21 cm.

Another print in the series, *Fence Sitters and Glass Houses* (2003) [135], depicts a scene of life in a 'cluster complex', places in South Africa in which wire mesh fences are used to divide "the haves" from the "have nots" in society. The vomiting figure appears as though taken from Goya's *This is what you were born for* [136] in his *Disasters of War* series.

Victor's *Disasters of Peace* etchings make us contemplate a more intimate violence; not that which is happening in a war zone miles away but what is happening on our streets and in our homes. They reveal an insidious violence that is often kept secret. The series were displayed at the Centre of Human rights at the University of Pretoria in South Africa in 2005. These were subsequently moved to Faculty of Law because of complaints at the disturbing content of Victor's etchings. Two of the etchings were then permanently removed from the Faculty by a group of complainants.



**137.** Diane Victor. *Monument*. 2007. Charcoal on paper, 150 x 200 cm. From the *Drawings of Mass Destruction* series.

In a series of works titled *Drawings of Mass Destruction* (2007) [137] Victor creates a vision of a South Africa under attack. Huge buildings and monuments appear bomb shattered and crumbling. She created these works in response to modern society's morbid fascination with natural disasters, criminal violence and terrorist destruction

proliferating in today's news media and popular entertainment. Victor's drawings explore notions of fear and paranoia in a world which was left reeling after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York. Her buildings appear fantastical, like Babylonian temples broken and crumbling down; they could be an apocalyptic vision of what is to come.



**138.** Diane Victor. *Smoke Portraits*. HIV infected patients at the St Raphael HIV Aids Clinic, Grahamstown.2004



**139.** Diane Victor. *Smoke Portrait IV*. 2005-7. Missing children series. Smoke on paper, 58.25 x 42 cm.

Victor's more recent works are smoke portraits [138, 139] of people infected with the HIV virus, murder victims, those awaiting trial in prisons and those listed as missing persons. These ghostly portraits capture a sense of the fragile nature of human life. With the assistance of Master Printer Anthony Kirk, Victor was able to translate her smoke drawings into intaglio prints. For Victor:

*The portraits are made with the deposits of carbon from candle smoke on white paper. They are exceedingly fragile and are easily damaged, disintegrating on any physical contact dislodging the carbon soot from the paper. I was interested in the extremely fragile nature of these human lines and of all human life, attempting to translate this fragility into portraits made from a medium as impermanent as smoke itself.<sup>94</sup>*

For an artist who is passionate about line drawing moving into etching is a logical choice. Victor has embraced etching and its related techniques for its refined, detailed and evocative effects to create her *Disasters of Peace* series. By employing etching Victor has effectively conveyed a sense of the dark energy that exudes from violent acts. She presents her themes and subjects in a manner that all but forces our attention to look at them. As images they have the power to shock and eject us out of any anesthetised stupor we may have with violence. I have employed an autographic approach like Victor's to create my etchings of Cronulla. And, like Victor, I believe in the power of the etched line to effectively convey violent actions.

<sup>94</sup> <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diane\\_Victor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diane_Victor)> Viewed 10 March 2011.

## JAKE AND DINOS CHAPMAN

Artists and brothers, Jake (b 1966) and Dinos (b 1962) Chapman, are always pushing the boundaries and challenging convention and taboos in their work. With a subversive black humour they aggressively examine subjects like war, the Holocaust, Nazis, genetic engineering, morality, sadism, sex and death; with a characteristic irrelevance that has become their trademark.

Since the beginning of their artistic career they have held a fascination with the work of Francisco de Goya. Following in Goya's footsteps the Chapman brothers recreated their own *Disasters of War* series [140] consisting of two sets of eighty-three etchings, one hand coloured and the other in black and white.



**140.** Jake and Dinos Chapman. *Disasters of War*. 1999.  
Installation of eighty-three etchings. Paper size of each: 24.5 x 34.5 cm.

Employing some of the classical etching techniques used by Goya such as hard ground, soft ground and dry point with aquatint, the Chapman brothers have produced prints that echo the dark message Goya has left us. Their reinterpretation of Goya's work employs absurdity, humour and sexuality, along with frightening images, without actually copying Goya. Yet they still retain the essence and despair of Goya's work.

*In these works, the Chapman's are clearly responding to Francisco de Goya and his graphic depiction of the Napoleonic occupation of Spain, while also giving free rein to their own drawing style and obsessions with the poles of beauty and pain, humour and horror, the sublime and perverse, the diabolical and the infantile.*<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> White Cube. *Jake & Dinos Chapman Disasters Of War*. Exhibition catalogue, White Cube Gallery: London, 1999.

<[http://whitecube.com/exhibitions/jake\\_dinos\\_chapman\\_disasters\\_of\\_war\\_/](http://whitecube.com/exhibitions/jake_dinos_chapman_disasters_of_war_/)> Viewed 6 November 2009.

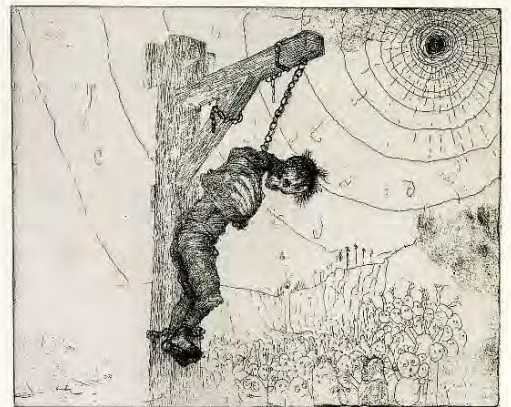




**141.** Jake and Dinos Chapman. *Disasters of War*. 1999.  
Etchings, 24.5 x 34.5 cm.

As with Goya's *Disasters of War*, the Chapmans [141] have also focused on the plight of the victims but tinged with a black humour that makes the images even more disturbing. According to the artists, even though they have based their images on Goya's, they feel that they actually exist in the subconscious imaginations of most people. Francesca Gavin describes this series:

*The artists attack and rework images, playing with the originals' ideas and warping them to reflect modern existence. The images are filled with blood, skulls, death, murder, spiders, floating eyeballs and monsters. A teddy bear grows fangs as its rotting stomach spews out of its fur, Goya's characters gain oversized ears, rows of fangs, Nazi uniforms and McDonald's-like noses as they murder and cannibalize.*<sup>96</sup>



**142.** Jake and Dinos Chapman. *Disasters of War*. 1999.  
Etchings, 24.5 x 34.5 cm.

For example, in one etching in the series we see chopped off fingers in the sign of the swastika, and in the centre there is a bullet hole with blood gushing out [142].

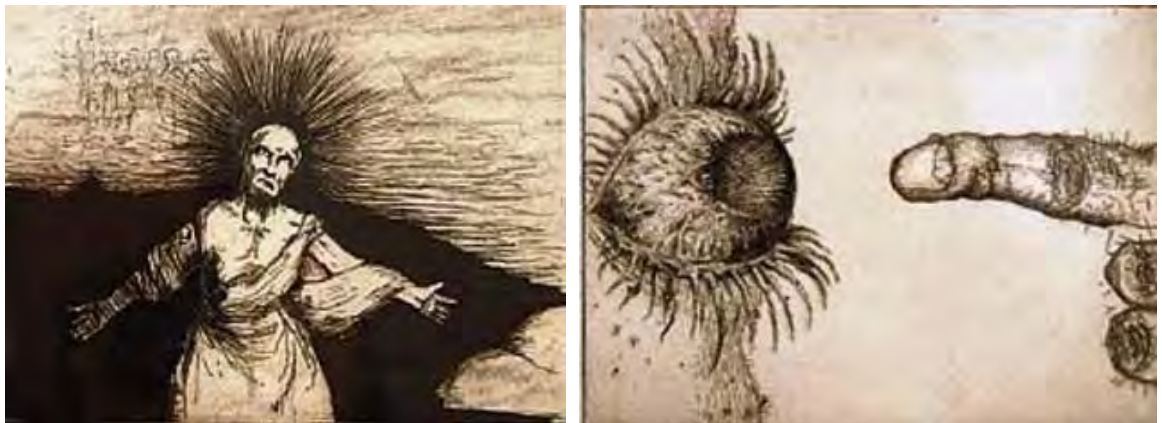
<sup>96</sup> Gavin, Francesca. Jake and Dinos Chapman interview. BBC collective, 20 October 2005.  
<[www.bbc.co.uk/dna/collective/A6206735](http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/collective/A6206735)> Viewed 1 May 2011.



The symbol of the swastika instantly evokes Nazi brutality; the Chapmans have taken what was quite a simple graphic emblem and transformed it into something else. The drawn fingers are apparently based on the fingers from one of Goya's victims in the *Disasters of War* etchings. The positioning of the fingers suggests different readings; upwards reads as a rude rebuff, downwards a feeling of lifelessness.

The Chapmans sensed there was a sexual energy in Goya's etchings, somewhat contrary to what historians think. Jake Chapman noted in an interview that although Goya's *Disasters of War* has been read as an indictment of atrocity:

*... there is actually a formal concentration around the areas of violence, a rigorous cross-hatching near the genitals, that seems highly libidized. It reveals an exaggerated, perverse pleasure on Goya's part that doesn't fit in with the institutional reading of the work.*<sup>97</sup>



**143.** Jake and Dinos Chapman. *Disasters of War*. 1999. Etchings, 24.5 x 34.5 cm.

The Chapman's startling images [143] still have the power to shock viewers who are perhaps desensitised to an extent by the proliferation of war violence by television news, movies, video games and magazine photos. Jake Chapman describes that for them there is a

*... convulsive beauty" in the violent image, and they are wedded to the Surrealists' avant-garde belief that such shocks and jolts can wake us from the dream-state of a commodity culture by, as Jake puts it, "shocking the viewer from the edifice of comfort".*<sup>98</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Nathan, Emily. 'Jake and Dinos Chapman: Shock and Awe'. *Artnet Magazine*, October 2011. Quoting Jake Chapman in conversation with Sir Norman Rosenthal at the Weill Art Gallery. <<http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/news/nathan/jake-chapman-sir-norman-rosenthal-10-31-11.asp>> Viewed 6 February 2012.

<sup>98</sup> Turner, Christopher. 'I'd like to have stepped on Goya's toes'. *Tate ETC Online*, Issue 8, Autumn, 2006. <<http://www.tate.org.uk/tateetc/issue8/goja.htm>> Viewed 10 August 2010.

In 2001 the Chapmans purchased a complete set of what has become the most revered series of prints in existence, Goya's *Disasters of War*. It was a first-rate, in mint condition, set of 80 etchings printed from the artist's plates. In terms of print connoisseurship, in terms of art history, what they had purchased was a treasure. They then set about systematically defacing them. This can be described as an art intervention, a physical interaction with an existing artwork. Doing this suggests an act of subversion; but that is exactly what the Chapman brothers enjoy doing.



**144.** Jake and Dinos Chapman. *Insult To Injury*. 2003.  
Goya's etchings reworked with paint, plate size 155 x 210 cm.

In creating the *Insult To Injury* (2003) set of reworked etchings, the Chapman brothers defaced Goya's prints by painting over some of Goya's faces to create new faces. The new faces appear cartoon like; they look like Skeletor or evil looking Mickey Mouses [144]. Cohorting with these are grinning evil clowns and crazed looking animals.

By covering Goya's faces with painted masks a connection could be made with Stanley Kubrick's film *Clockwork Orange* (1971) in which the vicious bullies wear masks in a violent rape scene; a visual device that made the violence shown in the film appear more sinister and diabolical. The careful selection of what faces became defaced invites new readings of Goya's prints. These new mask-like faces seem not to hide the violence but enhance it. When viewing the Chapman's faces you can see the delicacy of touch in their draughtsmanship; the paint application is delicately rendered. The Chapman brothers may be branded as vandals but they have done it reverently, as if paying a kind of homage to an old master.

Goya not only may have been amused by the defacing, he may even have appreciated the Chapman's incendiary gesture. Their 'vandalising' of Goya with their *Insult To Injury* series in fact keeps with the theme of 'body vandalising' in Goya's own prints.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Spicer, Frank G. *Subject, Object, Abject: Jake and Dinos Chapman's Disasters of War*.  
<<http://web.gc.cuny.edu/history/part/part11/articles/spicer.html>> Viewed 17 October 2011.



145. Jake and Dinos Chapman. *Insult To Injury*. 2003.  
Goya's etchings reworked with paint, plate size 155 x 210 cm.

The defacing of a work of art is something we tend to find incomprehensible, so why do it? What message is it trying to give us? Jonathan Jones gives his opinion on the Chapman's vandalistic actions:

*What the Chapmans have released is something nasty, psychotic and value-free; not so much a travesty of Goya as an extension of his despair. What they share with him is the most primitive and archaic and Catholic pessimism of his art - the sense not just of irrationality but something more tangible and diabolic.*<sup>100</sup>

The visual effect of the Chapman prints is quite extraordinarily powerful, highlighting the stupidity and senselessness of violence. Perhaps the Chapman brothers have only brought home the extent to which Goya's observations of violence are still considered relevant today. The hand craftsmanship and painstaking labour employed to create these etchings is evident. As contemporary artists they could have chosen to use digital processes rather than a traditional printmaking medium to create the series, but they chose not to.

The Chapman brothers embraced a variety of etching techniques to create their *Disasters of War* images. Employing traditional etching techniques of hard ground, soft ground and dry point with aquatint, they produced prints displaying a rich and diverse range of images. In my own printmaking I employ similar etching techniques, allowing me to create a variety of effects ranging from the traditional to more experimentally abstract.

<sup>100</sup> Jones, Jonathan. 'Look what we did'. *The Guardian*, 31 March 2003.

Review of exhibition: *Jake & Dinos Chapman: The Rape of Creativity*, April-June, Modern Art Oxford.  
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/.../artsfeatures.turnerprize2003>>Viewed 17 July 2010.

## SUMMARY

The work of all the artists discussed in this chapter references historical art, in some way, in its creation. As Mark Irving wrote:

*To be truly contemporary you must have a good grasp of history, since it is perhaps only by looking back that you have a sense of where you are.*<sup>101</sup>

All these artists have used an autographic approach in their work. Those who have used traditional printmaking processes, such as etching and wood-cut, have embraced the potential of these mediums to create prints that convey the violence of our time.

I strongly identify with Leon Golub's large scale paintings by way of his use of distressed paint surfaces that evoke a sense of something violent within itself. His use of mass media imagery for his source material in creating his figurative works linked to my own reliance on mass media imagery in creating my own work. Golub's large works also inspired me to push the boundaries of my printmaking into a scale I had never worked on before.

The photographic inspired works of Nancy Spero show how borrowed images can be altered to create richer and deeper interpretations of the chosen subject matter. Spero's approach inspired my early screen prints in the project.

The artist Sandow Birk has taken one of the oldest forms of printmaking, the wood-cut technique, and created powerful images of the American war in Iraq. The large scale of the works and the power of his cutting style inspired my works *Violence at Play* and *Back to Back*. This resulted in me taking a new direction in my printmaking during the experimental phase of the project.

The work of William Kentridge and Diane Victor, and their passion for drawing, inspired and reaffirmed my decision to use figurative drawing in the Cronulla works. This pivotal move to a figurative expression ultimately became the language of violence I had been searching for in the project.

The nightmarish visions of Goya are re-animated in the prints of Jake and Dinos Chapman. Though not overtly, Goya provided me with compositional strategies which I drew on when creating the large *The Cronulla Riot* work.

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<sup>101</sup> Irving, Mark. *The Independent*. London, 29 June 2003. <[www.dominicquerrini.co.uk](http://www.dominicquerrini.co.uk)> Viewed 16 April 2012.



## **CHAPTER THREE: HOW THE WORK WAS PURSUED**

### **Towards my own work**

The findings of my research into both historical and contemporary artists addressing socio-political issues, particularly those addressing violence through printmaking, substantiates that printmaking, particularly etching, is an effective medium for conveying violence.

Informed by the work of these artists, I embarked on my own work. The phases of the journey are discussed in this chapter. The work explored a range of alternative expressions and approaches, involving experimentation with processes and materials. The journey culminated in my decision on a method I felt had the potential to best express the language of violence. This manifested itself in the final works with the thematic focus on the Cronulla riots.

### **Development of the work for the project**

The work commenced with making prints that addressed a range of global socio-political issues such as the plight of refugees, Australia's involvement in the war in Afghanistan, the influence of violence on children, and the destruction of the natural environment from oil drilling. All of these issues have an extremely violent aspect.

The visual resources for my work have been appropriated from the mass media, largely through the internet, newspapers and magazines. Images were downloaded or scanned; electronically stored away for access. A large collection of images relating to violence was compiled. I perceive these as temporal images, enduring for only a short time. Once filed away they are isolated and can be controlled. In printing out an image I feel it becomes mine. I tend to let my printouts sit around for a while in folders, or pin them on my studio wall. Sometimes I lay them out on the floor, shuffle them around, crop and fold sections, and draw over them. From this process I arrive at ideas that I then formulate into a print.

For my initial works I decided to reproduce enlarged photographs onto paper using a photographic screenprinting process, as the basis for the works. Particular photographs were selected for their dynamic visual and embodied violence qualities. Screenprinting, with its photographic image capability and its capacity to print bold flat colours, has always been a popular medium for addressing socio-political themes. This can be seen in the work of artists such as Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, and Richard Hamilton.



**146.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Behind the Barbed Wire*. 2008. Screenprint, etching and monoprint, 70 x 410 cm.

*Behind the Barbed Wire* (2008) [146] is a sequence of four panels based upon a photograph of refugees pressed up against the barbed wire of a detention camp. Each of the prints is a photographic screenprint that has been overprinted with layers of monoprinting and etching, each one in a different way. These prints reveal how the stark graphic quality of the screenprint image has been transformed with the overprinted layers; diffusing and partially erasing the basic image. The intent was to experiment with different modification towards imbuing the notion of displacement and impermanence. The random scratches and foul bite textures from old etching plates disrupt the surface of the prints, evoking cuts and abrasions made on human flesh from barbed wire, a symbol of incarceration, war and torture.



**147.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Go To The Wall*. 2008. Screenprint, collagraph and etching, 70 x 410 cm.

*Go To The Wall* (2008) [147] is a sequence of four panels based upon a newspaper photograph of Australian soldiers and their Afghani prisoners, taken somewhere in Afghanistan. I was drawn to this photograph by the choreography of the figures against the background brick wall. Due to the low resolution of the photograph, the image became distorted and blurred during enlargement. Detail of the figures became barely visible, and the brick wall looked as if it was disintegrating; this distortion produced the same effect as looking at a scratched film. The photographic screenprints in this case have been overprinted with etching in combination with a collagraph plate to create the textural brick wall surface. In the progressive sequence of the prints the figures of the soldiers and their captives slowly disappear into the surface of the wall, as if dissolving; alluding to the impermanence and fragility of human life in the conflict of war.

Contemplating on the works to this stage, whilst the conscious use of layering on the photographic screenprints had been used to challenge flatness and give depth and complexity to the work, it did not successfully communicate what I wanted to express.

Any vestige as to my own touch as an artist was missing. I feel that my real passion only emerges when I can spontaneously draw and gouge on the matrix. I decided to discard directly appropriated imagery and revert to using an autographic figurative approach.



**148.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Back to Back* .2008. Linocut and relief etching, 70 x 210 cm.

*Back To Back* (2008) [148] is a two panel work based upon a drawing inspired by an internet photograph of two young Australian soldiers in Afghanistan, dressed in full military combat gear. The left panel is a linocut and the right a relief etching. Both panels show the soldiers standing back to back for protection, an important rule in a combat zone; you cover me and I'll cover you. The two young girls introduced in the right panel, one looking back at the soldiers, appear as no threat, just innocent bystanders. But are they? Who is friend and who foe? By reversing the drawing of the soldiers in the panels the soldiers on both panels appear as back to back. The expressive heavy gouging marks in the linocut contrast with the stark blackness of the relief etching. The right panel appears like an x-ray image, alluding to the inner turmoil perhaps experienced by soldiers in a war zone.

Reviewing the Afghanistan war subject matter of my prints to date, I realised that sustaining enthusiasm for this topic could end up making me feel that my prints could be interpreted as either my glorification of or condemnation of this war. I decided to move on and look at other violent issues.



**149.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Violence At Play*. 2009. Linocut, 90 x 120 cm.

The print *Violence at Play* (2009) [149] is a linocut based upon a drawing inspired by an internet photograph taken in Brazil of two boys persecuting another smaller boy with hand guns. The children were part of a street gang trafficking in hard core drugs. We generally regard children as innocents, not capable of extreme violence, but unfortunately this does not always hold true. My drawing was transferred onto linoleum, and aggressive cutting into the surface was purposely employed to imbue the image with a sense of violent tension. Strong cutting marks relate to a language of “attack” and can be translated by the viewer as such. A caustic etch was applied on the raised areas of the background linoleum to produce a grainy effect. The scale of the figures in the composition is purposely exaggerated. The two older boys, the aggressors, are accentuated with solid areas of black ink to emphasise their dark aggression. They leer menacingly over the younger boy, pressing their hand guns into the side of his head. The fear on the face of their victim is articulated through the expression of the gouged marks in the linoleum.

The physicality in the process of making the prints *Back to Back* and *Violence at Play* allowed me to vent out my emotions through actions that left their marks on the matrix. This physical connection is important to me in that it allows for emotional expression. Reviewing the work created so far, the imagery appears didactic, relying perhaps too directly on appropriated imagery. Rather than concentrating on creating my own images at this stage, I decided to experiment with materials and techniques that might contribute to further works.

### **Experimentation with liquid rosin and sugar lift etching**

Printmaking carries a long tradition of well rehearsed and practiced techniques, however, it does allow for the exploration of new techniques for artistic expression. The metal etching plate can withstand being physically attacked and disfigured. It is a surface that can withstand violent battle towards creating surface effects with energy that can translate into the print. Concentrating on intaglio techniques, I decided to explore the potential of using unconventional materials and techniques to impart a visual expression of violence.

Experimentation began with a technique called liquid rosin<sup>102</sup>, a process used to create fluid like effects in etching. I learnt the technique from master printer Max Miller. When demonstrating the process, he walked unprotected onto the flaming metal plates. I retain a lasting impression of this act; it was like something out of Dante’s *Inferno*. The

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<sup>102</sup> **Liquid rosin** is a mixture of rosin crystals dissolved in methylated spirits; dissolving over several weeks results in a mixture with the consistency of runny treacle. Spread onto an etching plate and set alight, the mixture bubbles and fuses onto the plate surface.



print historian Thomas Harris suggests that Goya may have employed a liquid rosin method in his etchings by blowing it on the etching plate with a mouth spray<sup>103</sup>. I wanted to use it in a more aggressive way by throwing and splattering the rosin on and across the surface of the etching plate. In conjunction with this, I decided to further experiment by throwing raw sugar granules over the liquid rosin before igniting.



**150.** Photographs of throwing liquid rosin onto plates and setting alight.

Liquid rosin was thrown across the surface of three large steel plates, the throwing action simulating an explosive splash effect [150]. Raw sugar was randomly thrown over, not covering the whole surface as a uniform grain was not sought. The liquid rosin was set alight with a blow torch, turning the rosin into lava that bubbled and blistered. The sugar melted creating little syrupy bubbles which became fused onto the surface of the plate. The smoke, the flames and the smell created a danger zone that I found exhilarating.



**151.** Photographs of fused plate and resulting print.

Once cooled, the plates were soaked in hot water to dissolve the sugar out of the fused rosin. The experiment was successful; the sugar granules dissolved leaving small pot holes of exposed raw metal beneath. Spray aquatint was applied on the bare metal parts of the plates. After etching, the plates revealed the result of the liquid aquatinting, an effect which looked like a big explosion and splatter. The sugar lift technique had created textural effects that looked like grainy clouds of smoke. The prints taken from

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<sup>103</sup> Harris, Tomas. *Goya Engravings and Lithographs, 2 Volumes*. Bruno Cassirer: Oxford, 1964, p27.

these plates conjured up an explosive force, pushing material upwards and emitting clouds of smoke [151]. The result offered opportunity for use as background effects that positive images could be layered over.



152. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Deep Down*. 2009. Etching and aquatint, 170 x 120 cm.

*Deep Down* (2009) [152] is based on the destructive impact of oil drilling rigs upon the environment. These dark machines appear, as if on the move, and pound away, extracting oil with their metal proboscis from deep inside the earth. They stand like large trebuchets, the medieval war machines used to hurl rocks at castles; ancient weapons of mass destruction. In creating *Deep Down* I used the splash and smoke like effects created from the liquid rosin and sugar lift experiments as backgrounds. The work is made up of two panels. The top panel, an image of an oil drilling rig, was hand drawn on a separate plate and then printed over the experimental effects. In the bottom panel the explosive spattering effect pushes downwards. A thin paper stencil was used to create the white line symbolising the oil drilling pipe draining the earth of its oily blood. Man makes and controls these dark machines. But what if that role is reversed and the machine becomes the controller?



153. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Mandrel*. 2009. Etching and aquatint, 220 x 120 cm.

*Mandrel* (2009) [153] shows a construct of a 'screaming man' and machine. The upper section, the major part of the work, depicts an enlarged section of an oil refinery plant, hand engraved across two large metal plates. The oil refinery construct is made up of pipes, tension wires, cogs and valves. The lower section shows a naked torso of a man: his arms are positioned as if in an expression of surrender, his open mouth is contorted in a shout of despair. His body shape pulsates through the spattering effects of an explosion. The pipes twist and squirm above him as if they were alive. The background eludes to clouds of smoke, forced upwards by some kind of explosive force. I wanted the machinery construct to look like it was driving into the man's head, extracting not the crude oil but his brain.



154. The Screaming Man.  
Internet photograph.



155. Sergei Eisenstein.  
*Battleship Potemkin*. 1925.  
Film still.



156. Francis Bacon. *Study after Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*. 1953.

The 'screaming man' image in *Mandrel* was sourced from the internet [154]. His identity and location was not provided, although it appears that he is in a war zone. His open mouth shouts out violence. His injured face reminded me of the injured face of the schoolmistress in Sergei Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) [155]. This Russian film shocked audiences at the time, not so much for its political statements but for its use of violence. In one particular scene people are protesting on the steps in front of a building. Their protest is quelled with volleys of bullets fired at them by soldiers as they try to ascend the steps. This scene contains many memorable images, but it is the anguished face of an injured schoolmistress that is the most distressing. A bullet has hit her face and shattered and broken her pince-nez spectacles; they sit precariously on her nose, blood pouring down her face, her mouth wide open, screaming. The blackness of the hole, her gaping mouth, makes her scream seem fathomless; a blood curdling scream coming out of her very being.

I recalled Francis Bacon's fascination with the human mouth. The Pope's mouth in Bacon's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953) [156] bears a remarkable resemblance to



the mouth of Eisenstein's schoolmistress. Bacon always kept a copy of that fearful image in his studio.<sup>104</sup>



157. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Screaming Man*. 2009. Screenprint, photo etching, over-printed using monoprint, collagraph and etching plates, 80 x 480 cm.

In the *Screaming Man* (2009) [157] sequence of prints, several versions of the 'screaming man' image were created using screenprint and photo etching, over-printed with various layered effects using monoprint, collagraph and etching plates. The prints in the sequence show how the layering effects have altered the man's image and the embodied violence.

### Experimentation with gunpowder on paper

At this stage experimentation had only been with material and techniques on the surface of etching plates. Printing paper is always thought of as fragile and pristine by printmakers and is treated with reverence. But printing paper can be extremely strong. I have often tested its strength to the very limit in my printmaking, using maximum printing press pressure, preferring to see the etched lines raised in a manner similar to what Braille looks and feels like. In thinking about what violent materials could be used to attack paper, fire and gunpowder came to mind.



158. Rosemarie Fiore. *Pyrotechnics*. 2009. Gunpowder print and Fiore creating the work.

American artist Rosemarie Fiore (b.1973) uses gunpowder to make works emulating the chaotic force of nature<sup>105</sup>. She creates her firework drawings [158] by containing and controlling firework explosions onto the surface of paper, bombing blank sheets of paper with a variety of different fireworks. She contains the chaotic nature of the

<sup>104</sup> Artyfactory. *Francis Bacon (1909-1992): Portraits of Anxiety and Alienation*. <[www.artifactory.com/art\\_appreciation/.../bacon/francis\\_bacon.htm](http://www.artifactory.com/art_appreciation/.../bacon/francis_bacon.htm)> Viewed 5 November 2011.

<sup>105</sup> Fiore, Rosemarie. <<http://www.rosemariefiore.com/-pyrotechnics-firework-drawings-2009>> Viewed 20 March 2012.



explosions in upside-down metal containers packed with dry pigment colours. In doing this she creates circles of exploded colour that she cuts out and uses in collages. They resemble the images you see when looking into a kaleidoscope, or through a microscope into the microscopic world.



**159.** Cai Guo-Qiang. *Black Fireworks Project for IVAM*. 2005. Gunpowder on paper, backed on wood panel, 15 panels, overall length 1341 cm.

Cai Guo-Qiang (b 1957) is a Chinese artist living in New York. He is internationally known for his huge scale gunpowder drawings, sculptural installations and use of pyrotechnics [159]. Guo-Qiang uses the destructive and constructive qualities of gunpowder to create works inspired from science, alchemy, the cosmos, nature and Taoism. Apparently, as a young child, he would hear the sound of distant explosions from the often daily exchange of bombs and missiles fired across the strait between China and Taiwan. He refers to this as the ‘soundtrack of my childhood’. As a young artist living in China, he began experimenting with the effects of exploding gunpowder on the surface of canvas and paper. At that time Guo-Qiang felt the pressure of living under a political regime that imposed strict social boundaries. He felt a sense of release when he used fireworks.

*Sometimes I'd put gunpowder on the canvas and have some kind of explosion on top of that. The idea was always to derive energy from nature. Out of that came the idea of investigating the accidental, that which cannot be controlled. This was a release from the repression and pressure that I felt around me.*<sup>106</sup>

Inspired by Guo-Qiang's words, I decided to experiment using the explosive force of fireworks to create effects on printing paper and metal plates. Unsure whether I could control the effects was not important; it was more the appeal of using a technique that was dangerous and violent. My container for the fireworks experimentation consisted of a stone and brick surround, creating a firing pit large enough for two large sheets of printing paper, with a loose-laid lid of old corrugated iron sheets to contain the firing process.

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<sup>106</sup> Friis-Hansen, Dana & Zaya, Octavio & Takashi, Serizawa. *Cai Guo-Qiang*. Phaidon Press: London, 2002, 13.



**160.** Photographs of rolling ink on the fireworks, the firing pit and the end result paper on ground.

Printing paper was laid on the pit floor and strings of fireworks arranged across the paper surface in a considered rather than random arrangement [160]. Prior to arranging, printing ink was rolled onto the firecrackers in the hope that this would leave additional marks of some kind on the paper. In doing this I still wanted to feel that this was a printmaking process. With the lid in place on top, the fireworks were lit.

The fireworks exploded with a deafening noise, and smoke and flames poured out from underneath the lid. The printing ink rolled onto the fireworks acted as an accelerant, making the fire more intense. After the explosions subsided, lifting the lid revealed that most of the fireworks had extinguished, leaving small pockets of fire burning holes in the paper which I quickly extinguished to prevent further damage to the paper. Clearing off the spent fireworks revealed smoke stained paper with scorch marks from the gunpowder. Another six sheets of paper were subjected to the same violent treatment. Looking at the results, I recalled the words of Quo-Qiang: 'I wanted to investigate both destructive and the constructive nature of gunpowder, and to look at how destruction can create something new'.<sup>107</sup>



**161.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Gunpowder print*. 2009. Overall 160 x 480 cm. Detail panel 80 x 120 cm.

On pinning up the gunpowder prints [161], I realised that I had created something new out of the destructive force of the fireworks. The results were not as controlled in appearance as Quo-Qiang's gunpowder drawings, but successful in their own way. The scorch marks and burn holes looked strangely beautiful, in spite of their destructive creation. They possessed an oddly appealing abstract aesthetic. They were contextually abstract and open to interpretation. I concluded that whilst they reflected the process of their creation, they did not speak of violence.

<sup>107</sup> Friis-Hansen, Dana & Zaya, Octavio & Takashi, Serizawa. Ibid.13.

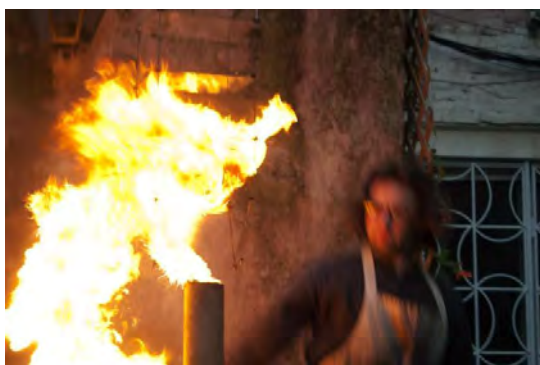


**162.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. Image of metal plate after firework experiment.

The process was repeated on a steel plate covered with a hard ground [162]. Unfortunately the force of the exploding fireworks was not powerful enough to create much disruption to the hard ground. It had only left an interesting smoky effect. I decided not to etch the plate because not enough bare metal had been exposed; the acid would have had very little to bite into.

### **Exploding powdered rosin**

American artist Jesse Boardman Kauppila (b.c1970) has been experimenting with using powdered rosin <sup>108</sup> as an explosive material to make effects on etching plates [163]. His aim has been to evaluate the potential of understanding violence through alternative means of representation. Kauppila's ideas for this came from research into technology used by Goya for creating aquatint effects, as exemplified in the *Disasters of War* prints: 'Goya was trying to capture the violence of war through a representational process that was itself violent.' <sup>109</sup>



**163.** Jesse Boardman Kauppila. Demonstrating aquatint explosion technique, 2008.

<sup>108</sup> **Rosin:** Organic substance, lump or powder, that melts when heated; mainly used in printmaking for aquatint grounds.

Saff, Donald and Sacilotto, Deli. *Printmaking: History and Process*. Holt Rhinehart and Winston: New York, 1978, 429.

<sup>109</sup> Kauppila, Jesse Boardman. 'Aquatint Explosions'. *Caterwauld Quarterly*, 25 October 2008. <[www.caterwauldquarterly.com/node/53](http://www.caterwauldquarterly.com/node/53)> Viewed 20 June 2009.

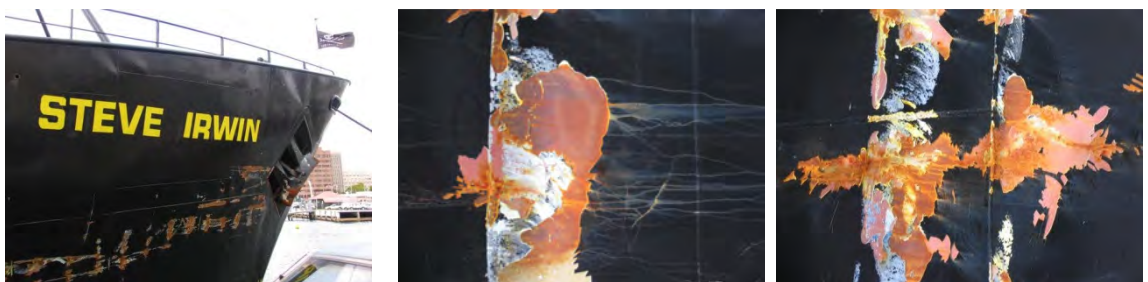
Apparently in Goya's time using the technique of aquatinting was potentially very dangerous. In those days the aquatint box holding the rosin dust was spun like a top, making the rosin dust fly upwards. As it came down it would settle onto the surface of an etching plate placed at the base of the box. The friction caused by the spinning would sometimes create sparks that ignited the rosin, causing a devastating explosion. Kauppila creates his explosions differently. He positions a metal tube over a lit candle underneath his suspended etching plate and then sprinkles rosin dust down the tube, which explodes when contacting the candle flame. By containing the explosion inside the tube, Kauppila can accurately aim it at the metal plate.



**164.** Jesse Boardman Kauppila. Aquatint explosion prints from a set of six, 2008.

Kauppila's prints [164] reveal surface effects that do not, I believe, capture the physical or psychological violence of an explosion. They appear atmospheric; more like clouds or water stains. I was unsure that this technique would provide any more than just background effects. Nevertheless, I still wanted to experiment. Using the same materials as Kauppila, I made up the apparatus to facilitate the explosions. The results were a complete failure. No explosions to speak of were produced. Nothing was deposited onto the surface of the steel plate.

### **Violent mark making on etching plates**



**165.** Steve Irwin. Hull damage from ramming by a Japanese whaling boat.

Walking past one of the anti-whaling protest ships berthed in Sullivans Cove, I noticed severe damage running along one side of the hull [165]. An enquiry to a member of the crew as to what had happened revealed that their ship, the *Steve Irwin*, whilst out at sea on a protest, had been rammed by a Japanese whaling boat attempting to abort their protest. On hearing the story I re-examined the damage. One side of the ship bore a huge scrape, like a wound; dented metal and scraped back paint revealing previous layers of colours. The damaged metal of the hull looked, in a strange way, beautiful.



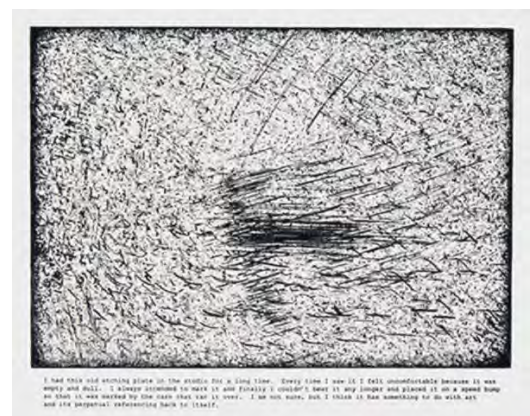
The textures and colours appeared to me like an abstract expressionist painting. The damage reminded me of the surfaces on some of my etching plates; surfaces that reveal the actions of being burnished, gouged and etched. I envisaged what would happen if I attached an etching plate to the hull to be defaced by the impact of a Japanese ship; a force gouging and scraping it, which could then be etched and printed. Could this violence be then identified with what caused it?

Denise Hawrycio (b 1970) is a Canadian born artist living in London. She produces prints by employing external agents, both human and physical, to attack her etching plates; cars driving over them, throwing them down mountain slopes, having mental patients attack them. Bill Jeffries describes Hawrycio's prints thus:

*Hawrycio's prints can also be seen as mirroring consciousness – just as the world imprints itself on the mind via the senses, she asks the same of the world in relation to her plates: she asks her plates to go get imprinted, go see what the world has in store for them.*<sup>110</sup>



**166.** Denise Hawrycio. *Bully*. 2005. Etching, 22.5 x 30 inches..



**167.** Denise Hawrycio. *Pencil Stories (Speed Bump)*. 2005. Etching, 22.5 x 30 inches.

In the work *Bully* (2005) [166] Hawrycio took an etching plate to a local high school and “asked a kid to bully it”. Apparently he kicked the metal plate around the schoolyard for an hour. The plate was etched and then printed. *Pencil Stories (Speed Bump)* (2005) [167] resulted from the placement of an etching plate face down on a traffic calming device, where it was repeatedly run over by cars and trucks. Hawrycio's prints represent a visual record of the external forces that randomly made marks over time on the surface of her etching plates. Looking at these etchings, I felt that without the artist's descriptions on the bottom of the prints I would not have connected them with the actions of a school bully, or cars and trucks.

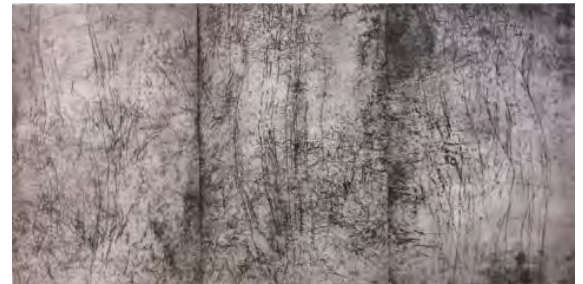
<sup>110</sup> Jeffries, Bill. *Denise Hawrycio's Situational Prints*.

<[www.hawrycio.com/printedmatter/Stochastic Art in a Rough and Tumble World](http://www.hawrycio.com/printedmatter/Stochastic%20Art%20in%20a%20Rough%20and%20Tumble%20World)> Viewed 26 September 2010

In contrast to Hawrycio and her use of external forces, I decided to use unconventional tools of my own invention to create a range of aggressive marks on the plate. I began by making two brutal looking tools. The first, nicknamed 'the whacker', was made using a broom handle height piece of metal pipe with barbed wire protruding out of the top of it. The second, a smaller tool named 'the truncheon', had a shorter handle made from wooden dowel with lengths of barbed wire attached to the end and secured by entwining more barbed wire around it.



**168.** Image of attacking the plates.



**169.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. Prints of the aggressive marks. Etching, 120 x 240 cm.

Steel etching plates were laid on the ground, forming a large working surface. I psyched myself up then attacked the plates; yelling, grunting and swearing whilst hitting them with my weapon-like tools [168]. The physical action of making marks in my painting, drawing and printmaking has always acted as a conduit for my emotions. My mark making was frenetic, consciously attempting to be uncontrolled and at the same time avoiding making a pattern. In writing this, I recall the words of Harold Rosenberg:

*Totally automatic drawing is not possible. Even under drugs, the mind exercises a certain degree of selection. What distinguishes automatism as a discipline in art is not absence of direction by the intellect but suspension of intention by the will. ... The artist gives himself up to the unknown; that is to say, to processes inherent in the brain and the hand. He renounces himself in order to be a passive medium of supervening influences, though this may make him the agent of their aggressions.*<sup>111</sup>

The plates, when etched and printed, revealed the marks of the aggressive attack, but nothing of the barbed wire that had made them. The words of art critic David Cohen left me thinking about the next stage of my journey: 'Violence is as much what happens to images as within them'.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Rosenberg, Harold. *Art & Other Serious Matters*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1985, p87.

<sup>112</sup> Cohen, David. 'The Dualist: Francis Bacon'. *Art In America*, March 1997.

< <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/features/the-dualist-francis-bacon-archive/> > Viewed 5 November 2011.

## Australian street violence

Following this experimentation, my attention turned to street violence in Australia. The violence perceived to be of greatest public concern was drunken violence, sporting violence, gang violence and racist violence. An internet search uncovered some disturbing photographs of these types of violence; images mostly taken on mobile phones by those watching the violent confrontations at the time [170].



170. Melbourne street violence. Internet photographs.

Although often badly taken, the photographs had a brutal quality which fascinated me. Many made brawling figures look like sloppy dancers in a maniacal ballet. The close ups of distorted drunken faces, along with broken beer bottles flying through the air, all appeared slightly surreal. Drawn by all of this, I decided to stage my own riot with the etching plate.



171. Photographs of Molotov cocktail throwing and igniting.

Molotov cocktails and beer bottles are often thrown as weapons of attack in riots and drunken brawls. I made my own Molotov cocktails by filling beer stubbies with liquid rosin, a highly inflammable liquid. My unlit Molotov cocktails were thrown down onto etching plates, simulating an aggressive act in order to create splattering effects on the plates [171]. Those that did not break were hit with rocks to shatter them. Splatters of liquid rosin and shards of broken glass lay across the surface of the plates. A blast from the blowtorch set the whole surface alight. The glass shards glittered through the flaming inferno, leaving their impression in the molten rosin fluid.





**172.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Molotov Cocktail* plate print. 2009. Etching and aquatint, 120 x 160 cm.

The plates were then etched and printed [172]. Joined together they read as one big violent splash; the dents and scrape marks revealed the violent course of the stubbies as they smashed into and careered out of control across the surface of the metal.



**173.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Red Riot*. 2009. Etching and aquatint, 240 x 120 cm.

*Red Riot* (2009) is a three panel work [173]. The Molotov cocktail plates were used to create the top two panels. The 'screaming man' image from *Mandrel* was reused for the bottom panel. The big red splash alludes to the destructive force of a bottle thrown in a drunken brawl. Bearing the brunt of this attack is the 'screaming man'.



Many artists use objects and symbols associated with violence in their work; such as guns and bullet holes. This observation is highlighted in Yoko Ono's installation titled *A Hole* (2009) [174] which features panes of glass that have been shot at with a gun. The glass panes are exhibited on the wall and in a free standing form. Her intention in creating this work was, as she states: 'I'd like to draw awareness to all the violence that is happening all over the world'.<sup>113</sup>



**174.** Yoko Ono. *A Hole*. 2009. Installation. Overall work and detail.



**175.** Photograph of Yoko Ono standing behind the installation *A Hole*. 2009.

A photograph [175] of the installation taken at the exhibition opening could mistakenly be thought of as being part of the exhibition. The photographer had perfectly positioned Ono behind the bullet hole in one of her glass panels; the bits of pink red could be thought of as blood. With this photograph the photographer had created an aestheticised portrayal of violence akin to that which we see on television and film.



**176.** Photographs of firing bullets at metal plates, and image of the plates.

I contemplated firing bullets at etching plates to create a violent effect that could be translated into the print. The photograph of Ono made me aware of the dangers of aestheticising violence to the point where it became something beautiful and unreal. Was using the bullet hole an obvious and clichéd thing to do in depicting violence? The only way to find out was to do it, and then see for myself. I was fortunate to be given the use of a disused quarry; an ideal place to shoot etching plates. With the help of a gun expert I shot at plates [176] with two types of rifles. I am not a marksman, so it took a few goes to actually hit the plates with the bullets.

<sup>113</sup> Artobserved. 'Go See-Berlin: Yoko Ono "Das Gift"'. *Haunch of Venison*, September 2010 <artobserved.com> Viewed 27 October 2011.

Some of the bullets pierced right through the metal; others left only a dent [176]. Printing the pierced plates would have meant flattening down the metal flaps around the bullet holes, in order to avoid damaging the printing press. I decided to leave these plates alone, retaining them with the thought that they could perhaps be used as a sculptural element in my final exhibition. I proof printed a plate that had suffered only abrasions and dents from the bullets. This did not reveal anything exciting in the print.

The plates were further attacked with the liquid rosin technique and spray aquatinting, and then etched in strong acid. The second proof showed more dynamic surface effects which could be used in other print compositions. I also envisioned leaving the wounded plates out in the open, allowing them to rust and become weathered. These then could perhaps be displayed in juxtaposition with the associated etchings.



177. Photographs of intense fire blistering heat treatment of etching plates.

My last violent experiment was to use the blistering heat of intense fire on the etching plates [177]. The disused quarry became, yet again, the experimental studio space. The etching plates were laid across the ground, and flaming logs from a large fire were thrown across them. Powdered bitumen and clumps of etching ink sodden tarlatan were thrown on top. Mineral turpentine was poured on, to make the fire more intense. Akin to doing a performance-based artwork, I threw Molotov cocktails onto the burning plates, as if I was part of a violent riot.



178. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. Heat treatment plate print.

The plates were etched and printed [178]. The surface effects were dramatic and atmospheric but they did not visually convey a real sense of violence, or the force used throwing the Molotov cocktails at them. Unsure if I could use these plates for the project, they were put aside for possible later use.

### **The Cronulla riots and the figurative**

Following all this experimentation, I turned my attention back to violent figurative imagery. Searching for images of social violence in Australia, I came across photographs of the Cronulla riots of 2005. I remembered seeing images of the riots on television at the time, and recalled my feelings of disgust at the sight of so much racist anger. As one of the worst race riots in Australian history, it exposed the racist underbelly of Australian society. This significant event captured my imagination; here was an exciting subject for focusing on in my search for a language of violence.



**179.** Frans Masereel Centrum, Kasterlee, Belgium.

The opportunity to quietly pursue violence in the context of the Cronulla riots arose when I undertook a residency at the Frans Masereel Centre<sup>114</sup> in Belgium; an acclaimed centre of printmaking [179]. The Centre is a non-toxic printmaking studio, not allowing me to experiment with dangerous materials and processes. In continuing on with my printmaking at the Centre, I decided to focus on the Cronulla riots, using figurative line drawing on copper etching plates.

Before travelling to Belgium, I assembled a collection of Cronulla photographs and had them photocopied and enlarged. Many of the photographs were not particularly great pictures as such, but were selected for their raw quality and uncontrolled figurative compositions, which was how I wanted my images to look. I envisioned that I could create a complexity to the drawings and a sense of violent energy by layering them over each other.

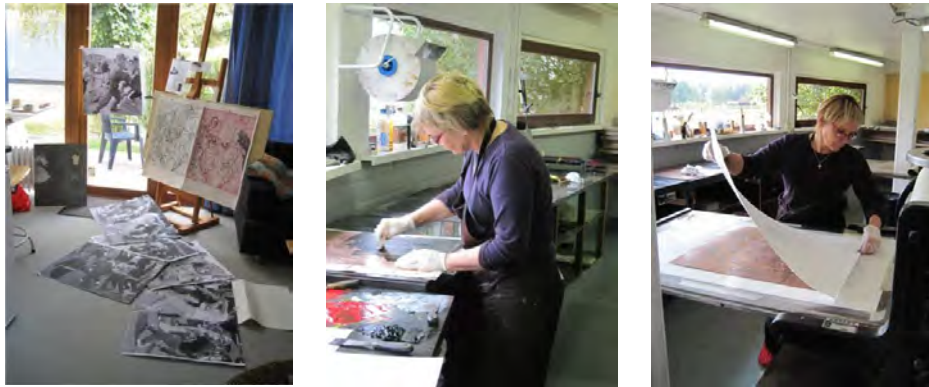
Pinning up the enlargements in my studio space at the Centre enabled me to become more aware of the detail in the riot imagery; detail of things like the strained muscles on

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<sup>114</sup> Frans Masereel Centrum, Kasterlee, Belgium: Three week residency in September 2009, financially assisted by the Marie Edwards Travelling Scholarship in Visual Arts Craft and Design (UTAS).



a face being punched, the anatomy of the rioters' hands, and the contorted forms of shoes as legs and feet strained in the fighting. I regarded these details as an important element in conveying the reality of the riot.



**180.** Frans Masereel Centrum. Studio and print room.

Working from the enlargements I produced some twelve figurative drawings on thin paper [180]. I coated the back of these with red oxide, to facilitate image transfer onto the etching plate. I played with the scale of the figures in order to create a depth in the composition, and concentrated on drawing figurative arrangements which showed the chaotic intensity of the fighting. Figures of policemen were made larger and drawn with stronger lines to accentuate their role as law enforcers.

The drawings were transferred onto four copper etching plates (60 x 50cm), laid out abutting side by side. By transferring the drawings onto the etching plates, and overlaying drawing one on another, a complex interwoven figurative choreography was created.



**181.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Cronulla Series I*. 2009. Etching, 60 x 150 cm.

The *Cronulla Series* (2009) [181-3] of etchings comprises prints created using the copper etching plates, both singularly and in various groupings, using red and/or black ink. Further complexity was explored by printing over the initial image with different



plates. In this figurative approach I felt I had found the language of violence which I had been searching for throughout the project. The layered effect of the figurative images captured the sense of the chaotic violence in the Cronulla riots.



**182.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Cronulla Series II*. 2009. Etching, 60 x 50 cm.



**183.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Cronulla Series III*. 2009. Etching, 60 x 100 cm.

I reflected upon what I had achieved in these latest works. The photographs that formed the basis for the figurative line drawings are 'framed snapshots', two-dimensional records of frozen time, frozen at the time captured by the camera and hence disconnected from any continuity. Layering the figurative line drawings had aggregated a multitude of these 'framed snapshots', pushing them together into a condensed single frame image. The works have become imbued with a sense of time, in contrast with what otherwise would be a static representation. I realised that by compressing the orchestration of the unfolding of the riot into one image had enhanced the sense of chaos. My time for quiet reflection working at the Centre had yielded results that I could expand upon when I returned to Tasmania.

Reflecting further after my return, I was perhaps not completely convinced that line drawing was the best approach. Thinking back to *Red Riot* and *Mandrel*, I decided to create two new works based on the Cronulla riots using detail snapshot photographic images in association with previously used techniques.



**184.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *We grew here you flew here I*. 2010.  
Photo-etching, aquatint and drypoint, 80 x 240 cm.

The plates from *Red Riot* were reused to create *We grew here you flew here I* (2010) [184] which is based on one of the most disturbing photographs taken at the Cronulla riots. It shows a Lebanese man being bashed by a group of rioters as he tries to protect his face from fist punches and beer bottles. I transferred a large photocopy of this image onto a silk screen; bitumen was used to print it onto an etching plate. This was then aquatinted and etched. In the second plate the image of the Lebanese man was drawn over to add another level of complexity and depth.



**185.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *We grew here you flew here II*. 2010.  
Photo-etching, aquatint and drypoint, 240 x 120 cm.

In *We grew here you flew here II* (2010) [185] the plates from *Red Riot* were reused to create the effects made from hurled and smashing beer bottles.



**186.** *The Australian* newspaper front page extract; 9 March 2006.

In what was seen as a shame tactic, police released photos of men wanted for questioning in relation to the Cronulla riots. These were published on the front page of *The Australian* newspaper [186] on 9 March 2006.<sup>115</sup> I reflected upon this front page exposure. These ‘thugs’ became the source of inspiration for my next works.



**187.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Thug*. 2011. Etching, silkscreen and sugar lift, 120 x 320 cm.

*Thug* (2011) [187] is a four panel work based upon a photograph of the head of one of the Cronulla rioters. The left hand panel is an etched line drawing; the lines frenetically build up the image, imbuing the anger and violence in the rioter's face. The middle panels are photographic enlargements of the head, silkscreened with sugar lift solution onto the etching plate. In the enlargement process the head became distorted. In creating the final panel, three plates were printed over each other, nearly completely obliterating the rioter's face.



**188.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Thugs*. 2012. Etching and silkscreen, 160 x 360 cm.

*Thugs* (2012) [188], a six panel work, is an interpretation of the accused faces, enlarged and distorted to make them more confrontational. The ‘thugs’ are shouting, spitting and smirking. Their enlarged presences jump out from the smoky background. These works were reassuring, but in a negative way. Through focusing on the rioter's heads, I realised that the key element in capturing the essence of the Cronulla riots was missing in these works; the chaotic choreography of the rioters bodies. I became convinced that my *Cronulla Series* approach was the way to move forward.

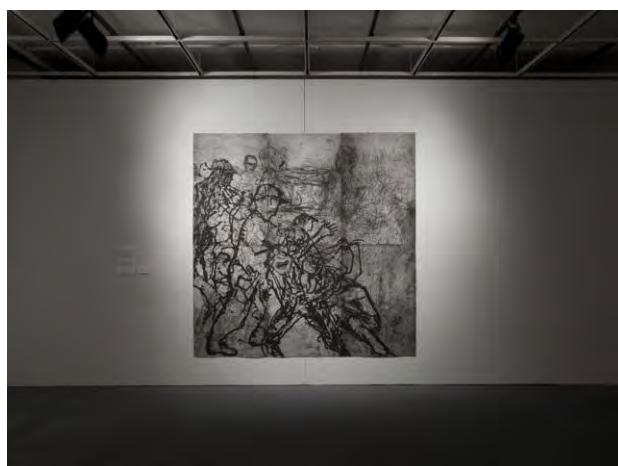
<sup>115</sup> <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200603/s1587318.htm>> Viewed 20 November 2011.



## Towards the final work

Under this conviction, I decided that the final work for my exhibition would be figurative autographic, inspired by the Cronulla riots. These were an epic spectacle involving thousands of people. In order to capture the energy and the enormity of the event, the work needed to be at a larger-than-life scale. I reflected upon the gigantic size of the figures in Leon Golub's paintings. The scale of his work forces the viewer to stand at eye level with the figures, creating the sense that the viewer can enter into the picture and, in doing so, feel as though part of the scene. In Golub's *Vietnam III* painting this effect is further reinforced by figures that career off the bottom of the painting, creating a sense that they are propelling themselves into the viewer's space.

Having made this decision on scale, I decided to create a larger-than-life size prototype of the riot to test the validity of working at this scale. Rather than making drawings directly referring to photographs, as proposed in my final work, I decided to draw directly onto the plates from memory. Further, to test whether pure line drawing was the best approach I decided, with the prototype, to experiment by drawing with a brush instead of an engraving tool. Reproducing a brush drawing effect in etching requires drawing with sugar lift solution directly onto the plate. Also, working at this large scale I wanted the drawing action to be free and expressive. This was to be achieved through extending the brush handle by attaching it to a long timber dowel.



**189.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Strike Force*. 2010. Sugar lift, etching and dry point, 240 x 240 cm.

*Strike Force* (2010) [189] is a six panel work depicting the fighting that occurred at the Cronulla riots. The figurative composition creates a sense of physical pressure as the rioters bodies are pushed back by police force. The figures are hand drawn from memory onto the plate, using brush with sugar lift solution. A variety of etching tools were used to create variable line thicknesses, and the plates were also attacked with a 'whacker', creating random background marks.



Reviewing the proof prints, the overall image needed to be more complex. The figures appeared too stark against the white printing paper. To overcome this, in the final printing my violent marking plates were first used to print a background layer, and the figurative plates were then printed over.

I was generally satisfied with the results, particularly the success of working at larger-than-life scale, but a few matters were of concern. I had captured an aggressive energy with the free flowing brush stokes, but had lost something in relying upon my memory of the photographs of the Cronulla riots when I drew on the plates. Also, in composing the figures from memory, I found myself diverging from the specific subject matter. It took a conscious effort to keep the drawings in the spirit of the riot. All this did however reaffirm my advance decisions in relation to my final work.

### The final work



190. Cronulla riot photographs from the internet.

The people involved in the Cronulla riots were surf lifesavers, 'surfies', 'Bogans', Lebanese Australians, policemen and their dogs, a host of 'mates' and local bystanders [190]. All have their own identity characterised by their physical appearance. It seemed important that my figure drawings for the final work should be imbued with some of the specific visual characteristics that established who they were. I did not think I could use my imagination alone to do the drawings for the large Cronulla work. Recreating the different characters at the Cronulla riot without photographic reference would be too arduous a task. I recalled Leon Golub's words when asked about his reliance on photographic imagery when drawing the characters for his paintings:

*My take on it is that I use photos for information. The information is specific. It's a stronger fix on reality than any preliminary drawings that I might improvise. Facial expressions and acknowledgments, body gesture, and details of uniforms are part of the density of information that I draw upon.*<sup>116</sup>

The prototype result had confirmed my resolve for the final work to be a larger-than-life scale version of the riots, using hand drawn figurative images directly based upon

<sup>116</sup> Samaras, Connie. *Interview with Leon Golub*. <[www.conniesamaras.com](http://www.conniesamaras.com)> Viewed 25 April 2011.

photographs. This work would form the centre piece in my exhibition. The largest wall space in the Plimsoll Gallery established the limitation for the size of the work. The work would be site specific, consisting of thirty six panels, each 120 x 82 cm, assembled in portrait format, three panels high x twelve panels long; an overall work size of 360 x 984 cm.



**191.** Highfield House basement studio space.

To create such a large print required a large working space. I rented subterranean rooms beneath an empty city building [191]. They were cold, damp and slightly spooky; qualities that created an appropriate atmosphere for creating a work based on violence. Somewhat ironically, the floors above my working space were taken over and occupied by the Department Of Justice Correctional Services during my period of occupancy. I was working outside, beyond and below the law.

In assembling a large collection of photographs to form the basis for my drawings, I resisted the temptation of selecting street violence images from other than the Cronulla riots; it was important that my drawings of bodies, gestures and details be an authentic representation of the Cronulla riot reality. As I assembled the photographs, I kept asking myself as to why was I attracted to certain photographs and not others? I recalled Ronald Barthes' *Camera Lucida* and his idea of '*punctum*'. Barthes described the punctum as a "prick, sting, a speck, a cut, a little hole."<sup>117</sup> Photographs with the punctum possess an aura that can prick the viewer's attention; as I searched for photographs, some pricked me and others did not. The ones that shouted at me I would save.

The photograph printouts were spread out on the floor. I experimented with various compositions such as arranging figures into different groupings, cropping out certain figures, placing the figures back to back, reversing figures, and cutting and pasting to make new figurative configurations. All this provided ideas towards placement of the figures on the surface of the plates.

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<sup>117</sup> Stones of Erasmus. *On the Punctum of Roland Barthes's Camera Lucida*.

<<http://www.stonesoferasmus.com/2010/06/on-punctum-in-barthes-camera.html>> Viewed 15 April 2011.



**192.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. Small black ink hand drawings, 15 x 10 cm.

I made small black ink hand drawings, 15 x 10cm, from the photographs; the size being dictated by an epidiascope tray [192]. Using the epidiascope, images of the small drawings were projected onto a wall surface at a large scale. The small drawings were projected onto a blank wall covered with large sheets of joined butcher's paper. In partial darkness the projected figures were drawn over with graphite and felt pen. Varying the space between the epidiascope and the wall allowed variation in the scale of the figures, necessary to create any desired depth of field in the figurative compositions.



**193.** Photographs of large drawings in studio.

A total of eighty nine large drawings were created by this method [193]. The size of the figures ranged from life size to larger-than-life size, only a few were of a small scale. Red oxide powder was rubbed on the back of these drawings, to facilitate transfer of the enlarged drawings onto the surface of the etching plates.



**194.** Transferring the large drawings onto the plates.

In transferring the enlarged drawings, the intention was to draw across the whole area of the steel plate assembly, not just on individual plates [194]. Constrained by the floor

area of my working space, as many plates as possible at any one time were assembled in order on the concrete floor. I started transferring the large drawings onto the metal plates. As the drawings were superimposed over one another, the overall image started to develop complexity. Figures were strategically placed to create dynamic interactions and highlight the chaos of the fight. I created new fight scenes by changing the position of the fighters.



**195.** Francisco de Goya. *Ravages of War*. Plate 30 Disasters of War series. 1810-15.

Goya's etching *Ravages of War* [195] from his *Disasters of War* series kept lingering in my thoughts. In this work the falling bodies and debris are arranged in a chaotic configuration conveying a dynamic tension. I wanted to imbue this same tension in my own composition. I played around with the figures as I supplanted them; upending them to look like they were falling into or on top of other figures, placing them as though their bodies were being pushed into the fighting. In other sections I showed only a part of a leg, an arm, a hand or a foot as though coming in from the base or side of the work. This created more unusual figurative arrangements than seen in the original photographic images. Each figure was an aggressor, victim, onlooker or a member of the police force. Like characters in a play, I was creating a scenario in which they were all playing a part of the riot story. Through a progressive build up in the layers of drawings the figures began to feel animated. There became a stage where I stopped layering some sections as the figures were starting to disappear within the mesh of lines. Drawing into the hard ground, I sometimes would draw on the plate by gripping my etching tool like a dagger. This produced a more aggressive looking line.



**196.** Karl Bryullov. *The Last Day Of Pompeii*. 1823-24. Oil on canvas.



**197.** AES+F Group. *Last Riot The Cisterns*. 2007. Photograph, 170 x 210 cm.



While I worked, I recalled an epic painting by the Russian master Karl Bryullov [196] and a work by the contemporary Russian artists the AES+F Group [197]. The former is a sanitised frozen moment; a formally composed choreography infused with the anticipation of the violence to come. The latter is beautiful choreography of young people in violent poses, but knives do not pierce the skin, batons do not make contact, and blood does not stain their bodies. These works are sanitised tableaux; highly aestheticised violence without imparting the reality and chaos of the event depicted. In contrast, I did not want to over-aestheticise my work.



**198.** Photograph of plates in the studio, before and after etching.

In finalising the plate engraving, I gave consideration to creating pronounced negative spaces, diverting attention to the areas of chaotic action. In these spaces, where I wanted more random marks, I attacked the plates with the 'whacker' to impart further mark making. I also scuffed the plates with my work boots and threw tools and empty beer cans at them.



**199.** Photograph of plate after etching and cleaning.

The etching of the plates was extremely time consuming, involving progressive biting in order to create varying strengths to the etched line. It involved blocking out, etching, redrawing, and further blocking out; all of these actions were necessary to produce line etching which would achieve a tonal variance in the finished print [198-9].



**200.** Photograph of the pile of discarded drawings on the floor of the studio.

In clearing away, the gathered pile of all the transfer drawings resembled a sculptural installation by Anselm Kiefer [200]. Etching completed, I vacated my temporary space and moved to my print studio in Princes Park [201].



**201.** Printing in the Princes Park studio.

The proof printing of the etched plates demanded using an intense black etching ink. Creating the desired tonal value intensity in the prints required experimentation with inking and wiping of the plates. I used the *retroussage* method of dragging ink impregnated tarlatan across the inked plates to darken the lines. From all this experimentation, a routine was established that produced the desired effects. Printing the plates with extreme press pressure produced raised etched lines, giving the surface a more tactile feel.



**202.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. Image of *The Cronulla Riot* proof prints on the floor.

The thirty six proof prints were assembled on the floor of a large space [202]. This was the only option; a large wall space for pinning up was not available. This was the first time I had seen the work in its entirety. I viewed it from a mezzanine area above and from a ladder at ground level. It was very difficult to critically evaluate the overall work in this manner.



**203.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *The Cronulla Riot*. 2011. Digitally stitched photographs of proof prints.

Each of the thirty six proof prints was photographed, and arrangement made for the images to be digitally stitched together, creating a single image simulating the reality of how the work would look vertically on a wall [203]. On viewing this image, some of the individual prints obviously needed reworking; certain areas needed more depth and complexity. Overall the work needed to look grungier; the pristine nature of the printing paper in some areas worried me.

The final printing of *The Cronulla Riot* began, firstly, with the printing of thirty six background panels. The background prints were created using plates from aggressive mark making, and the back of some of the *Cronulla* etching plates. The background effects were purposely modulated with variations in the inking, and by superimposing effect plates over each other. This created a sense of depth and complexity of line.

The figurative plates were then printed over these backgrounds. This layering effect of the figurative over the background effects realised darker and more dramatically evocative images than had been realised in the proof printing. From all of this, the final work emerged.



**204.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *The Cronulla Riot*. 2011. Etching and drypoint, 360 x 984 cm.

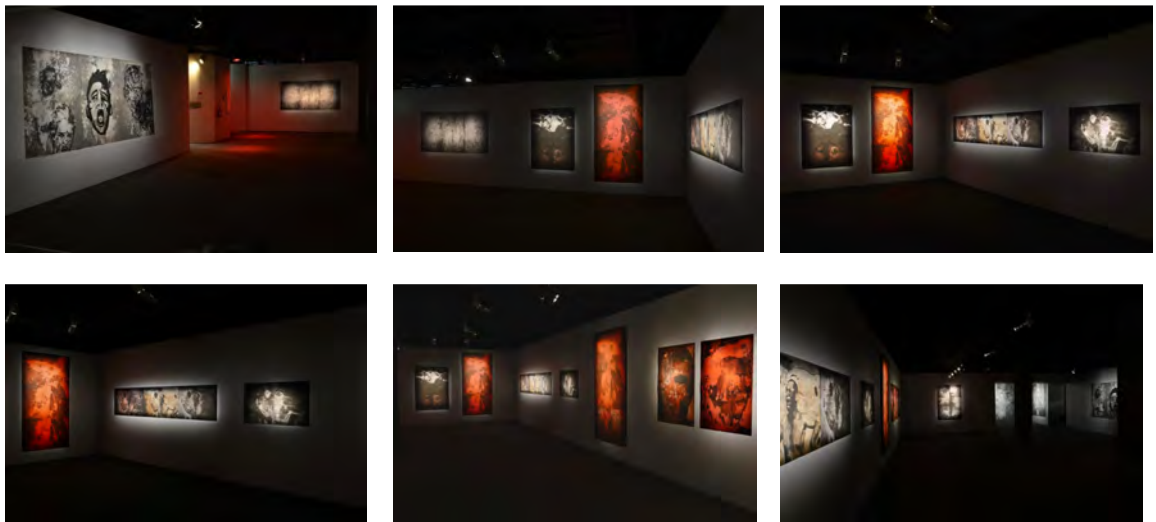


My final work *The Cronulla Riot* (2011) [204] depicts the violent human choreography of the Cronulla riots. I have tried to capture the physical intensity of this theatre of violence. By assembling a multitude of frozen moments together, the work evokes a sense of expanded time condensed into one singular image. My intention is that the work's vital and tactile presence will act to disperse any desensitised feelings the viewer may have towards violence. The large scale of the work enables the viewer to feel immersed in the violence.

### The exhibition

The final stage of the project was an exhibition of selected works drawn from the latter phase of the project, which had culminated in a focus on the events at Cronulla and the final site specific *Cronulla Riot* [67?] work. The exhibition was housed in two interconnected gallery spaces at the Plimsoll Gallery, Tasmanian School of Art, UTAS.

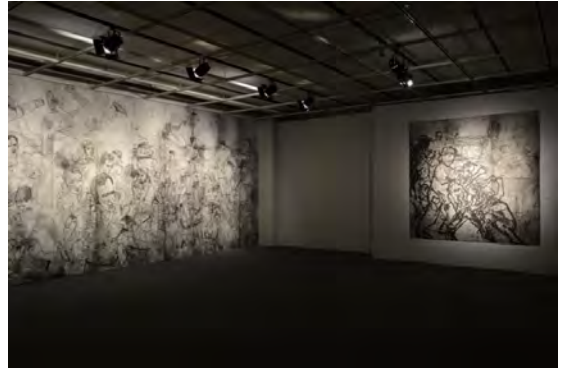
The background lighting in the gallery spaces was subdued, placing focus on the individually lit works; creating the sensation of the works emerging from out of the darkness. The intent was to echo the ominous feel of the room of the Museum of Political History in St Petersburg, as noted in chapter one [11, 12]; an experience which haunted me and lingered in my thoughts throughout the duration of the project.



**205.** Plimsoll Gallery Exhibition: First gallery space

The first gallery space [205] at entry was flooded with red light. My aim in this space was primarily to create a mood of disquiet, apprehension and violence. The works were not chronologically ordered but arranged to reveal the violent mark making, explosive etched effects, strong red colour and the dynamic figurative compositions. All of these visual elements work to display a language of violence; challenging the viewer to seek understanding.





**206.** Plimsoll Gallery Exhibition: Second gallery space

The second taller gallery space [206] featured the latter stage large scale figurative works. The work *Strike Force* [189] was positioned on the side wall, with *Cronulla Riot* [207] covering the entire end wall, as was intended in the initial planning of the work.



**207.** Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *The Cronulla Riot*. 2011. Etching and drypoint, 360 x 984 cm. In location in Plimsoll Gallery.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the project has been to demonstrate that the traditional processes of printmaking, in particular etching, are a relevant medium for the artistic expression of violence. Creating the body of work has been a journey of artistic exploration towards finding a personal visual language for violence. In using a traditional autographic printmaking approach, I wanted the work to have a physicality that could be seen and felt in the gestures of my drawn line and evocative surface effects. The creation of this sense of physicality endeavours to convey a visual experience different from that presented in the mass media. The experience of violence through the mass media is somewhat distanced and disconnected. The final works, through scale and aggregated figurative layering, are imbued with a temporal dimension, a quality not present in mass media imagery.

The research into historical artists using the medium of etching reveals that the medium was used because it offered the ability to strengthen line drawing and create other surface effects appropriate to effectively conveying a sense of violence. The contemporary artists researched provided insight into different perceptions of violence and how different materials can be used to process and portray violence.

The early work of the project provoked thought on the plight of refugees, Australian soldiers in the Afghanistan conflict, violence towards children, and the power and violence behind crude oil extraction. A range of printmaking techniques were explored, seeking a visual language to effectively convey the violence embodied in these subjects. This initial phase convinced me of the emotive potential of the medium of etching. An ensuing experimental phase explored the use of explosive materials, such as gunpowder and rosin powder, to create surface effects on print paper and etching plates. The experimentation produced abstract surface effects which I felt were too vague in their suggested meaning having been produced in a random and detached way, devoid of my own mark. The effects only reflected the process of their creation. They did not in any way reveal my intent.

This desire to be physically connected with the printmaking process led me to explore unconventional personal mark making expressions on etching plates. Traditional etching tools were replaced by aggressive fabricated implements, such as the 'whacker'. I walked across the plates, varying the force used in making the marks. I was now physically connected to the whole process. I also experimented with liquid rosin, fire, bullets, and Molotov cocktails which produced unique surface effects that became backgrounds for the later works.

In the end, the Cronulla riots became my thematic focus. The Cronulla works explore the use of the layering of figurative line drawings to convey the violent energy of the fighting in the riots. The photographs sourced from the mass media, the basis for my figurative line drawings, are 'framed snapshots', two-dimensional records of frozen time, frozen at the time captured by the camera and hence disconnected from any continuity. My layering of the figurative line drawings has aggregated a multitude of these 'framed snapshots', pushing them together into a condensed single frame image. The works have become imbued with a sense of time, in contrast with what otherwise would be a static representation. I believe compressing the orchestration of the unfolding of the riot into one image had enhanced the sense of chaos.

This approach was expanded in creating the major work of the project, *The Cronulla Riot*. The work is a singular site-specific work created from thirty six etchings at total size of 360 x 984 cm (h x w). The size of this work challenged me both physically and mentally. The large scale is designed to invite the viewer to go up close to the work and feel the tactility of the drawn marks and surface textures; to feel that they could enter in and traverse through the layers of figuration, creating the sensation of being physically part of the violent spectacle.

The project has challenged and expanded the direction of my printmaking practice. Firstly, by inspiring me to create the largest printed work I have ever created. And secondly, in directing me towards experimental materials and processes, the discovery of a new and exciting visual language for my printmaking.

My work aims to contribute towards a revitalisation of socio-political printmaking in Australia. My own personal involvement as an exhibitor at International Printmaking Biennials has revealed that socio-political issues are strongly pursued by many international printmakers. In contrast, my research into the history of socio-political printmaking in Australia reveals a shift away from these issues in recent times. The Cronulla riots were a significant event in Australian history. I have not found any examples of printmaking that addresses the Cronulla riots. In pursuing the theme of violence in the context of the Cronulla riots, my work aimed to highlight the expressive capabilities of printmaking.

Printmaking is a unique art form because it offers endless potential for experimentation with age-old traditional techniques combined with new mediums. With this in mind I want to continue to explore new intaglio expressions in response to ideas that have arisen out of this project. These ideas include increasing the size of my work by way of installing prints on the floor space of the gallery, utilising my etching plates as a sculptural element within the space, and projecting imagery on the surface of the prints.

There is much more I want explore within the topic of violence; it is an all consuming topic and an artist could spend a lifetime depicting it. My passion for printmaking lies in the constant challenge it presents to explore new approaches in making images. Its rich tradition of social commentary is firmly rooted in my own thinking as I continue making prints about the complex world in which we live.

In the light of my research and my final works, I maintain that the traditional processes of printmaking, in particular etching, are powerful means for artistic engagement. The core technology of etching may be ancient, but it continues to present the contemporary artist with a powerful and dynamic medium for personal artistic expression.



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142. Jake and Dinos Chapman. *Disasters of War*. 1999. Etchings, 24.5 x 34.5 cm.
143. Jake and Dinos Chapman. *Disasters of War*. 1999. Etchings, 24.5 x 34.5 cm.
144. Jake and Dinos Chapman. *Insult To Injury*. 2003.  
Goya's etchings reworked with paint, plate size 155 x 210 cm.
145. Jake and Dinos Chapman. *Insult To Injury*. 2003.  
Goya's etchings reworked with paint, plate size 155 x 210 cm.

### CHAPTER THREE

146. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Behind the Barbed Wire*. 2008.  
Screenprint, etching and monoprint, 70 x 410 cm.
147. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Go To The Wall*. 2008.  
Screenprint, collagraph and etching, 70 x 410 cm.
148. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Back to Back*. 2008. Linocut and relief etching, 70 x 210 cm.
149. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Violence At Play*. 2009. Linocut, 90 x 120 cm.
150. Photographs of throwing liquid rosin onto plates and setting alight.
151. Photographs of fused plate and resulting print.
152. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Deep Down*. 2009. Etching and aquatint, 170 x 120 cm.
153. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Mandrel*. 2009. Etching and aquatint, 220 x 120 cm.
154. The Screaming Man. Internet photograph.
155. Sergei Eisenstein. *Battleship Potemkin*. 1925. Film still.
156. Francis Bacon. *Study after Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*. 1953.
157. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Screaming Man*. 2009. Screenprint, photo etching, over-printed using monoprint, collagraph and etching plates, 80 x 480 cm.
158. Rosemarie Fiore. *Pyrotechnics*. 2009. Gunpowder print and Fiore creating the work.
159. Cai Guo-Qiang. *Black Fireworks Project for IVAM*. 2005.  
Gunpowder on paper, backed on wood panel, 15 panels, overall length 1341 cm.
160. Photographs of rolling ink on the fireworks, the firing pit and the end result paper on ground.
161. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Gunpowder print*. 2009. Overall 160 x 480 cm. Detail panel 80 x 120 cm.
162. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. Image of metal plate after firework experiment.
163. Jesse Boardman Kauppila. Demonstrating aquatint explosion technique, 2008.
164. Jesse Boardman Kauppila. Aquatint explosion prints from a set of six, 2008.
165. Steve Irwin. Hull damage from ramming by a Japanese whaling boat.
166. Denise Hawrysis. *Bully*. 2005. Etching, 570 x 750 cm.
167. Denise Hawrysis. *Pencil Stories (SpeedBump)*. 2005. Etching, 570 x 750 cm.
168. Image of attacking the plates.
169. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. Prints of the aggressive marks. Etching, 120 x 240 cm.
170. Melbourne street violence. Internet photographs.
171. Photographs of Molotov cocktail throwing and igniting.
172. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. Molotov Cocktail plate print. 2009. Etching and aquatint, 120 x 160 cm.
173. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Red Riot*. 2009. Etching and aquatint, 240 x 120 cm.
174. Yoko Ono. *A Hole*. 2009. Installation. Overall work and detail.
175. Photograph of Yoko Ono standing behind the installation *A Hole*. 2009.
176. Photographs of firing bullets at metal plates, and image of the plates.
177. Photographs of intense fire blistering heat treatment of etching plates.

178. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. Heat treatment plate print.
179. Frans Masereel Centrum, Kasterlee, Belgium.
180. Frans Masereel Centrum. Studio and print room.
181. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Cronulla Series I*. 2009. Etching, 60 x 150 cm.
182. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Cronulla Series II*. 2009. Etching, 60 x 50 cm.
183. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Cronulla Series III*. 2009. Etching, 60 x 100 cm.
184. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *We grew here you flew here I*. 2010. Photo-etching, aquatint and drypoint, 80 x 240 cm.
185. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *We grew here you flew here II*. 2010. Photo-etching, aquatint and drypoint, 240 x 120 cm.
186. *The Australian* newspaper front page extract; 9 March 2006.
187. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Thug*. 2011. Etching, silkscreen and sugar lift, 120 x 320 cm.
188. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Thugs*. 2010. Etching and silkscreen, 160 x 360 cm.
189. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *Strike Force*. 2010. Sugar lift, etching and dry point, 240 x 240 cm.
190. Cronulla riot photographs from the internet.
191. Highfield House basement studio space.
192. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. Small black ink hand drawings, 15 x 10 cm.
193. Photographs of large drawings in studio.
194. Transferring the large drawings onto the plates.
195. Francisco de Goya. *Ravages of War*. Plate 30 Disasters of War series. 1810-15.
196. Karl Bryullov. *The Last Day Of Pompeii*. 1823-24. Oil on canvas.
197. AES+F Group. *Last Riot The Cisterns*. 2007. Photograph, 170 x 210 cm.
198. Photograph of plates in the studio, before and after etching.
199. Photograph of plate after etching and cleaning.
200. Photograph of the pile of discarded drawings on the floor of the studio.
201. Printing in the Princes Park studio.
202. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. Image of *The Cronulla Riot* proof prints on the floor.
203. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *The Cronulla Riot*. 2011. Digitally stitched photographs of proof prints.
204. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *The Cronulla Riot*. 2011. Etching and drypoint, 360 x 984 cm.
205. Plimsoll Gallery Exhibition: First gallery space
206. Plimsoll Gallery Exhibition: Second gallery space
207. Yvonne Rees-Pagh. *The Cronulla Riot*. 2011. Etching and drypoint, 360 x 984 cm. In location in Plimsoll Gallery



## CURRICULUM VITAE

# YVONNE REES-PAGH

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## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**University of Tasmania School of Art 2008-12** PhD research scholarship (current studies)

**University of Tasmania School of Art 2004-07** Master Of Fine Art / Research scholarship

**Monash University 2002-3** Master Of Visual Arts / High Distinction

**Monash University 1998-99** Post Graduate Diploma of Arts (Visual Arts) / High Distinction

**Curtin University Perth Western Australia 1988** Post Graduate Studies in Printmaking

**Claremont Technical College Perth Western Australia 1969-72**

Advanced Certificate in Art and Design 1971, Diploma in Fine Arts 1972

**The Graphic Arts Studio Leeds UK 1967-68** Apprenticeship

## AWARDS

2009	Award of the Rector of the Katowice Academy of Fine Arts MTG-Kraków International Print Triennale
2009	The Hutchins Art Prize Student Award
2009	Marie Edwards Travelling Scholarship (University of Tasmania)
2005	Novosibirsk IV International Biennial Of Modern Graphics (Siberia) Award for Best Curated Exhibition
2005	Arts Tasmania / Artsbridge International Grant
2003	Novosibirsk III International Biennial Of Modern Graphics (Siberia) Premium 2003 Second Award
2003	Arts Tasmania / Artsbridge International Grant
1997	Australian Printmedia Award & Logan Art Award / Selected for exhibition
1986-93-94-07-09	Fremantle Print Award Finalist
1985	Printmakers Association of Western Australia Prize
1976	Undercroft Gallery University of WA / Highly Commended
1972	Mount Barker Painting Prize Winner / Perth WA

## INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

2013	International Print Triennial - Krakow / Dalarnus Museum, Falun, Sweden
2012	MTG-Kraków International Print Triennale Main Exhibition / Bunkier Sztuki Gallery, Kraków Poland
2011	"Chronotop" Exhibition, Rock Art in Modern Society International Conference, Kemerovo Museum of Fine Arts, Siberia
2011	"Chronotop" Exhibition, Siberian Gallery, Krasnoyarsk, Siberia, Russia.
2010	"Seeing Double" / UTAS & Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris Malaysia / Plimsoll Gallery & Tanjin Malim, Malaysia
2010	5th International Printmaking Biennial 2010 / Douro, Portugal
2010	Taiwan 14 <sup>th</sup> International Biennial Print Exhibition / Finalist
2010	International Print Network Exhibition. Oldenburg, Germany
2009	MTG-Kraków International Print Triennale / Bunkier Sztuki Gallery, Kraków Poland
2009	Print Art Kraków-Katowice / Rondo Sztuki Gallery, Katowice, Poland
2005	Novosibirsk IV International Biennial Of Modern Graphics / Siberia, Russia Exhibited and curated exhibition of works of twelve Tasmanian artists
2003	Novosibirsk III International Biennial Of Modern Graphics / Siberia, Russia Exhibited and curated exhibition of works of six Tasmanian artists
1992	New Pisage Gallery of Contemporary Art / St Petersburg, Russia
1992	Omsk & Tomsk State Museums and Art Gallery / Russia
1991	Tomsk & Novosibirsk State Galleries and Museums / USSR (with Pippin Drysdale)

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2012	Gallery Pejean / Launceston
1996	Nisart Gallery / Launceston, Chapel Gallery / Prahran, Victoria
1995	<i>The End Of An Era.</i> / Lady Franklin Gallery Hobart
1993	Fremantle Arts Centre / Fremantle WA (with Sally Morgan), Perth Galleries / Perth WA
1992	New Pisage Gallery / St Petersburg, Omsk & Tomsk State Museums and Art Gallery / Russia
1991	Tomsk & Novosibirsk State Galleries and Museums / USSR (with Pippin Drysdale)
1990	International Galleries / Perth WA, Tomsk Museum and Art Gallery USSR
1989	Perth Galleries / Perth WA, Fremantle Arts Centre / Fremantle WA
1988	Greenhill Gallery / Perth WA (with Clifton Pugh)
1986	Perth Zoo Exhibition / Perth WA, Allendale Square Main Foyer / Perth WA
1984	CSA Gallery / Claremont WA
1974	Robin Phillips Gallery / Perth WA

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2013	Burnie Print Prize / Selected for exhibition
2009	<i>Osmosis.</i> / Sidespace Gallery, Salamanca Arts Centre
2009	The Hutchins Art Prize. Selected for finalist exhibition
2007-09, 11	Burnie Print Prize / Selected for exhibition
2007	<i>Quartet.</i> Schoolhouse Gallery, Rosny Historic Centre
2006-08	<i>The Big Draw: Drawing Australia.</i> Tasmanian Museum And Art Gallery
2005	Novosibirsk IV International Biennial Of Modern Graphics / Siberia, Russia
2003	Novosibirsk III International Biennial Of Modern Graphics / Siberia, Russia
2001	ASAP Vanessa Wood Fine Art Gallery / Mosman NSW
1999-2001	<i>Pets, Prey and Predators.</i> Museum & Galleries Foundation of NSW (NETS Program), National Touring Exhibition: Mosman, Dubbo, Campbelltown City, Bathurst, Shepparton, Logan, Toowoomba & Grafton Regional Galleries
1998-2008	<i>Images of Tasmania.</i> / Long Gallery, Salamanca Arts Centre
1998-99, 01-04, 07	<i>The Hutchins Art Prize.</i> Selected for finalist exhibition
1998	<i>Rena Ellen Jones Print Award</i> Selected for finalist exhibition
1997	<i>Female Form 6</i> Tas Women Printmakers / Nisart Gallery, Charles Hewitt Gallery / Sydney Australian Printmedia Awards Casula Powerhouse Art Centre selected for exhibition
1996	<i>Etch Your Art Out</i> Printworks Co-operative Exhibition / Long Gallery, Salamanca Arts Centre
1994	Ten Plus International Printmakers/ Petrozavodsk Russia, "Three Women Artists of Aust"/Perth Galleries
1992	<i>From Russia With Love.</i> Festival of Perth Exhibition with Russian artists / Perth Galleries
1991	<i>Born In The CSA.</i> / Claremont School of Art, "The Artist's Artist" Festival of Perth / Fremantle WA
1989	<i>Summer Visions.</i> / Festival of Perth, <i>13 Women Printmakers.</i> / Perth WA, Greenhill Gallery / Perth WA
1988	Access Contemporary Gallery / Sydney NSW, Printmaking / Curtin University WA
1987	Dempsters Gallery / Melbourne Victoria
1986	<i>Women Artists of Western Australia.</i> / Perth College WA, <i>The Peace Show.</i> / Art Gallery of WA,
1980-85	Claremont School of Art Gallery / Claremont WA

## REPRESENTED

### Institutional Collections:

SMTG Krakow, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Museu Do Douro Regua Portugal, Frans Masereel Centrum Belgium, Petrozavodsk Museum of Fine Arts Russia, Edith Cowan University WA, Russian Museum St Petersburg, St Hilda Collection WA, Tomsk Art Gallery of the Soviet Union, Novosibirsk State Art Museum Siberia

### Corporate Collections:

The Robert Holmes a Court Collection; Education Dept of Western Australia; Exploration House, Norseman Gold and Prudential Insurance Buildings, Hendry Rae & Court Solicitors / Perth WA, Jacob Allom Wade Architects/Hobart, Medibank Private / Hobart

### Private Collections in Australia, Russia, Japan, Argentina, USA, Germany and UK

### Public Artworks:

Sculpture / Sacred Heart College Performing Arts Centre, Hobart.  
Forecourt sculpture, paving and security screen / Tasmanian Art for Public Buildings Scheme, Clarence High School  
Entry mural and screen sculpture / Sexual Health Unit. 60 Collins Street Hobart / Dept of Health & Human Services,  
Animated sculpture / Dismal Swamp Interpretation Centre / Forestry Tasmania  
Foyer artwork / Tasmania Police / Tasmanian Art for Public Buildings Scheme

## TEACHING

### **School of Art University of Tasmania**

Tutor in printmaking and sessional lecturer 2008-13

Tutor in media & methods and image development 2004-06

### **Adult Education Tasmania**

Tutor in life drawing, portrait painting, contemporary painting and experimental drawing 2006-08

**Tomsk Arts College Tomsk University USSR** Artist in Residence 1990

### **Claremont School of Art Perth Western Australia**

Lecturer in Fine Arts 1974-86, 1988-93 / Lecturer in Printmaking 1986-88, 1993

### **Fremantle Arts Centre Western Australia**

Arts Officer / Lectures and workshops in Painting and Printmaking 1990-92

**Visual Arts Foundation Artists In Residence Programme** 1990-93 (PICA)

Perth Secondary College WA / Printmaker in Residence 1990

Artist In Residence / Hollywood Senior High School WA 1992 and Santa Maria Girls College Perth WA 1993

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AS CURATOR AND ARTIST

**Frans Masereel Centrum, Kasterlee Belgium** Residency 2009

**Novosibirsk IV Biennial Of Modern Graphics Siberia, Russia 2005** *Tasmania To Siberia: Connection Through Art*  
Curator of exhibition of the works of twelve Tasmanian printmakers.

**Novosibirsk III Biennial Of Modern Graphics Siberia, Russia 2003** *Art From Under Down Under*  
Curator of exhibition of the works of seven Tasmanian printmakers.

**Salamanca Arts Centre, Long Gallery 2003** *Haven: The Art and Craft of Refuge in Tasmania*  
Exhibition Coordinator / Curatorial Assistant (with Kevin Murray)

**Arts Access Programme: Fremantle Arts Centre** 1991-92

Arranging & conducting art exhibition judging and workshops in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions of Western Australia

**Perth Galleries Western Australia** 1992 *From Russia With Love*

Curator of exhibition for the Festival of Perth WA: Conceived exhibition, visited Russia to select artists and arrange work, obtained sponsorship for freight of works and accompanying artists (4) travel to Australia, artists travel and accommodation arranging, exhibition planning and implementation, arranging return despatch of works

**Artemis Women's Art Forum** 1990 *NETS Touring*  
Co-ordination with NETS Touring for organisation of regional touring shows in Western Australia

**Artemis Women's Art Forum Exhibition 1990** *Death Dwellings and Displacement*  
Curator for Artemis exhibition at Perth Institute Of Contemporary Art Gallery for the Festival of Perth WA 1990

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Art and Australia** Summer 1991 / Vol 29 No 2, p 153

### **A Dictionary Of Women Artists In Australia**

Edited by Max Germaine Craftsman House 1991, 385 - 386 (Robertson, Yvonne Diana)

### **New Art Seven: Profiles In Contemporary Australian Art**

Edited by Neville Drury Craftsman House 1992 pp 166-169

**A Spirited Place** Claremont School of Art 1993 p 99, p 133

### **The Australian Arts Diary 1994**

**Island** Spring / Summer 1997 / Issue No 72/73, Cover "Leningrad"

**Island** Autumn 1998 / Issue No 74:

Hammond, Victoria. *The Peregrinations of Yvonne Pagh.* pp 116-124

### **Art & Design in Western Australia: Perth Technical College 1900-2000**

Edited by Dr Dorothy Erickson, TAFE College Publications

**Imprint** Spring 2011 / Vol 46 No3, p44:

Forster, Sue. *Studies in the language of violence: recent prints by Yvonne Rees-Pagh.*

24 FEBRUARY 2013