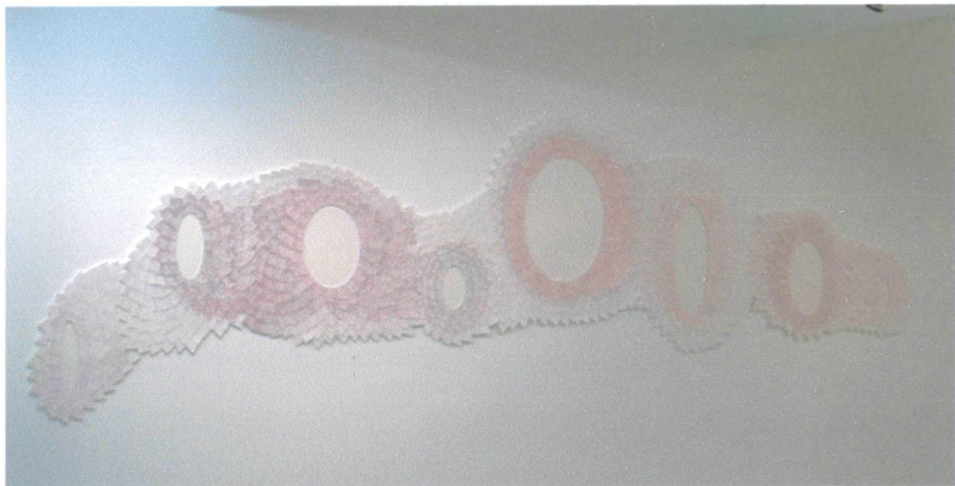


Eleanor Tracey Cockburn

**Building from fragments: reconstructing a site through print**



**Building from fragments: reconstructing a site through print**

by

**Eleanor Tracey Cockburn B.Des., BFA (Hons).**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Fine Art.**

**Signed statement of originality.**

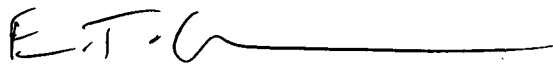
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Eleanor Tracey Cockburn



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## **ABSTRACT**

Fragments of crockery recovered from the site of a property I built in Hobart form the basis of this research project. The works contained within the body of research are derived from the patterns on these fragments as well as the patterns that are created by the process of collage. By repetition and enlargement, and the creation of entirely new forms, the patterns become the vehicle used to convey a range of ideas. Production of the multiple, made possible through the use of a range of traditional and new printmaking processes, allowed development of non-traditional large scale print based works which make reference to the various aspects of the site (the interior or domestic space, the broader landscape, the intimate garden) and ideas of archaeology, collection and cataloguing.

Several areas of investigation comprise the major body of the research, and these are related by the central theme of the lost and recovered object. These ideas are examined under a number of headings, including the Object, the Overlooked, Archaeology, and the Ruin, while considering attitudes to history and the role fiction plays in our concept of what constitutes history. In considering notions of the lost and recovered object, the work of photographers Anne Ferran and J.J Priola is examined. The highly decorative nature of the works and the use of found remnants of pattern is related to the work of Philip Taaffe and Elizabeth Gower, and references to the domestic, and craft based 'womens work' are related to artists such as Miriam Schapiro and Elizabeth Gower.

The ubiquitous nature of the fragments recovered and the fact they have no intrinsic value is of prime importance. They represent the everyday or overlooked lives of those who may have inhabited this space. Much has been written about the power of the object to conjure memories, to stand as a witness to past events, to bring to the present histories, and to imply ways of life. By re-interpretation and re-presentation of the fragments I wish to elevate them to a higher value and bring them absolutely to our attention and in doing so offer a suggestion of the importance of the everyday in our concept of history.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is the remaining evidence, the accumulated residue from the many possible histories of a specific site that constitutes the material central to this research project. For David Malouf, it is this material that helps us find our own place in time.

In a lecture delivered in 2000, Malouf evoked a notion of heritage which is contrary to the way we would normally understand the term.<sup>1</sup> Heritage conjures ideas of the preservation of grand buildings, of social or architectural significance, or sites of cultural importance. Malouf challenges this as the sole definition alluding instead to a heritage of the *everyday*. He suggests that as much importance should be placed on the preservation of sites of everyday life and living, for the way they shed light on our existences, as on those normally fitting with a traditional view of what constitutes our heritage. He talks of the need to preserve sites:

...for which there is no argument in terms of aesthetics, or rarity, or significant previous events or associations; places where there is no existing fabric, or very little; where nothing happened except that a whole lot of living and working and dying was done there...<sup>2</sup>

According to Malouf, along with the grand buildings and important sites, the things which should be preserved are the utterly ordinary things which are 'essential to our health and spirit'.<sup>3</sup> It is the remaining unremarkable evidence - whether physical traces *on* the landscape and artefacts unearthed *from* the ground, or the memories of former existences – that suggest long hours of living and toil that Malouf asserts gives even the most ordinary site its complex layered history.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Malouf, 'National Trust Heritage Lecture 2000', National Trust <http://www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au/dmalouftalk.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 6.

## History of the Site

The residue central to this investigation is that uncovered during the excavation process and construction of my house in West Hobart. The building site was a block in a subdivision of one of the last remnant bushland areas available for development in inner-suburban Hobart. It is situated in what was formerly known, and still occasionally referred to, as Providence Valley and was originally considered part of the suburb of Mount Stuart, being absorbed into West Hobart possibly post WWII or, alternatively, as part of a relatively contemporary redrawing of the suburban boundaries in 1999. (As with a number of facts relating to the history of the site the information I have is a little ambiguous). The valley has a history of habitation pre-dating colonial settlement when it became one of the earliest land grant programs in Hobart Town. Indeed, local oral history talks of aboriginal camps or shelters in the dolerite caves that are situated on what is now a council reserve immediately adjoining my house block. These were from the Mouheneerner tribe – the original families to live in the valley<sup>5</sup> and a local resident related to me the story of a fight between the original inhabitants and the earliest orchardists in the area involving a dispute over the theft of fruit from the orchards, for which the valley was renowned in early settlement. This could be urban myth.

Post-colonisation Providence Valley was predominantly a market garden area. The original land grant in the area was to Dr. James Ross, a Scottish immigrant, and encompassed Knocklofty and the top of Mount Stuart. His estate covered 430 acres and extended from the Female Factory in South Hobart to Lenah Valley. He built *Paraclete* – a substantial homestead in what is now Dewrang Place situated above the cliffs that stand behind my house. After Ross's death it appears the estate was granted to his widow Susan Ross and Valentine Griffiths and, subsequently, it was broken up and sold between 1836 and 1840. *Paraclete* was purchased at a later date by Joseph and Cornelius Cato, sons of Joseph Cato Senior who arrived in

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.staff.brad.ac.uk/gshoobri/FAMILYLN.HTM>

Hobart Town in 1832 from England bringing with him a considerable collection of plants and shrubs. Cornelius died soon after the purchase but Joseph Junior continued to work the property, 'giving special attention to the propagation of new varieties of apples'.<sup>6</sup> One of Joseph Junior's sons, Arthur Hilmer Cato, continued to run *Paraclete* after his father. Victor Hooper purchased a considerable quantity of land in the Mount Stuart area from 1932 onwards, running a farm specialising in dairying and later growing flowers.<sup>7</sup> Hooper's name was on the title documents relating to the subdivision when I purchased my block in 1996.



### **1. Paraclete, Mt. Stuart c.1888**

During the excavation and construction process for my house I recovered a considerable quantity of items from the site. These items largely consist of broken fragments of 19<sup>th</sup> century crockery but also include horseshoes, turn of the century bottles and a few miscellaneous items such as a small china

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<sup>6</sup> D.H.Metcalf, *A History of Mount Stuart*, Hobart : Mount Stuart Progress Association, 2001, 35.

<sup>7</sup> For a summary of the history of Mount Stuart and West Hobart refer to D.H. Metcalfe's *A History of Mount Stuart*; Joan Goodrick. *The West Hobart Story*, Sandy Bay, Hobart : Shearwater Press, 1993; Godden, Mackay, Logan. *A Thematic History of West Hobart : West Hobart Heritage Review: Part 1*, Hobart : Hobart City Council, 2000.



doll or Frozen Charlotte – common around the mid 19<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a miniature tea cup, presumably from a child's toy collection, an early glass paperweight and an assortment of rusty metal, barbed wire and building rubble. I collected these items as they were unearthed by the excavator and continued to do so after the building was complete and as I set about landscaping and further developing the site. As a child, like so many, I had a fascination with collecting and gathering the flotsam that I came across - whether old coins, a button on the footpath or shells from the beach - and during the house building process I became obsessed with collecting all that the site offered up.



## **2. Recovered objects from the site**

There are a number of areas of investigation that comprise the major body of this research and these are associated with the central theme of the lost and recovered object. This exegesis examines these under a number of headings: The Object, The Overlooked, Archaeology and The Ruin. I consider our attitude to history and the part fiction plays in our concept of what constitutes history. By re-interpretation and re-presentation of the



fragments I am elevating them to a value higher than would normally be attributed to the remnants of common, mass-produced objects. In this work it is the *idea* of the fragment that is paramount – the fragment as representative of a lost and, through a process of construction or reconstruction, possibly a recoverable past. By reproducing the tiny fragment I am extrapolating it into my interpretation of the various aspects of the site. The fragment evokes all that could have gone on at that particular site and is, for me, above all representative of lives lived and the daily existence of those who might have resided there.

## CHAPTER 1: THE CENTRAL ARGUMENT

### THE OBJECT

Much has been written about the power of the object to conjure memories, to stand as witness to past events, to bring histories to the present and to imply ways of life.

Susan Stewart argues when discussing the souvenir that it is always, by definition, incomplete.<sup>8</sup> The souvenir (in this instance the fragment of 19th century transfer-ware recovered from my site) is merely a 'sample' of the original site from which it was appropriated. But it is metonymic to the object – cup, bowl or plate - of which it is only a small surviving part. These incomplete samples/objects are in turn metonymic to the notions of domesticity and daily chores: everyday life in the 19th century. They are subject to a dual coding.<sup>9</sup> They come to represent not only the simple actions for which they were originally intended - containing liquid; serving food - but the whole range of experiences that would have or could have occurred on that site. The object or souvenir has little or no intrinsic value but brings with it the connotation of years of life, living, histories and memories.



### 3. Recovered fragments from the site

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<sup>8</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Baltimore : John Hopkins University Press, 1984, 136.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the notions of Connotation/Denotation and Dual Codings see Rod Ewins, *Staying Fijian: Vatuele Island barkcloth and social identity*, Hindmarsh (S.A.) & Honolulu : Crawford House Publishing and University of Hawaii Press, 2002 in press.

Arjun Appadurai suggests in his treatise, *The Social Life of Things*, that such objects acquire specific biographies as they move from place to place and hand to hand.<sup>10</sup> With each change of state, location or ownership, another layer is added to their accumulated history. The bowl, plate or cup that began its life in an English pottery, that was shipped to Australia and found its way to a household in West Hobart, that was handed from one generation to the next to be finally broken and discarded, acquires a complex range of experiences that are conveyed in part to those into whose possession it finally comes.

Yet Stewart argues that we can never know the *specific* histories of these objects. They will always be subject to speculation. The souvenir ribbon from a corsage may be metonymic to the corsage but the referents to the corsage become increasingly abstract and lost: the gown, the dance, the particular occasion, the particular spring, all springs, romance etc.<sup>11</sup> With regard to a specific site, while we may be able to determine who lived there, for how long, how many children they had or what their occupation was, no matter how much research we feel compelled to do we can never know the intimate details of their daily lives. 'The experience of the object' says Stewart, 'lies outside the body's experience – it is saturated with meanings that will never fully be revealed to us'.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, these objects not only convey their multiple histories but also function as pointers to our own transience. Malouf proposes that they not only create a sense of the past for us but by doing so serve to remind us of our sense of the future. The present is underwritten by the past and in the same way the present contains and underwrites the future.<sup>13</sup> 'In the fate of the objects around the body is read the body's own creatural frailty and

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<sup>10</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*, Cambridge : Cambridge Uni Press, 1986, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Stewart (1984), 136.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>13</sup> Malouf, *National Trust Heritage Lecture*, 2.

imminent demise.’<sup>14</sup> My impact on the site will be as fleeting as that of those who formerly inhabited the area. The evidence of their existence on this landscape is merely the garbage, the refuse of their day-to-day existence and in time the evidence of my existence on the site may well be measured in the same way.

In her discussion of the work of the photographer J.J.Priola, Rebecca Solnit writes of this ability of the object to evoke the past. She talks of objects as ‘witnesses, silent, unjudging, obdurate witnesses to the lives that go on in front of them...’<sup>15</sup> and proposes the power of the object not only to conjure historical possibilities but also to become the event itself. Over time the object comes increasingly to represent the event and its narrative rather than its own material presence.

Solnit describes an evening in Paris where a young Gustav Flaubert recounts a story to some companions of a lost first love in the port of Marseilles. Solnit writes of his return to the house where the affair took place only to discover it transformed – the ground floor into a toyshop and the top floor into a hairdresser. Flaubert submitted himself to a shave in an upstairs room. The room had been his lover’s. He recognised the wallpaper and was transported by the sight of it. For Flaubert the wallpaper had become an aide-memoire and a means of confirming and recovering seemingly lost moments, passions and lives from his past. And further, the *story* itself of the wallpaper became something that removed both teller and listener from a Parisian evening by the fire to ‘...a southern port redolent of the irrecoverable past’.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still-Life Painting*, London : Reaktion Books, 1990, 145.

<sup>15</sup> Rebecca Solnit, “The Colour of Shadow, The Weight of Breath, the Sound of Dust” in *Once Removed: Portraits by J. John Priola*, Santa Fe : Arena Editions, 1998, 118.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid ., 113.

## THE OVERLOOKED

In Norman Bryson's argument for a discourse on still life painting he draws a comparison between history painting, portraiture and still life. It is, he states, the deliberate avoidance of the human form that separates still life painting from its counterparts. History painting is built around narrative and still life is the world without these narratives or the ability to generate such instructive tales.<sup>17</sup>

The subject of the still life then is that which is not worthy, or in need, of narration. Nor is it one of those things that require explanation. There are no heroic or frightening or cautionary actions. 'They (the forms of still life) require no attention or invention, but emerge fully formed from the hand of cultural memory; and it is because they store such enormous forces of repetition that they are universally overlooked.'<sup>18</sup> The objects in still life represent the *everyday* actions of the user and the objects (or subjects) of still life belong to a group of universal objects that are independent of time - the jug, the bowl, the plate. These objects are:

... tied to actions repeated by every user in the same way, across generational time; they present the life of everyman as far more a matter of repetition than of personal originality or invention.<sup>19</sup>

It is the absolute ordinariness and universality of these items that allows them to be so readily overlooked and yet wherever the archaeological process is pursued it is these everyday objects, or forms of them, that are ubiquitous to the archaeological site. Ubiquitous because, as Rhys Carpenter describes, oven-baked clay is a peculiarly indestructible material. It is amazingly resistant to chemical action and is immune to total destruction. It may be broken and re-broken but the results of this action are multiplication - not only does it survive but it is more prolific than ever.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Bryson (1990), 60.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>20</sup> Rhys Carpenter, *Art and Archaeology*, New Jersey : Prentice-Hall, 1963, 67.

....simple utensils obey a slow, almost geological rhythm. In stratum upon stratum the archaeology of western sites unearths endless variations on the same basic ideas...such objects belong to the *aevum*, a time which has a beginning but no end.<sup>21</sup>

In Bryson's book he investigates the distinction between what he calls 'megalogy' and 'rhopography'. He argues that there is a distinction between that which is grand, legendary, worthy of note - important history, and that which is the basic stuff of the everyday, the 'unassuming base material of life' - the overlooked. In still life painting, he argues, the two are inextricably linked. The *important* depends for its being upon the existence of the other; it cannot exist without attempting to disentangle itself from the trivial and insignificant. Conversely, the still life by its very being implies



**4. Juan Sánchez Cotán, *Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber*, c.1602**

the existence of the grand. In a discussion of the work of Juan Sánchez Cotán he points out that Cotán, in rendering the contents of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Bryson (1990), 139.



century Spanish larder in lavish, hyper-real detail, has inverted our conception of that which is important, elevating the everyday stuff of life to a higher level, in contradiction to what were the rigid social norms of the time. He compares Cotán's kitchen pictures with Velázquez' *Las Meninas*.



### **5. Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656**

In *Las Meninas*, he argues, we see a typical example of the visual representation of the strict social hierarchies of the time. The King and Queen are depicted as possessors of 'absolute power', embodying the 'sovereign gaze' over the court, with the Infanta, the 'centre of attention, the privileged spectacle of the court'; and finally, below them, the court functionaries, including Velázquez himself, 'filling the lesser roles of the observer and the observed'.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to this we have Cotán's exquisitely rendered fruit and vegetables. We all must eat; even the great, the rich and the powerful cannot exist without the everyday. As Bryson notes, food is the great leveller. So we are forced to see these everyday objects in a new light – as if illuminated by the glow of the grand – and in turn hinting at the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 64.

mortality of the powerful. These items are brought more sharply into focus for us and elevated to a higher status.

Bryson suggests that these objects can be taken for granted and it is this that allows them to be overlooked. But when they become the subject of still life painting we are forced to see them in a new light. We are shocked by what we see. The newness or uniqueness of the objects surprises us.

### **Unreliable histories**

In this project I have no subject. There are some unreliable fragments of information on the history of the site and a modest amount of general information, compiled largely by local historians, about those who may have at various times owned the property. The information that is not in my possession is that of the individual stories that were played out within the houses, or detailed accounts of the lives of those who inhabited the area: what was daily life really like for them? I have only the *rhopos*, the trivial objects, and of those, only fragments, to suggest the possibilities of their lives. But rather than be frustrated at the lack of information, I can revel in the blank canvas I have been offered and thus the freedom to suggest, imply or speculate how their lives may have been; to create a narrative for, and of, them; to elevate their ordinary lives to something worthy of our attention.

By creating this narrative I am also alluding to a past of my own that may or may not be real. I am recovering what Solnit describes as the ‘...immaterial of the past’.<sup>23</sup>

Christopher Woodward proposes that when we look at ruins we are forced to face our own futures.<sup>24</sup> He suggests that when ruins confront us we are each in turn compelled to supply the missing pieces. He cites the example of the ‘tokens’ that were delivered with children who were given over to foundling institutions. The tokens were simple objects; a ring or porcelain

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<sup>23</sup> Solnit (1998), 114.

<sup>24</sup> Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins*, New York : Pantheon Books, 2001, 2.



plate, which was snapped in two – one half being kept by the relinquishing mother, the other left with the child. To reclaim the child the mother had to present the matching half of the token and Woodward speculates on the countless stories that each abandoned child must have projected onto its fragment.<sup>25</sup> Being confronted by the fragments recovered from the site my immediate reaction was to speculate on the myriad possible histories of those who may have owned them. In the absence of so much of the material the tiny fragment is a key to recovering the past and speculating on the future.

## ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE RUIN

### The thrill of discovery

The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of the intellect, in some material object (in that sensation which that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling. And it depends upon chance whether or not we come upon the object before we ourselves must die.<sup>26</sup>

At the outset of his book on the origins of the science of archaeology, Glyn Daniel asks the question ‘What is archaeology?’<sup>27</sup> An archaeologist, he argues, is interested in *things*, and in how they may be used to reconstruct the lives of those in whose possession they once resided. My question is *Why archaeology?* Why do we wish to reconstruct those lives and what do we wish to gain from such an exercise? Traditional history books, argues Daniel, say little of what the life of the ordinary person was like. Just as Bryson argued in the case of history painting - history is based on narrative, that is, written texts of the events considered worthy of preservation and retelling. Therefore we must rely upon the objects recovered, the *subjects* of archaeology, to shed light on the *daily* existences of people. The ‘true’ history of individual people can only be discovered by the study of what

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>26</sup> Marcel Proust as quoted in Michael S. Roth ed, *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed*, Los Angeles : Getty Research Institute, 1997, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Glyn Daniel, *The Origins and Growth of Archaeology*, England : Penguin, 1967, 13.

they wrote about themselves and what they made and did for themselves.<sup>28</sup> We may define archaeology as the science of digging up things but it is people, or people's lives, that we are actually recovering. Daniel describes archaeology as an occupation which is underwritten by humanity. Throughout history societies have repeatedly dug up, revealed and catalogued materials from the past. We fail to recognise that our task is not to dig up the things from the past but, in fact, the people.<sup>29</sup>

### **Unconscious evidence**

This recovered material is described by Daniel as 'unconscious evidence'.<sup>30</sup> This is not the material that was written with the intent that it be preserved as a record of events. It is the incidental material which, in the absence of such records, is critical to any possible reconstruction of the past and the everyday or ordinary actions of those who resided there.

Why do we feel so compelled to rediscover those pasts? Both David Malouf and Charles Merewether<sup>31</sup> suggest that it is to shed light not only on the present but to point to the future, and by extension illuminate our own ordinary existences. And yet there is also the evocation of a sense of loss or unease for what was, or could have been; for that which we fail to remember fully although it may be faintly familiar. In Malouf's novel *Remembering Babylon* his protagonist, Gemmy, struggles to recollect simple things from his past. His sense of loss is evoked by his melancholy struggle to remember and he is forced to conclude that he must be sharing someone else's memory. On reading this passage I was drawn to the idea that we could be sharing someone else's memory. By living on this site, recovering the objects and creating a body of work based around them, I feel that I am sharing the memories of those who lived here previously. I cannot recount the real histories as these memories belong to somebody else, but I permit

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Merewether, 'Traces of Loss' in *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed*, Los Angeles : Getty Research Institute, 1997, 25.

myself to share the *possible* stories of the former inhabitants whilst speculating that these stories could easily have been mine.

The fragment and the ruin have the power not only to evoke memories but to allow the invention of a new set of possible histories, and in doing so to suggest a broader, more universal picture of the past. All of the facts may not be in our possession so we must construct a history or set of possible histories. Malouf would say that: 'Our past has to be constructed and interpreted.'<sup>32</sup> That is, we must find a way to fabricate it from the fragments now in our possession.

### **The ruin transformed**

The ruin, of course, cannot be considered a static object – at least in the temporal sense. It is not fixed in time. Not only is it subject to continual decay, it is transformed by the very act of digging it up. It ceases to belong exclusively to the past. The act of excavating a site, as Merewether suggests, brings it immediately into the present.<sup>33</sup> We are therefore subjecting the ruin to a process of transformation by the very act of retrieval and documentation. After all, once the archaeologist has retrieved the object, the next task is to record its existence and discovery - to bring it to the present and fix it there.

But is it really fixed? As the archaeologist tries to fix the ruin in the present the artist or writer attempts to do likewise. We may consider that the work of art is able to immortalise history – to comment upon it – to save it from oblivion. The photograph or work of art has the effect of 'reclaiming' the ruin from the further effects of time (nature); that is - saving them from death.<sup>34</sup> But Roth argues in his text, *Irresistible Decay*, that despite our attempts to preserve the fragment as a work of art it is always only going to be preserved as an item of fragility that will in time be equally subject to

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<sup>32</sup> Malouf (2000), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Merewether (1997), 25.

<sup>34</sup> Michael S. Roth ed, *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed*, Los Angeles : Getty Research Institute, 1997, 16/17.

decay. It is easy to forget that by fixing the ruin either on photographic paper or on canvas these objects in turn become ruins. He suggests that when we 'frame an object as a ruin we reclaim that object *from* its fall into decay and oblivion and *for* some kind of cultural attention and care',<sup>35</sup> whether it be documentation of the fragment through the archaeological process, writing, or creating a work of art.

Complete restoration of the object or ruin will never be possible, just as the writing of history could be considered the creation of a fiction (albeit one based on *some* evidence), it is impossible to re-create fully that which has been lost or destroyed. All we are able to create is a facsimile or interpretation of what it *may* have been. All that is in our power to do is to preserve what little is left and to reconfigure it just as French artists Anne and Patrick Poirier have done. They created a fictive archive of a fictional architect/archaeologist that will, by definition, always be incomplete. Their cabinet of objects suggests the results and field notes from an archaeological dig and Merewether describes it thus: 'Each object suggests the material evidence of a civilisation, yet the archive is incomplete...the archive turns out to be nothing more than a collection of fragments presented not as ruins of the past but ruins of a memory.'<sup>36</sup>

So it becomes clear to me that it is not the action of unearthing the fragments that is central to this project. Unearthing the fragments has merely precipitated the primary activity which is that of recording, duplicating, reconfiguring and re-presenting them in an attempt to recover the memories that were never mine. There is no possible completion to this archive, I cannot recreate that which I do not have and so there will always be speculation. I am also aware that my archive and the artworks created will in turn be subject to decay.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Merewether (1997), 33.

## **CHAPTER 2: RELATED ART PRACTICES**

This chapter situates the works on three levels within contemporary practice and historical context:

- formal considerations; that is, the context of the work in relation to the historical development of pattern and decoration in art of the 20th century
- the relationship of the work particularly, although not exclusively, to the development of collage as a feminist art strategy
- the reference the work makes to history – the lost and recovered object as a referent to how everyday lives were lived, and consequently the reference it makes to a number of artists who have dealt with similar ideas of history.

All of the art works contained within this body of research are derived from the same source imagery – patterns from the recovered fragments of 19<sup>th</sup> century transfer-ware. And yet the works themselves cover a range of techniques and styles within the broad scope of printmaking practice that makes situating them within any particular context a complex one. The art works may be stylistically varied but are united by a common subject matter and broader notions of site, place and history. They have evolved from a long-standing part of my practice that uses pattern and decorative elements as vehicles to convey a range of ideas. These themes relate the pieces to the artists discussed in this chapter.

In the production of the works for this submission I have used a variety of printmaking processes although I am not pursuing the study of a particular technique or style, nor necessarily considering artists who may use work in a similar fashion. The relationship of my work to that of the artists discussed in this chapter is on a conceptual basis. The use of pattern and decorative forms is considered in relation to the development of the Pattern and Decoration Movement in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and to the art of

a number of women artists who have dealt with notions of craft-based women's work. I also consider how we regard history, what we use to recall the past and the ways in which we attempt to reconstruct possible histories. In particular I look at the work of artists who use the found object as an aide-memoire. In my practice the various print techniques employed are the means to an end. They allow the development of multiple or repeat units which are crucial as a method of constructing new forms from a single image and moving beyond the traditional notion of the editioned, framed print.

Within this argument a number of threads are woven through the range of concerns. For example, it is difficult to separate the feminist concerns of collection and collage as cultural activity from the formal considerations of pattern and decoration within contemporary practice. At the same time, I am also attracted to Philip Taaffe's approach to constructing his work through the collage process: the formal qualities that result are intertwined with the acknowledgement of the tradition of the use of found elements of pattern and decorative motifs. In this light, the work of particular artists is discussed on a number of levels in the sections below.

## **PATTERN AND DECORATION**

### **Philip Taaffe**

Throughout my practice I have used pattern and decorative forms appropriated from a broad range of sources. (See Appendix 1). The use of decorative motifs and patterns has become a recurring visual device to convey my ideas whether as an investigation of place, landscape, the domestic or the garden. We tend to think of 'ornament' as something added to an underlying structure, something that is superfluous to the primary function of the object. In discussing the work of Philip Taaffe in his paper 'Fragment on Ornament', Francesco Pellizzi challenges this notion by suggesting that ornament may even be 'endowed with an enduring life of its

own, independent of its substratum'.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, as Pellizi goes on to say, in Postmodernism 'there is apparently a new attempt to make ornament "the thing itself" as in a kind of return to certain aspects of the late Gothic, the Baroque and other such styles...'<sup>38</sup>

In my body of work, pattern – whether fragments of found pattern or patterns created through the construction of the works - is once again the mechanism used to convey a range of ideas that in this instance relate specifically to history and the site. Within my practice the fragments of pattern or decorative elements have become the *primary form* configured in such a way as to convey a particular idea. Often these works have used the technique of collaging sections of repeated patterns to form new images.

Philip Taaffe is an artist whose work is synonymous with pattern, repetition and the construction of images from found decorative elements. His sources are many but his ability to assimilate diverse visual referents into what Roger Denson describes as 'more contemporary structures that command the attention of viewers...'<sup>39</sup> is of particular interest to me. As Denson says, in an essay on Taaffe's work of the late 80s, Taaffe isolates components of objects or patterns that have a rich cultural significance.<sup>40</sup> In a work such as *Old Cairo*, 1989, we are compelled to consider carefully the forms that are tantalisingly familiar and yet appear to straddle the boundaries of the architectural motifs of many cultures and times. He takes this imagery from diverse and often seemingly opposing sources and in bringing it together assimilates it in the mind of the viewer. Taaffe's practice is indebted to a history of the process of collage that started with Georges Braque and his appropriation and use of found wallpaper and has continued throughout the art of the 20th century. Taaffe has used the process of collage '...addition,

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<sup>37</sup> Francesco Pellizzi. 'Fragment on Ornament', *Parkett* #26 (1990): 98.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>39</sup> Roger Denson, 'Philip of Naples and the Evocative Geometry of History', *Parkett* #26 (1990): 111.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 111.

construction, of incremental embellishment, of layering and fragmentation'<sup>41</sup>  
in a response to high minimalist, abstract painting.



## 6. Philip Taaffe, *Old Cairo*, 1989

I have based this project on fragments of crockery where the imagery is an unlikely mix of orientalism, botanical drawings, English pastoral scenes and Arcadian visions. The eclecticism of the manufacturers of these items in selecting images for decorating their wares is comparable with that of Taaffe's collection of diverse materials. We tend not to be aware of the diversity of the imagery until it is brought to our attention as it is unified by the forms and colours of the objects to which it is applied. Our familiarity with the objects causes us to overlook the details of the particular pattern. Denson stresses that Taaffe is not interested in history per se, but our power as a race to process the visual imagery and features of patterns from history.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Jeff Perrone. 'Philip Taaffe: History in the Making', *Parkett* #26 (1990): 81.

<sup>42</sup> Roger Denson (1990), 111.



Closer inspection reveals a bizarre mix indeed. I have assimilated these fractured images in large-scale works which speak of history, place and loss. After all most of us are familiar with the blue transfer-ware, so much so that we seem almost oblivious to it until it is brought to our closer attention. Although I make reference to a possible specific history of the site on one level, on another I wish not necessarily to talk of a singular history but to hint at broader ideas of history and its signifiers through the use of these diverse elements of pattern.

## **COLLAGE AND FEMINIST ART PRACTICE**

There are many references to the use of collage as a feminist art strategy contained within the works which make up this submission: in particular, in the works *Unearthed* and *Residual* and the frame pieces *Residual I – V*. This connection was not necessarily intentional; I did not set out to make an overtly feminist statement with the creation of this body of work and yet it is impossible to overlook the debt owed to the work of the feminist art movement and I acknowledge the relationship of the work to that of a number of women artists of the last 50 years. I will refer principally to the work of Miriam Schapiro and more recently to that of Elizabeth Gower and Sally Smart.

It is no coincidence that these artists are using the particular techniques of collection and collage as a way of conveying the feminist message. Schapiro's practice focussed sharply on feminist concerns of the 70s and 80s with the development of the women's movement and the Pattern and Decoration Movement. Gower on the other hand has stated that, although aware of the feminist movement and at one time making claim to be a feminist artist during a time when feminist concerns were at the forefront of critical debate, her *current* concerns are more inward looking.

## Sally Smart

Sally Smart has also used the strategy of collage reflecting ideas traditionally connected with women's craft practice through her use of fabrics, collage and pinning. In installations such as *Shadow Farm* she has used cut-out forms of 'dissected parts' from experiences of her childhood, her own collected memories and the world. These disparate components cut from felt, paper and patterned fabrics are reconfigured into large-scale wall drawings. She talks of 'constructing (her) farm, according to an idea of representing domestic spaces in the bush'.<sup>43</sup> Similarly in her installation *Parameters Head: A La Ronde*, she depicts what Marcus Baumgart describes as the 'psychological portrait of a house'<sup>44</sup> once again using fabric



### 7. Sally Smart, *Parameters Head: A La Ronde* (installation view), 2000

and felt cut-outs of silhouetted forms. Her concerns with these installation works are those of the reconstruction of a particular site through the use of techniques and materials which are redolent of the feminine, the interior and the domestic. She alludes not only to the interior space with her decorative pinning of the repeated elements – furniture shapes in particular – but also to the idea of the domestic garden in her use of tree and plant forms, gates and fences.

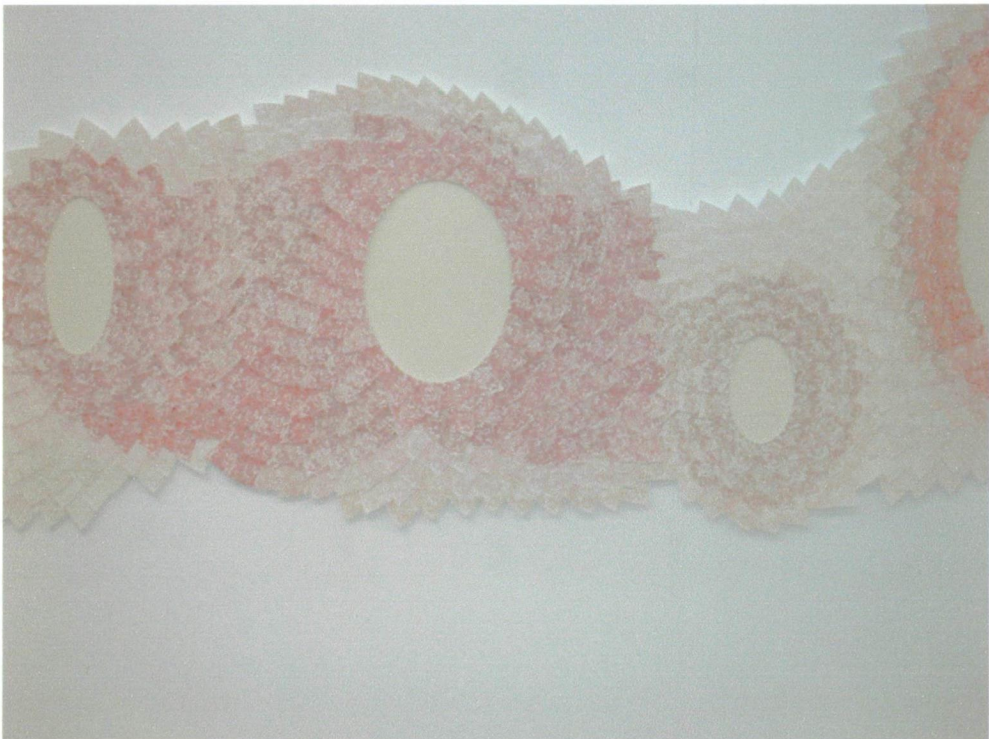
Strictly speaking a dictionary definition of collage would indicate the juxtaposition of a range of disparate materials or elements into a unified

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<sup>43</sup> Sally Smart, *Sally Smart: Shadow Farm* catalogue, Victoria : Bendigo Art Gallery, 2001, 16.

<sup>44</sup> Marcus Baumgart. 'Parameters Head: A La Ronde', in *Sally Smart: Parameters Head: A La Ronde* catalogue, Adelaide : Experimental Art Foundation, 2000.

whole as with Smart's installations. A number of my works use many thousands of *similar* items brought together to create a greater image using the collage technique. There is a strong relationship between these works and those of Gower and Schapiro. The two major pieces *Residual* and *Unearthed*, as well as the individual frame pieces *Residual I - V*, use the strategies of collecting, cutting and collaging images to create something that is far more than the sum of its parts. They also speak of women's traditional art/craft practices by their use of highly decorative elements and fancy pins. *Unearthed*, in particular, is reminiscent of a highly elaborate piece of lace work that is held tentatively together with many delicate pearlescent pins.



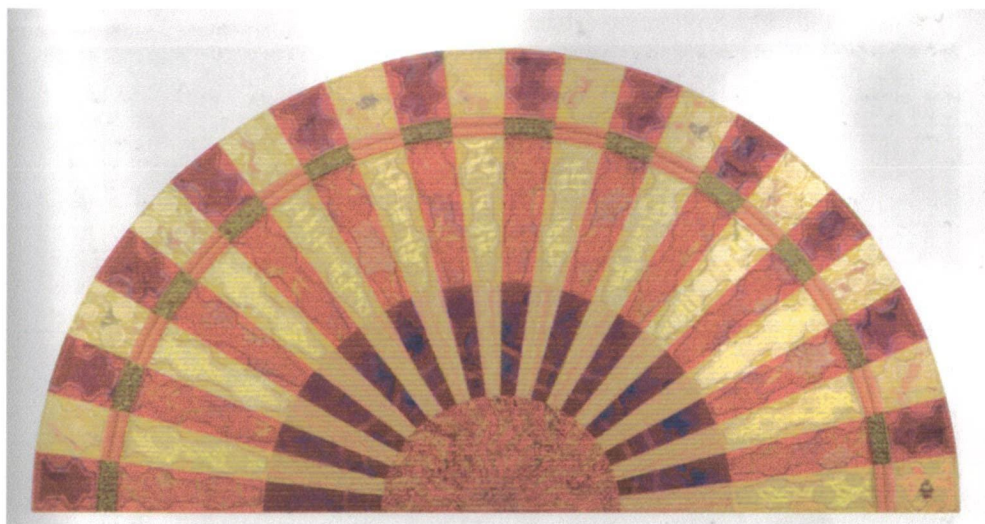
**8. Tracey Cockburn, *Unearthed* (detail), 2003**

### **Miriam Schapiro**

In her essay *Beyond fragmentation: collage as a feminist strategy in the arts* Gwen Raaberg refers to Miriam Schapiro and her coining the term *femmage*: that is the strategy of contemporary women artists of collecting artefacts and fragments from their cultural past to create an aesthetic



direction for their art practice. In gathering these artefacts and fragments *femme* refers backwards to the heritage of women's traditional art activities and at the same time forward to contemporary feminist artists who have reclaimed the legacy of such craft practices.<sup>45</sup> In works such as *Garden of Paradise* 1980 or *Barcelona Fan* 1979 Schapiro incorporates found



### 9. Miriam Schapiro, *Barcelona Fan*, 1979

scraps of fabric patterns and paints back over them. Her materials are the utilitarian objects from all countries. She has a passion for the needlework craft, quilts and clothing made by anonymous American women.<sup>46</sup> In my case the items gathered are not those pertaining to a particular artistic tradition or practice but items that relate to the domestic life of those who would have resided on the particular site to which I am referring. Like Schapiro's gathering of materials from a diverse range of sources I am not talking of a specific personal history or traditions from my past but an implied history.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Gwen Raaberg, 'Beyond fragmentation: collage as a feminist strategy in the arts' *Mosaic*, v31 n3, (Sept 1998),

[http://web5.infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infonark/828/291/28736303w3/purl=rc1\\_EIM\\_0\\_A21240456&dyn=14!ar\\_fmt?sw\\_aep+utas1](http://web5.infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infonark/828/291/28736303w3/purl=rc1_EIM_0_A21240456&dyn=14!ar_fmt?sw_aep+utas1)

<sup>46</sup> Miriam Schapiro. Artist's statement in 'Decoration, Ornament, Pattern and Utility: Four Tendencies in Search of a Movement', *Flash Art*, No.90-91 (June – July 1979): 19-23.

<sup>47</sup> It is quite probable that my ancestors would have owned and used this type of mass-produced crockery albeit in England rather than Australia.



**10. Miriam Schapiro, *Garden of Paradise*, 1980**

In the 70s and 80s Schapiro used the technique of gathering together these fragments or artefacts from her cultural past and from utilitarian objects the world over and, as Raaberg claims, gave them a new voice. She used the insignificant, everyday objects which were in her hands and by a process of duplication, patterning and repetition converted these mundane items into something that far exceeds their humble origins. Schapiro has transformed them, as Raaberg says, into 'a statement of extensive proportions'.<sup>48</sup>

**Elizabeth Gower**

The work of Elizabeth Gower has often had collection as a starting point.<sup>49</sup> In her *Chance or Design* series of the late 90s Gower obsessively collects, sorts, cuts out and orders images. For each of the works she selects images with a particular theme generating a unity of image albeit with subtle differences. Her themes may be varieties of fish, trees or butterflies. She painstakingly composes these thousands of gathered images or repetitive fragments into a whole; that is, an image that tells a story that far exceeds

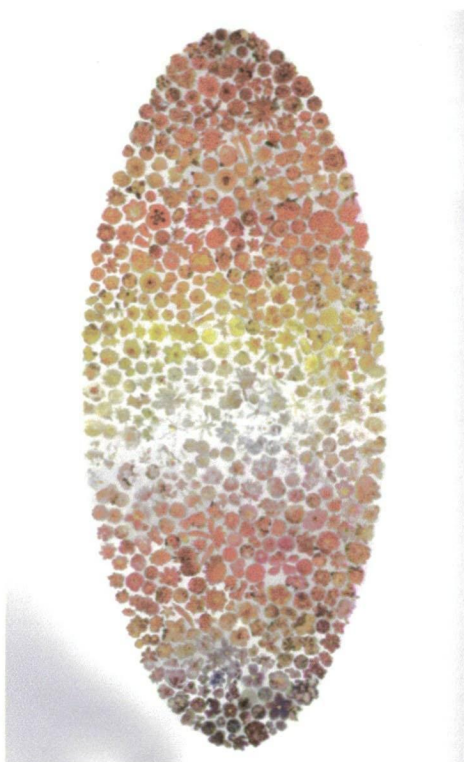
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<sup>48</sup> Gwen Raaberg (1998), 154.

<sup>49</sup> Merryn Gates, 'The Collection Paradigm' in *Chance or Design* catalogue, Melbourne : Ian Potter Gallery, University of Melbourne Museum of Modern Art, 1995, 5.



that which could be told by the simple single image from whence they are derived. Gower has described her work as ‘...accumulating, sorting and piecing together small *repetitive* fragments to make a whole’.<sup>50</sup>



### 11. Elizabeth Gower, *Chance or Design*, 1995

When discussing her 1995 exhibition of works *Chance or Design*, in an interview with Gary Catalano, Gower talks specifically of her choice of imagery and the deliberate intention of evoking the everyday and the domestic.<sup>51</sup> This grew out of her response to finding herself in a domestic, suburban environment where her early source material was junk mail catalogues. Gower is a collector of things. In the catalogue for her *Chance or Design* series many references are made to *the* Collection and the *act* of collecting. There is also a discussion of the unavoidable connections of this group of works to ‘women’s practices of fabric construction’.<sup>52</sup> Her works have been derived from this interest in sewing and weaving, that is,

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<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Gower as quoted by Merryn Gates in ‘The Collection Paradigm’, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Gary Catalano, ‘The Paper Chase: An Interview with Elizabeth Gower’, *Art and Australia*, Vol.34 pt 1 (1996): 104.

<sup>52</sup> Merryn Gates (1995), 7.

women's work. And as Merryn Gates says in her article on Gower these are the common threads which have run through her work. 'To collect', says Gates, 'is not only to accumulate, it is to order in some fashion and to construct meaning through this ordering.'<sup>53</sup>

As with Gower my intentions have never been explicitly aligned with those of the radical feminist art movement, nor the use of collage as an oppositional art strategy. I am attempting to 'construct meaning' through my practice of ordering these thousands of fragments into alternative forms which, whilst representative of various aspects of the site, also lead us to consider ideas of history, the everyday and the overlooked. Through sheer volume of numbers and repetition I am elevating the status of the simple valueless fragment to that of an object which the viewer can no longer ignore or overlook. They must consider it and all that it may represent. The viewer is not only confronted with these familiar objects in a unique way, but forced to consider the greater form into which they are constructed. Ultimately the tiny repetitive elements have been arranged, in a largely intuitive process, into shapes and patterns which have the power to relate their own story of the site.

The formal process of collecting, sorting and ordering has a scientific edge that may appear to exclude any creativity. But with Gower's work in particular the intuitive plays an vitally important role. Ultimately the process of construction of these works must come down to an intuitive one of *Chance or Design*. The aesthetic qualities of the works are indebted to the process of collection and collage.

## **THE LOST AND RECOVERED OBJECT**

The third topic in the context of my research is that of its theoretical relationship to artists who work with the idea of the lost and recovered object. Once again the emphasis must be placed on objects which were of

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 7.

little intrinsic value in their own time and make reference to the everyday and unimportant aspects of the lives of those who owned them or lived with them – household items and articles of clothing. We are all able to recognise the power of objects recovered from the past; their power to evoke memories; to cause us to consider those to whom they belonged; and that the objects were handled and touched by many others. As we touch them now, by association we can almost touch those from the past. These objects may have been treasured possessions or items of mere utility.

The two artists discussed in this section are photographers. In both cases the artists have documented objects from the past and in both cases that process of documentation has generated a series of images that are painfully evocative of the history and personal stories of these objects, their biographies, and by association that of those who owned them, handled them, treasured them or wore them. The power of the photograph lies in its ability to present these objects to us in a raw and unmediated way. The photograph can furnish us with hints of a vanished past that we can never fully know. I am using print techniques which are fundamentally photographically based in the production of the artworks in this submission. It is no coincidence, as the photograph is such a powerful medium, that I am transfixed by the work of artists such as J.J.Priola and Anne Ferran. The power of ‘The photograph as a physical trace of its subject...’<sup>54</sup> is what is of concern here. In all of the works the notion of the trace is immediate.

Importantly this photographic process allows a truth in presentation of the imagery or objects but, just as with the photograph, the various print techniques degrade the image at each step – often deliberately. This degradation is of vital importance as these works are not based upon perfectly formed, pristine objects, but those that have been subject to the effects of time and the elements. The sense of history or biography of these objects is reinforced and rendered visible by this degradation.

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<sup>54</sup> Andy Grunberg, *Once removed: Portraits by J.John Priola*, New Mexico : Arena, 1998, 9.



## **Anne Ferran**

In 1995 and 1998 Anne Ferran carried out two projects with the cooperation of the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales. Each of these projects used historical items dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in an attempt to 'restore' the lives of those to whom they once belonged and to bring them to our attention. The items she used from the two locations were dramatically different in nature and yet both of these projects have a resonance for me. In the first project Ferran was working with the objects recovered from under the floorboards of Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney. During a period of about 40 years from 1848, the barracks were used as an asylum for various 'unprotected' women - orphans, wives and families of convicts, 'distressed' needlewomen and others in need of asylum, the aged, infirm or destitute.<sup>55</sup> The items recovered were bundles of material containing broken clay pipes, pins, scraps of stitched fabric, discarded menstrual belts – pathetic conglomerations of remnants of the few possessions owned by these women who were themselves once considered 'society's refuse'.<sup>56</sup> Many of the items - scraps of cloth, threads and sewing materials - had been carried away by industrious rats to weave into their nests under the floorboards. During the archaeological process many of these tightly woven nests were recovered largely intact.

In her collaborative works with Anne Brennan, Ferran photographed and presented images of the bundles and their contents in the installation *Secure the Shadow*. She produced highly detailed studies of the recovered scraps in the series *Textile Fragments*. The little pieces of cloth had been rolled, stitched and knotted as makeshift menstrual belts and tampons and in Ferran's photographs they come to resemble DNA strands, that most fundamental substance of life.<sup>57</sup> Importantly, in her works Ferran has

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<sup>55</sup> Geoffrey Batchen, 'History Remains: The Photographs of Anne Ferran', *Art on Paper* 4. No.3 (Jan-Feb 2000): 47.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>57</sup> Claire Armstrong, 'Ghosts of former inhabitants', *Art Monthly Australia*, No. 85, (Nov 1995): 20.

allowed these fragments to exist in their own right rather than as part of an object or garment that they may have come from. The status of the simple fragment is thus raised and accorded the respect normally reserved for something larger and more significant - particularly, as Claire Armstrong points out, in an aesthetic sense.<sup>38</sup>

In the following chapter in a discussion on the development of my work, I note that after initial experiments in trying to recreate a printed form of the item from which the fragment had come, it became apparent that it was in fact the fragment itself that was of prime importance. Through isolating and enlarging the pieces as I have done with the *Fragments* and *Blue Garden Series* the viewer is forced to contemplate the significance of each individual fragment, its detail, and its history in much the same way that I was when recovering, reproducing and re-interpreting the items. Coincident



## **12. Tracey Cockburn, *Untitled - Fragments*, 2004**

with this increased focus on the fragment, came the realisation, effected by the very act of bringing it to attention, that it is not only a fragment that I am

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<sup>38</sup> Evelyn Juers, 'Under the House' in *Secure the Shadow: Anne Brennan and Anne Ferran*. catalogue, New South Wales : Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1995, 9.

considering but by association all that is missing. That which is not present has become as important as the residue and thus the created image becomes a symbol for the absent. In Ferran's practice she is more interested in the gaps of knowledge surrounding the objects than in what is actually known about them, once again allowing speculation on the histories of the objects and on those who owned or used them. Many of her projects, says Kyla McFarlane, are an exploration of those who remain absent from the grand narratives of history.<sup>59</sup> And, as we know from my earlier discussion, David Malouf suggested that these everyday histories – those which we often pay little attention to – are as important as those that are normally deemed worthy of preservation.

Ferran also created a series of images based on a related photograph that represented a group of women – some of whom were thought to have inhabited the barracks during the time that it was used as an asylum. This second series of images were of the head cloths, or *Soft Caps*, worn by women who were in positions of servitude. The photographs give the cloths the appearance of being draped over the invisible heads of the women. Only the cloths are visible enveloping a dark void. The creation of these solid yet ghostly forms has the effect of resurrecting the individuals, but by their very absence, only in part; the women remain anonymous. Geoffrey Batchen argues that Ferran has bestowed on these women a kind of half-life. They are he claims 'photographed but not exactly portrayed'.<sup>60</sup> This act of providing them with a half-life intrigues me as it permits speculation. I have made the claim previously that in this project I wished to suggest a history of my own that may or may not be real. It is not my intention to imply a direct connection with these particular women but as Batchen explains 'these women now demarcate a space to be filled with invented memories, perhaps even with our own projected selves'.<sup>61</sup> Ferran herself has

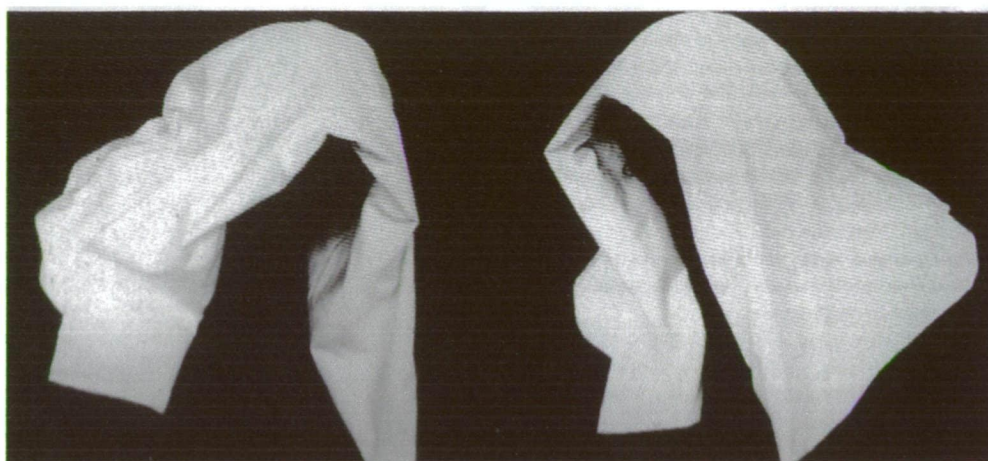
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<sup>59</sup> Kyla McFarlane, 'Tear' in *On Display: New Essays in Cultural Studies*, Anna Smith and Lydia Wevers ed., Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2004, 142.

<sup>60</sup> Geoffrey Batchen (2000), 48.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

commented that through these images we are all invited to share 'what has become an imaginative connection with these women'.<sup>62</sup>



**13. Anne Ferran, *Soft Caps*, 1995**

With both the *Textile Fragments* and the *Soft Caps* we are reminded that history 'cannot be constructed solely from the material evidence. The gaps in the historical record might, indeed, be able to tell us more'.<sup>63</sup> Once again I am reminded that the evidence that I have is a mere fraction of the whole but indeed, the gaps, or missing parts, are as important as that which has been recovered.

In the second project Ferran had access to the contents of another Historic Houses Trust property – Rouse Hill Estate. The Estate has been inhabited by the same family since 1813 and differed greatly from the Barracks project in so far as it contains many of its original, carefully preserved contents. Ferran focussed on the contents of the bedrooms – specifically the many items of clothing that are contained within the drawers and cupboards. She chose to create photograms of these garments. That is, she manufactured single life sized images of the individual items by placing them one at a time on large sheets of photographic paper and exposing them to light. Ferran's images are ephemeral traces of the items in all their detail but these

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>63</sup> Claire Armstrong (1995), 20.



traces are fixed (semi-) permanently on the photographic paper. As a consequence of the photogram process the most minute details of the garments are visible in the resulting images. Intricate stitching, folds, pleats and repairs are rendered visible thereby revealing the hand of those who owned and wore these items, the stories of the lives that they led and the many layered histories or biographies of the garments themselves. Batchen describes Ferran's works in this series in terms of the clothing as a physical memory, an imprint, a second skin to the body that it formerly covered. So these photograms then are 'traces of the body twice over, imprints of imprints'.<sup>64</sup>



#### **14. Anne Ferran, *Untitled - Baby's Dress*, 1998**

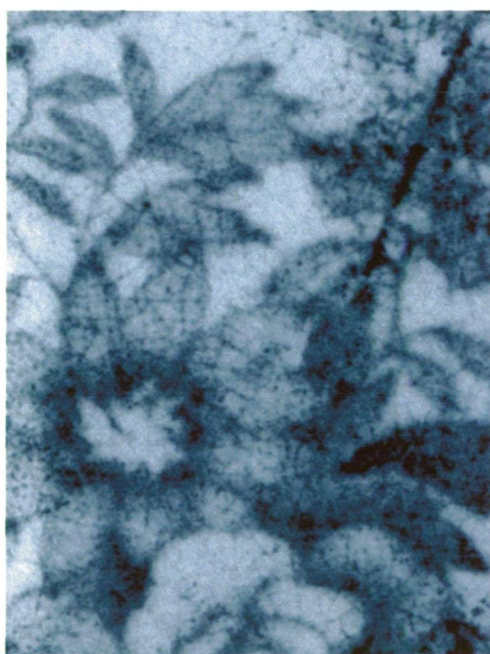
It is the element of the trace that has fascinated me with the work of Ferran; the trace of the body on the garment, or the hand that stitched it; the trace of the impact of history on the item; the trace of the item on the photographic paper. I am intrigued by the possibility of the trace of the fingers that handled the plate or bowl of which my fragments were once a part. I pick up these items and consider who could have touched them before me. They

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<sup>64</sup> Geoffrey Batchen (2000), 49.

cannot escape their history and they bring it very much with them. As I stated in the previous chapter the objects accumulate unique biographies that they bring with them as they come into our possession and as they move from place to place and hand to hand. By the process of scanning, manipulating, printing, or drawing onto a lithographic stone, I am rendering visible the histories of the objects. To reveal minute detail is to encourage the viewer to consider the objects at length and to force the objects themselves to offer up their stories.

The *Blue Garden Series* bears a direct relationship to the seemingly fragile and ghostly images of Ferran. They serve as a kind of record, but one that can barely bring itself to remain in existence without once again fading away. As noted previously, these objects remind us of our own transience.



**15. Tracey Cockburn, *Untitled – Blue Garden Series*, 2004**

Whatever we choose to create in an attempt to preserve or reconfigure that which we have recovered, it too will be subject to decay in time. I have changed the scale of the items that I am dealing with in this group of works in order to expose the details of the patterns, the broken edges, the crazing of the glaze and the imperfections in the design. But the images are

reminiscent of the delicacy of Ferran's photograms in their ghostly appearance and fragility.

Finally, with respect to the photographic works of Anne Ferran, there is the reference made to the process of cataloguing the individual items. By documenting them one by one she creates an awareness of the day-to-day quality and utility of the items. And yet by the act of recording them in this manner she brings them to our attention as was never intended. With the rats' nests, the scraps of material and the garments from Rouse Hill she has created an inventory of the items through a laborious process of documentation using the photograph as her medium. The body of work becomes a pseudo-scientific record or taxonomy of the items such as a curator or archaeologist would create. The prints then 'act almost as an extension of the archaeological process...'<sup>65</sup>

### **J.J. Priola**

The second artist I wish to discuss when referring to the idea of the lost and recovered object is also a photographer. I am drawn to Priola's depictions of recovered objects in the series *Saved*, part of a larger group of works *Once Removed*. In this series Priola presents us with images of single pathetic objects which have been broken and discarded and that show all the evidence of the impact of time upon them. They sit alone in a velvet black space and talk of the melancholy of loss, the passage of time and absence. Rebecca Solnit puts it thus: 'These objects are oblique portraits of the absent; they imply lives, moments, connections that are irrecoverable in their specifics, though imaginable through the surviving objects.'<sup>66</sup>

In elevating the status of these objects they become catalysts for us not only to contemplate their original owners but also to examine broad ideas of the history of the time. These items for me become representative not only of a specific action or event, but of all that *could possibly have* occurred. I want

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<sup>65</sup> Claire Armstrong (1995), 19.

<sup>66</sup> Solnit (1998), 120.



to bring my objects to the full attention of the viewer. In the works I am manufacturing, particularly the *Fragments*, it was always my aim to raise them above being prints of the patterns on the fragments. By the use of scale and material these prints become objects themselves in much the same way as Grunberg's description of Priola's photographic portraits '...they (the photographs) become as much objects as the objects they describe'.<sup>67</sup>



**16. J.J.Priola, *Girl*, 1995**

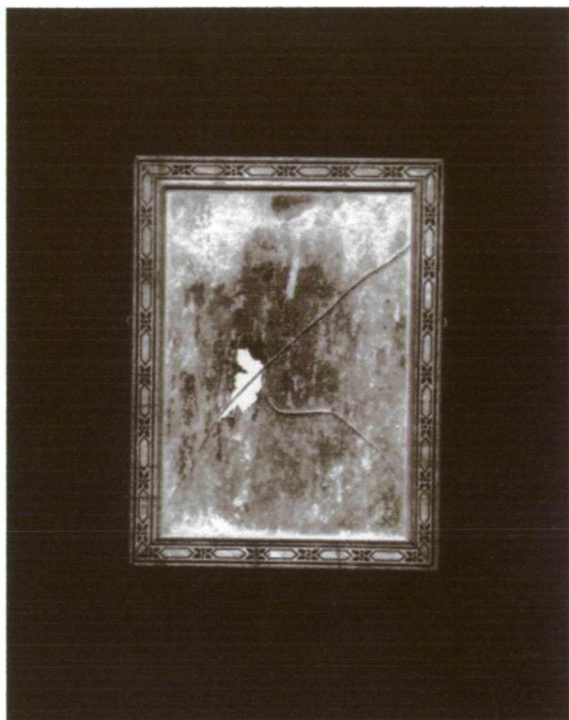
By isolating his objects and placing them alone in a darkened space Priola brings them entirely to our attention - they cannot be overlooked now. What was formerly a pathetic, cast-off item is once again imbued with all the power of somebody's treasured possession. I was immediately drawn to these images. They are melancholic and fragile. Priola instils in them a sense of loss, or at least the loss of the stories that they could tell as we become acutely aware of the impact of time upon them – a missing limb from an ornament, a torn or tattered photograph, a cracked plate. We are permitted to imagine what their biographies are: 'For what is traced in these photographs is not merely the object, or the sign of its residual presence

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<sup>67</sup> Andy Grunberg (1998), 8.



avant the photograph, but the echo of its historical resonances and place in time'.<sup>68</sup> As with Ferran's photograms, Priola's images are revealed in all their minute detail; a broken edge, stained paper, a missing part. The photographically produced and mediated image reveals far more than the object itself.



**17. J.J.Priola, *Mirror*, 1995**

Anne Ferrans's *Secure the Shadow* images presented the recovered items not as archaeological relics but 'eloquent objects'.<sup>69</sup> And surely Priola's objects are eloquent objects par excellence. Solnit argues that the object has the power to rise above any literal interpretation of itself and its materiality. It is no longer read for its biography but stands as a symbol for something far greater. In this instance the passage of time, loss and absence. 'That is to say, the object no longer refers to its processes but to another part of the world, material or otherwise. It has stopped talking about itself and begun talking about others.'<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>69</sup> Anne Kirker. 'Anne Ferran: Longer than life', *Eyeline* 38 (Spring 1998): 37.

<sup>70</sup> Solnit (1998), 114.

### CHAPTER 3: THE STUDIO INVESTIGATION

The project began as a reconstruction of imagined aspects of a specific site based on recovered objects and the discovered history of that site. In the proposal I stated that, by the examination of the relics from a site, I wish(ed) to recover or reconstruct the *possible* history of the place for the viewer and suggest a personal history that may or may not be real. It was my stated intention to 'Reconstruct the Site in Print'.

I wrote earlier of the multitude of items recovered from the site. Of all these items it was the fragments of household crockery that became the focus of the project. I was intrigued by their origins, how they came to be there and why so many in what appeared to be a small plot of land that had apparently not been built on before. Although the homestead *Paraclete* stood at the top of the cliffs above the site there has been no evidence in my research of any dwellings or buildings on the particular half acre that was my house site. Who had owned these objects?

The patterns on the shards were also intriguing. Tantalising fragments of images, part of a bird, a branch of a tree, a Grecian urn, the turret of a castle, an arm or foot, as well as glimpses of the traditional blue willow pattern with which we are all familiar, and a variety of decorative motifs. These objects and their disjointed images transcended a literal interpretation and came to suggest to me some kind of Arcadian existence that had possibly occurred there. This imagery became the primary focus of the project.

Throughout the production of the art works described in the following text, the common visual thread is that of the imagery from the recovered fragments of transfer-ware. All of the works are derived directly from this source material. Indeed, the images from the shards are used and re-used in a variety of approaches with changes in scale, process, colour and material offering a complex set of visual interpretations of the site. The printmaking processes lend themselves to this multi-layered investigation. It is very

much the tradition of the printmaker to carry out this intensive scrutiny of the image; layering, reworking and reconfiguring it many times over – offering up many variations of the original in a complex set of possibilities for the interpretation of the subject matter.

In this work it is the *idea* of the fragment that is paramount. The fragment is representative of a lost and possibly, through a process of construction or reconstruction, recoverable past. By reproducing the tiny fragment I wished to extrapolate it into my interpretation of the various aspects of the site. The process is akin to one of culturing or cloning – that is the creation of an entirely new entity through the multiplication of a single cell. The fragment evokes all that could have gone on at that particular site and is, for me, above all, representative of lives lived and the daily existence of those who might have resided there.

Throughout my practice, I have used pattern and decorative forms that have been appropriated from a broad range of sources; wallpaper, textiles, old engravings and natural materials. (See Appendix 1) The use of pattern and decoration has become a recurring visual device to convey my ideas; whether an investigation of place, landscape, the domestic or the garden. It is this historical use of pattern in my previous work that underlies my interest in the fragments. Not only do they serve to suggest what may have happened on the site but the patterns and imagery are highly seductive. They provide a rich source of visual material from which to construct my own interpretation of the site in an approach similar to Sally Smart's use of cut-out silhouette forms from fabrics and patterns to reconstruct the sites of particular interest to her.

My arts practice up to this point has been that of a printmaker specialising largely in screen-prints. Although I had, in the past, attempted some large scale works which were installation based in nature, on the whole these had been less successful and to some extent still relied on the single image, albeit on a much bigger scale. I was still operating in the traditional

printmaking mode of the serial print. The approach with the works central to this project led to an examination of my own practice. I had to find a new way of producing work – was screen-printing an appropriate medium? The traditional mode of the framed, editioned image was called into question as I set about contemplating a methodology required to ‘reconstruct the site’.

A logical starting point in this reconstruction seemed to be to attempt to recreate the objects that the fragments were derived from - or at least images that alluded to the form of these objects. By recreation of the plates, jugs and bowls I hoped to infer the repetitive actions of daily labour and in doing so to make reference to the mundane aspects of the lives of those who had formerly inhabited the area. Selecting one fragment, I began a series of studies, using a number of techniques, for the reconstruction of the sort of everyday objects from which the shards may have come.

This rebuilding was in part informed by a display in the Melbourne Museum of an archaeological dig that was carried out in St.Kilda, Melbourne. In the display the archaeologists and curators had taken the broken shards that could easily have been those I had found and had painstakingly pieced them back together, filling in the missing parts, where necessary, with blank white sections – as in the rebuilding of an ancient statue where the missing pieces are filled in to recreate the whole. For my project I was to reinterpret the items in print form.

I adopted two approaches. As my practice to this point had been largely based on screen-printing I was confident in the use of this technique. I set about screen-printing multiples of a dramatically enlarged version of a fragment from which I was to form a simple plate shape. By making the prints very large - somewhere in the order of 10 times the original size - I hoped to bring these common objects to attention, to elevate them from being one among many and to draw attention to the details of the pattern. My intention was to take the objects that are familiar to many people (to the point of being uninteresting) and compel the viewer to confront them in all

their detail and contemplate all that they might connote. The second concept was to make tiny prints of the tiny fragments and use these to generate a looser interpretation of the items suggested – symbolic forms of bowls or plates.

These two methods were very literal and left little to the imagination. Importantly, the second approach seemed to negate the screen-printing process due to the very small scale of the images I wished to create. They needed to suggest something more. With Anne Ferran's works from the Hyde Park Barracks she talks of the importance of the actual fragment or scrap of material. The fragment to Ferran was more important than the object it had come from. The absent parts became as critical as the traces that were present as a means of alluding to the histories of the women who lived at the Barracks.

I also attempted to manufacture simple three-dimensional objects using muslin formed over a mold. These were intended to be ghostly forms of the



**18. Tracey Cockburn, experimental *Ghost Objects*, 2003**

bowls, plates and cups I imagined the shards had come from but this approach very much neglected the idea of the pattern – the very thing which drew me to the objects in the first instance. Although pleased with the idea of these objects as ghosts of the items I chose not to pursue this avenue of

inquiry as I felt it moved too far away from my prime area of concern – the patterns.

Concurrent with these early formal experiments I had a feeling of unease about the conceptual basis of the project. I was aware that many people shared my experience of unearthing these shards from their gardens all over Hobart, indeed all over many inhabited areas. I had to confront the source material I was dealing with. Was its ubiquitous nature problematic for me? It took some time to come to the realisation that it was in fact the very commonness of the objects that was of prime importance. The very genesis of the project was centred around Malouf's notion of a heritage of the *everyday* and Bryson's theory of the *overlooked* and I was compelled to look back to these early ideas to ground the project again in what was its fundamental theoretical premise and regain some composure and certainty of its direction. Although reassured about the conceptual basis of the project I soon realised that it was not going to be enough to simply reproduce the forms of the items; that was too obvious and simplistic bringing nothing more to the project.

An alternative approach was required and the tactic I developed was to extrapolate the tiny fragment recovered from the soil into a representation of, or allusion to, various aspects of the *entire* site. As discussed in Chapter 1, Susan Stewart argues for a theory of the souvenir as an eternally incomplete fragment yet one that is redolent of not only its originating object but a whole range of experiences that went on around it. Once again one thinks of the work of Ferran with her focus on the absent as well as Priola's still life portraits of objects which not only have physical parts missing but imply the presence of much more than the object itself. The entire experiment was a kind of archaeological process - recover, catalogue, interpret. Despite this apparently quasi-scientific approach the pieces that were to follow were far more intuitive than the previous attempts and finally allowed the work to take on a life of its own.



## Process

The tiny shards suggested to me that they should be lithographic prints – not a medium I usually work with but a seemingly appropriate connection. In contrast with the much more contemporary, mechanical and precise process of direct photo stencil screen-printing, the action of drawing the patterns directly onto the lithographic stone, a process steeped in history and tradition, seemed a better fit with the project's proposition. The lithographic print resonated more with the artefacts themselves and the knowledge that these patterns would have originally been hand-engraved onto plates in order to produce transfers for the ceramic items.

The early shapes that evolved from this approach remained connected to an desire to reconstruct the object rather than the site. After the failure of the early attempts, the forms that naturally evolved, in part due to the particular shape of the fragment I was focussing upon, were decorative frames – particularly in oval and round forms. This was not entirely accidental. In previous work I had given some consideration to ideas relating to the frame

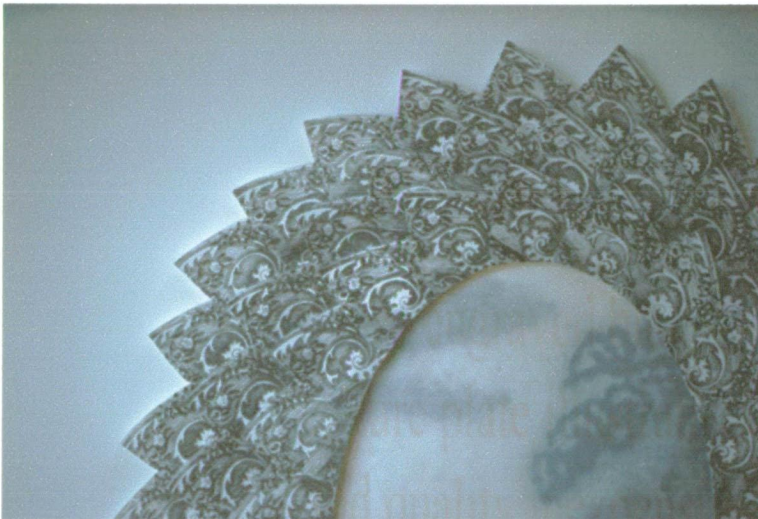


**19. Tracey Cockburn, *The Mirror*, 2003**

and framing methods and had on several occasions investigated the tradition of decorative frames and the Victorian framing devices that were common in early colonial Australian portraiture. I have looked at the work of Narelle

Jubelin and her use of the classical frame forms. Jubelin has used representations of the Victorian frame repeatedly in her practice as reference to modes of depicting the individual within Colonial representation.

I have also had an ongoing interest in photographic portraiture and the techniques and shapes used to frame early portraits. By use of the oval - which alludes to the portrait, whether colonial miniature paintings or early photographic portraits, I found I could make some reference to persons who may have inhabited the site without resorting to the literal by use of the figurative. Once again I could make a sideways reference to inhabitants who were absent in a literal sense.

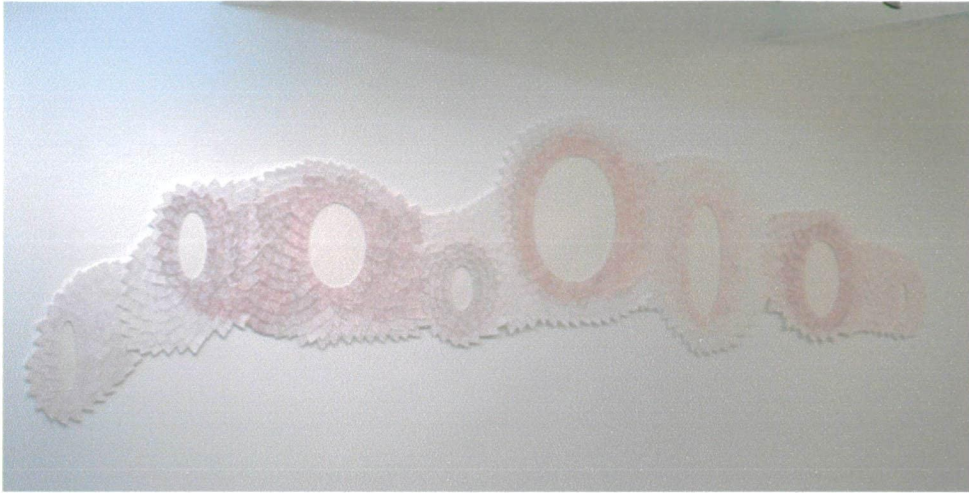


**20. Tracey Cockburn, *Residual III*, 2003**

***Unearthed***

A number of works grew out of this new approach beginning with a series of individual 'frames' and resulting in the large-scale work *Unearthed*. In this work the tiny fragments have been repeated thousands of times over and collaged together creating a bizarre interior scheme in which there are openings like frames or portals. These openings not only appear as frames, as in the traditional mode of picture framing or portraiture, but also are suggestive of windows looking out or mirrors reflecting back.





## 21. Tracey Cockburn, *Unearthed*, 2003

Germano Celant talks of the frame as having the purpose of positioning the pictorial object in the world. It is, he says, ‘an enclosure which isolates art and identifies its ‘separate’ reality.’<sup>71</sup> He goes on to describe the power of the frame as a one ‘where the relationship between interior and exterior space can be reinterpreted. The frame seems to create an illusory and potential opening in the wall; it alludes to the territory outside its borders’.<sup>72</sup> With *Unearthed* these openings or frames do precisely this – they ask us to consider this boundary between the interior and exterior spaces. Historically the mirror has many associations. Merleau Ponty writes that: ‘...mirrors are instruments of a universal magic that converts things into spectacle, spectacle into things, myself into another, and another into myself...’<sup>73</sup> And in Jonathan Miller’s catalogue to the exhibition *On Reflection* he writes of the mirror which conjures up: ‘...the disconcerting conclusion that we are paired for life with an intermittently visible counterpart of the person or individual we know or feel ourselves to be...’ and that, when contemplating the mirror ‘we must accommodate the idea of being in two places at once’.<sup>74</sup> The notion of the mirror as an instrument of duplication or the suggestion

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<sup>71</sup> Germano Celant, ‘Framed: Innocence or Gilt’, *Artforum* Vol. 20 No.10. (June – July 1982): 50.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>73</sup> Maurice Merleau Ponty, ‘Eye and Mind’ in *The Merleau Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, edited by Galen A. Johnson, Illinois : Northwestern Uni Press, 1993, 134.

<sup>74</sup> Jonathan Miller, *On Reflection*, London : National Gallery Publications Ltd, 1998.

that we are paired with 'an intermittently visible counterpart' fitted well with my proposition. That is, that I wish to suggest not only the real history of the site and it's inhabitants but some kind of 'immaterial' past; an ambiguity as to whose past was being alluded to - my own or some other character – real, fictional or 'intermittently visible'.

When showing these works for the first time much debate ensued about the use of the empty frames. Many responded that the openings should contain images. I felt that this would be too prescriptive. I wanted the viewer to work harder than that – to be forced to question what they were, and hopefully to consider Celant's view of the frame as an architectural device that alludes to the territory outside of its borders.

The entire large work *Unearthed*, with its additional embossing of the individual prints and elaborate pinning is highly suggestive of 'women's work'; that is a craft-based, decorative construction. The space created was very much a woman's space – the interior or domestic landscape. The action of pinning, at first simply a device to hold the many hundreds of pieces in place, soon became a feature using fancy pins that alluded less than subtly to women's craft and the feminist craft/art movement of the 70s. As outlined in the discussion of the context of the work there has been a focus, in the women's art movement, on making reference to traditional women's craft practices and cultural heritage. This supplied the movement and those who followed it with visual and theoretical devices for a new aesthetic direction. This work has followed in that tradition of referencing the craft practices and decorative forms used by women artists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Residual***

Having created what was ostensibly an interior scheme in *Unearthed*, the intention for the next work was to recreate a more expansive picture of the site. Continuing with the use of the oval – a deliberate device which makes reference to the traditional miniature portrait form, the work *Residual* evolved. I had, in my research into the history of West Hobart and Mount

Stuart, come across a watercolour image of a distant view of the site, painted from the Domain in 1834, by Benjamin Duterreau. In early experiments for this next piece I tried to apply a range of different coloured and patterned ovals, again from the fragments, over an enlarged photocopy of Duterreau's watercolour painting in an attempt to make a literal interpretation of the original.



## **22. Benjamin Duterreau, West Hobart from the Domain, c.1834**

The first technical hurdle to overcome with this work was to find a way of producing thousands of subtly varied tiny prints with a perfect oval form. Unlike the random form of the pink prints in *Unearthed* that were cut by hand, I needed a way of cutting each one to the exact shape and size desired. I contemplated die-cutting which would require the purchase of a specially constructed die, but until I had determined the viability of the piece I did not wish to commit to this expense – the die would have had to be manufactured in Melbourne and the printing and cutting would then be carried out by a commercial printing company. I discovered as the work developed that I had no idea how many prints I would need and did not wish to lose control



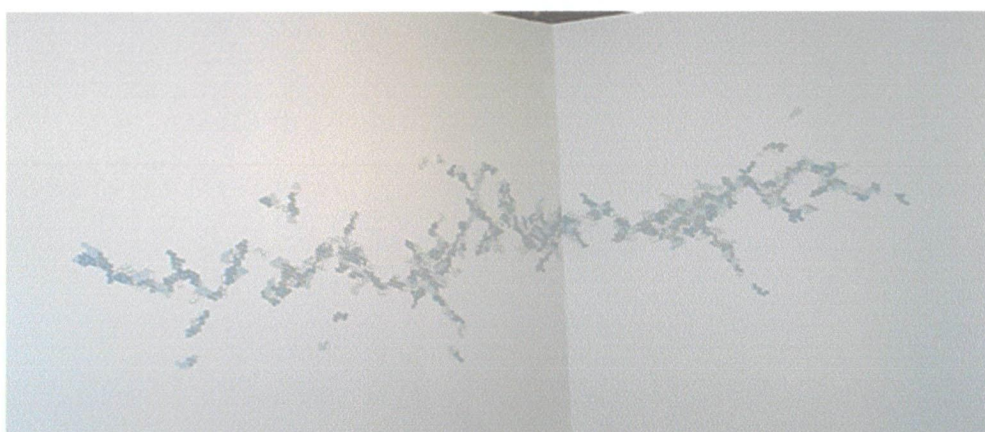
of the production of the pieces. I had little concept of the finished form of the work and the print and die-cut process required large run quantities to make the cost viable. I began by producing a quantity of digital images scanned from photocopies of the fragments. They were quick and easy to reproduce and I found a supplier who could laser cut paper when provided with a digital template generated in a CAD package. This allowed the freedom of producing short runs of the ovals – 100 to a page, in a range of patterns and colours, which could be laser cut a few pages at a time as the need arose.

The vision of recreating my own version of the Duterreau watercolour in some kind of Chuck Close pixelation simply would not work. The work was clumsy and awkward and the scale wrong. What was required, I quickly realised, was my own interpretation of the IDEA of the landscape rather than a semi-literal reproduction of Duterreau's impression. Once I had made this break from the literal I was at liberty to create the piece as I had conceived it – an interpretation of a more expansive view of the site. It was then simply a case of constructing the piece as it wished to evolve. The thousands of tiny prints were stuck one by one onto long, panoramic sheets of drafting film, in a very loose interpretation of 'landscape' but one which, when viewed afterwards, alluded not only to the possibility of the landscape and the panoramic representations of it in early Tasmanian depictions, but many other notions: clouds, residue on a shore, the air.



**23. Tracey Cockburn, *Residual (early version)*, 2003**

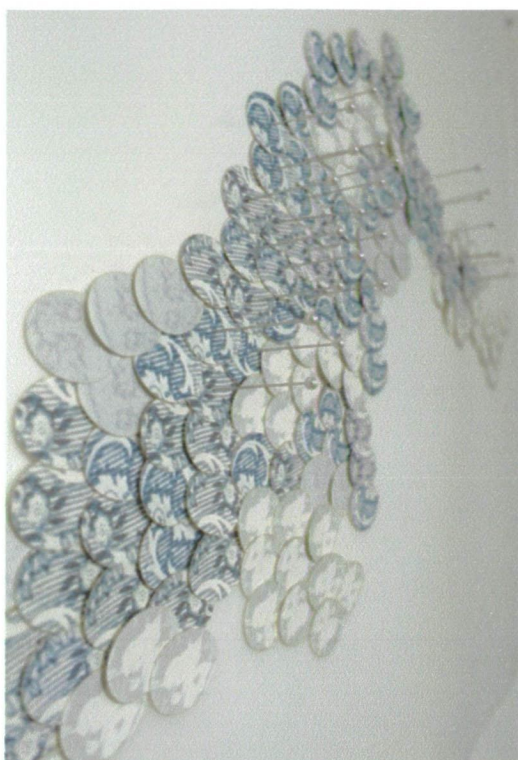
The immediate results of these unwitting references to colonial panoramic representation, and of the construction process that was used, was that after showing the piece *Residual* in a number of locations I sensed that it needed more flexibility in its layout - possibly not being constrained by the rigid boundaries imposed by the substrate onto which it was constructed. In subsequent installations I disposed of the backing upon which the work was built allowing it the freedom to move over the gallery walls and go around corners as the space allowed and as I deemed necessary.



#### **24. Tracey Cockburn, *Residual* (installation view), 2005**

The expansion into these large scale works was a major turning point in the project. That they grew from a single 'frame' into something only suggestive of, but not literally a room; or from the idea of a specific landscape into a broader *notion* of landscape; provided the opportunity to expand the works and ideas in a way not possible with my previous approach. I no longer felt tied to the idea of producing single images that *illustrated* the ideas – the works were more fluid, mutable. The creation of a set of 'units' from which the pieces were constructed meant that they could be constantly reconfigured depending upon the location they were shown. Just like Smart's installations, they could grow, shrink and go around corners. The processes I chose, that is, a range of printmaking processes, facilitated the production of the multiple unit allowing this development. But over and above process, it was the concept that was of prime importance rather than any attempt to represent an object, as I had made in previous works.





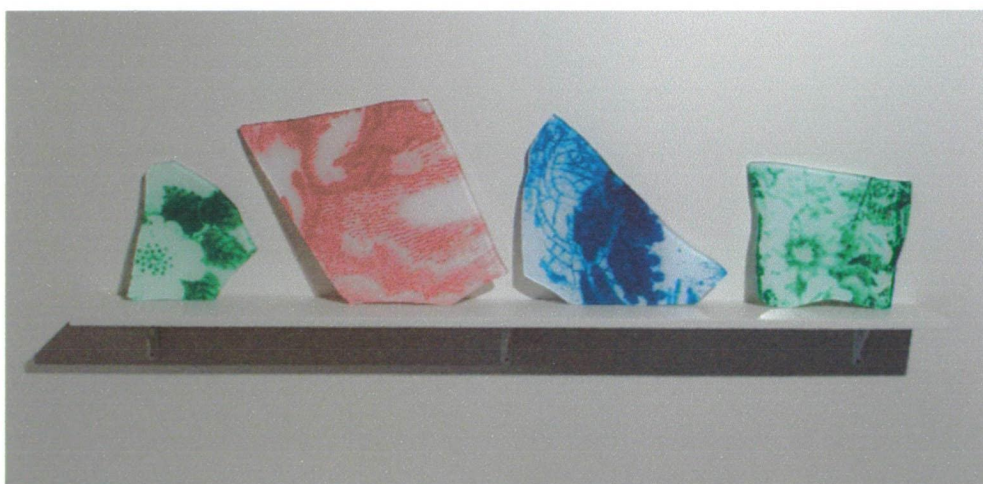
**25. Tracey Cockburn, *Residual* (detail), 2005**

### ***Fragments***

The pieces *Unearthed* and *Residual* and the single frames *Residual I – V* all suggest history. By their decorative qualities, colours and materials they imply a very Victorian view of the world. With the next set of works I wished to make much more contemporary comment on the site and my relationship to it – to bring these found objects into the present and bring them very much to attention. I wanted to elevate their status from universally overlooked, ubiquitous remnant to boldly stated comment on this forgotten or ‘unimportant’ history. In this instance screen-printing seemed the perfect choice of technique with its references to very contemporary 20<sup>th</sup> century printmaking modes. I chose to print onto thick, clear acrylic – a material with a very glossy, contemporary feel. As with one of the earliest experimental pieces, I chose scale as the obvious tool to use in an attempt to bring these objects to the fore. Previously I had used tiny prints to create a larger form thereby overlooking the imagery of the fragment as it became absorbed into the greater construction. I now wished to bring attention directly to the imagery of the individual fragments – the pieces of pattern, disjointed limbs, leaves and parts of flowers that had

drawn me to these objects in the first place. As with the earlier works I used colours that made reference to the original colours of the transfer-ware but by making them high key and printing onto the acrylic they became quite deliberately glossy and redolent of Pop Art.

Much research and experimentation was required in choosing a suitable, reasonably non-toxic ink system that would key into the plastic. The pieces were printed first, cut and edges finished afterwards in order to get the bleed print effect I was striving for. This required ink that would not chip or scratch during handling and trimming but my personal preference has always been to use water-based non-toxic screen inks which were less likely to have the desired properties. The images were created from digitally manipulated scans of the patterns. These were separated into several layers with varying amounts of contrast to create different tonal layers in the final print. Each layer was printed separately in reverse order onto the back of the acrylic building up the finished multi-layered, large-scale print of the individual shards.



**26. Tracey Cockburn, *Fragments* (installation view), 2005**

Other issues that required resolution were how to arrange and mount the works for display. I had the first few experimental pieces manufactured with drilled holes to accept stainless steel mounting posts of a type that I had used in previous projects. These posts were designed as shop display fittings



and although they had quite a 'high tech' appearance, it soon became obvious that they were somewhat large and intrusive. They were too obvious. I needed a hanging system which was virtually invisible in order that there was no visual interruption to the images. I opted to use clear plastic 'keyhole' hangers which could be glued directly to the back of the work without damaging the ink and remain completely hidden.

Once the hurdles of material, colour and hanging were resolved the final issue to be addressed was that of the arrangement of the group of pieces created. It had been my original intention to craft a group of works,



**27. Tracey Cockburn, *Shatter* (test piece), 2004**

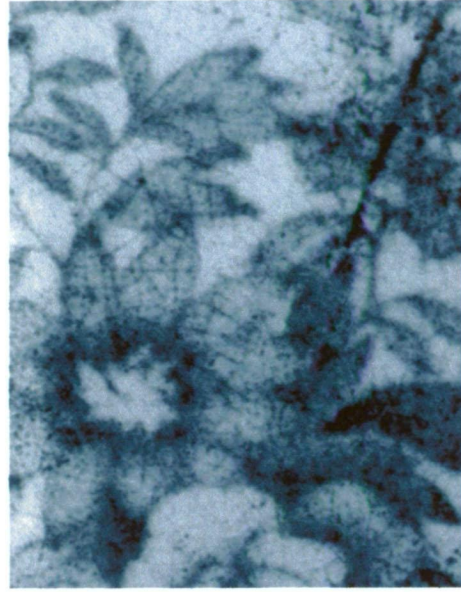
monumental in scale, that clustered on the wall in a shatter pattern – alluding to the broken plate and thus to the whole from whence the shards came. I also wished, through careful use of scale and material to create *objects* rather than prints. It proved to be difficult to achieve a layout for the pieces that did not appear contrived – which was of course exactly what it



was. After the trial of numerous variations using mock-ups and cut-outs of coloured paper I tried a simple line. This was getting closer as it allows the viewer to focus on the individual pieces rather than the whole contrived arrangement. In the final installation the works are not hung at all but resting on shelves. This immediately frees the pieces from being organised into any sort of pattern and permits them to become the objects I intended at the outset, rather than images hanging on a wall.

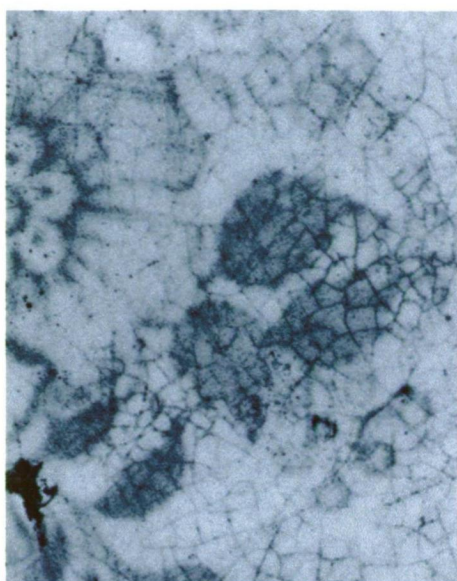
### ***Blue Garden Series***

At this juncture I sensed that the missing element in the works that were evolving was some reference to the notion of decay – the ruin. It is after all the detritus from the ruined or abandoned site that is the focus of the project and I refer extensively to ideas relating to the ruin in research central to this project. Also, I had succeeded thus far in making pieces that were redolent of the interior/domestic space and the greater landscape. A more intimate relationship with the landscape of the specific location appeared to be lacking. This preoccupation with landscape, specifically the cultivated garden space, was not a new one in my practice. I had previously created a body of work centred around ideas of the garden and how we transform the landscape in order to create familiarity when confronted with an alien environment. The types of images used in 19<sup>th</sup> century transfer-ware often made reference to ‘Arcadian’ scenes; the garden as an idyllic landscape of familiarity and comfort. Many of my found fragments contained images of plant life – parts of garden scenes, branches, flowers and leaves. I selected a quantity of these particular shards and focussed on reproducing sections of them that contained such imagery. My intention was to create images that alluded to an intimate landscape: the garden as a site of decay and fragility, and the notion of the ruin. I hoped to create a large-scale work which had these characteristics. I had originally intended forming another large composite piece from scraps of image with ephemeral qualities but, in the process, the concept changed substantially.



**28. Tracey Cockburn, *Untitled – Blue Garden Series*, 2004**

I selected random sections of the fragments that depicted plant life, with the intention of tearing them up to construct the desired piece. But, in this process of fairly random selection, I grew even more intrigued by the images. By scanning, enlarging and manipulating the patterns and designs they became at once even more prominent and tantalisingly more fragile in their appearance. At this point I became acutely aware of the qualities of the images themselves rather than as arbitrary patterns to be torn up. They revealed marks like static on a screen – scratches, crazing, the mark of the engraver. I decided to work with these greatly enlarged and manipulated images in their own right. They were developed into a set of prints using the glimpses of flowers, leaves and branches that depicted the idea of the intimate and ruined garden. I wished to avoid the set becoming too designed. My hope was that they would retain a sense of the randomness with which they came to be the remnant pieces of a larger design being standardised by the final format of the print.



**29. Tracey Cockburn, *Untitled – Blue Garden Series*, 2004**

The group of prints that resulted pays homage to a taxonomic approach of classification, recording, cataloguing. Once again this refers to a previous body of work which dealt with the pseudo scientific approach of botanical illustration by many colonial women artists. Their attention to detail was often exquisite. In this group of prints the detail is similarly exposed through the use of the digital media. The group of works and the book which have evolved exist as a kind of record of all that was discovered on the site. Once again colour and choice of substrate were important. I chose the blue of the transfer-ware but remained aware of its connotation as a colour of melancholy. I allowed myself a small range of blues in which to work. Remarkably the cheap tracing paper I chose for its qualities of transparency and fragility could stand up to much more saturation than expensive drafting films and yet still retain the delicacy I desired.

The body of work that stands as a result of this research project has another aspect which was a particular challenge. The majority of the works had become very large scale and posed a number of problems in relation to their production and construction as pieces that could be installed in a gallery space. They also posed problems with respect to their existence in the

gallery setting and viewer interaction with them. They are not necessarily installation works in the true sense. They are large, and some can be reconfigured to fit the particular space, but they remain individual pieces within a unified body of work. They are diverse in appearance and each can be shown in their own right but the way in which they interact within a gallery setting is critical. Each represents a specific aspect of the site and yet the tension they set up between them is significant in understanding the many aspects of the site and my interpretation of it. It is, therefore, important to consider the way in which they are situated in the gallery space in relation to each other.

## CONCLUSION

The research in this project centred around the recovered refuse from a house block that I purchased in 1996 upon which I constructed a house in 1999. This refuse from the site alerted me to possible prior existences there. The fragments of 19<sup>th</sup> century crockery that were among the range of items uncovered during excavation are like so many others unearthed from gardens and building sites throughout Hobart. These are objects that for me stand as aides-memoire for all that could have gone on in that location.

I concluded that the reason for the existence of this material when my research pointed to no previous dwellings on the site was that it was most likely a rubbish dump or 'cess pit' for the homestead *Paraclete* or other surrounding early properties.

Although dealing with the universal nature of the material and suggesting the everyday existences that could have occurred in any one of hundreds of houses or sites all over Hobart, I limited myself to the use of fragments from my particular location despite offers of material from a number of others. The personal connection remained a vital element in creating a dialogue that allows us to contemplate what life may have been like for these people through considering our own intimate experiences in this context. The 'everyday' or 'overlooked' quality of the items recovered was crucially important in considering a broader notion of that which constitutes a history that is considered worthy of retelling.

I was also alluding to my personal connection with *this* site and the way in which we become associated with, or entangled with, the history of any place we choose to occupy. We become part of the history of it and yet our mark on it may be as fleeting as that of the previous inhabitants.

I set about 'reconstructing [my] site in print' and in order to do this I was compelled to find a new methodology to achieve the works. The use of the



print as a tool for producing the multiple was paramount in developing a strategy to create these pieces which stand as my interpretation of the many aspects of this place; the interior, the landscape, the garden and my contemporary response to these. The patterned details of the fragments were the visual material used to construct these art works using a range of print processes.

Crucially, the need to adopt a new approach to recreate a visual interpretation of the site has lead me to consider new modes within the discipline of printmaking. The editioned, framed print is no longer sufficient to offer the complex narratives I am constructing. Through this investigation I have developed a new strategy in my practice which will inevitably inform future works. I have produced works which rely upon the flexibility and freedom of a repeat unit to construct much greater pieces which, despite their scale, can be moved around, constructed and dismantled according to the viewing space. The works in this submission extend well beyond the traditional forms of printmaking and yet they are only beginning to suggest to me a range of possibilities for future practice. The pieces are moving away from the planar surface of the wall and are bordering on installation works and objects. From these developments I have new work in progress which will extend further into the realm of truly 3-dimensional installations.

In the years following construction of the house in Providence Valley the ground continued to offer up many little treasures - gradually diminishing in quantity over time. In November 2005 I sold my share of this house. I now own a new block of land in another suburb of Hobart.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. *Paraclete, Mt. Stuart* c.1888. Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.
2. Recovered objects from the site.
3. Recovered fragments from the site.
4. Juan Sánchez Cotán, *Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber*, c.1602, oil on canvas, 69 x 84.5cm.
5. Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656, oil on canvas, 323 x 276cm.
6. Philip Taaffe, *Old Cairo*, 1989, monoprint acrylic on linen, 231 x 172cm.
7. Sally Smart, *Parameters Head: A La Ronde* (installation view) 2000.
8. Tracey Cockburn, *Unearthed* (detail), 2003, hand coloured and embossed lithographs, 120 x 450cm.
9. Miriam Schapiro, *Barcelona Fan*, 1979, acrylic and fabric on canvas, 183 x 366cm.
10. Miriam Schapiro, *Garden of Paradise*, 1980, acrylic and fabric on canvas, 160 x 167cm.
11. Elizabeth Gower, *Chance or Design*, 1995, paper on drafting film, 240 x 102cm.
12. Tracey Cockburn, *Untitled – Fragments*, 2004, screen-print on acrylic, 28 x 34cm.
13. Anne Ferran, *Soft Caps*, 1995, gelatin silver print, 34.5 x 38cm.
14. Anne Ferran, *Untitled – Baby's Dress*, 1998, gelatin silver print.
15. Tracey Cockburn, *Untitled - Blue Garden Series*, 2004, digital inkjet print on tracing paper, 59 x 42cm.
16. J.J.Priola, *Girl*, 1995, gelatin silver print, 20 x 16cm.
17. J.J.Priola, *Mirror*, 1995, gelatin silver print, 20 x 16cm.
18. Tracey Cockburn, experimental *Ghost Objects*, 2003, muslin.
19. Tracey Cockburn, *The Mirror*, 2003, lithographs and digital print, 102 x 74cm.
20. Tracey Cockburn, *Residual III* (detail), lithographs and digital print, 102 x 74cm.

21. Tracey Cockburn, *Unearthed*, 2003, hand coloured and embossed lithographs, 120 x 450cm.
22. Benjamin Duterreau, *West Hobart from the Domain*, c. 1834, watercolour and white crayon, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.
23. Tracey Cockburn, *Residual* (early version), 2003, digital inkjet prints on drafting film, 42 x 750cm.
24. Tracey Cockburn, *Residual*, (installation view), 2005, digital inkjet prints, 200 x 700cm approx.
25. Tracey Cockburn, *Residual*, (detail), 2005, digital inkjet prints, 200 x 700cm approx.
26. Tracey Cockburn, *Untitled - Fragments* (installation view) 2005, screen prints on acrylic.
27. Tracey Cockburn, *Shatter* (test piece), 2004, screen-print on acrylic and paper cut-outs.
28. Tracey Cockburn, *Untitled – Blue Garden Series*, 2004, digital inkjet prints on tracing paper, each 59 x 42cm.
29. Tracey Cockburn, *Untitled – Blue Garden Series*, 2004, digital inkjet prints on tracing paper, each 59 x 42cm.

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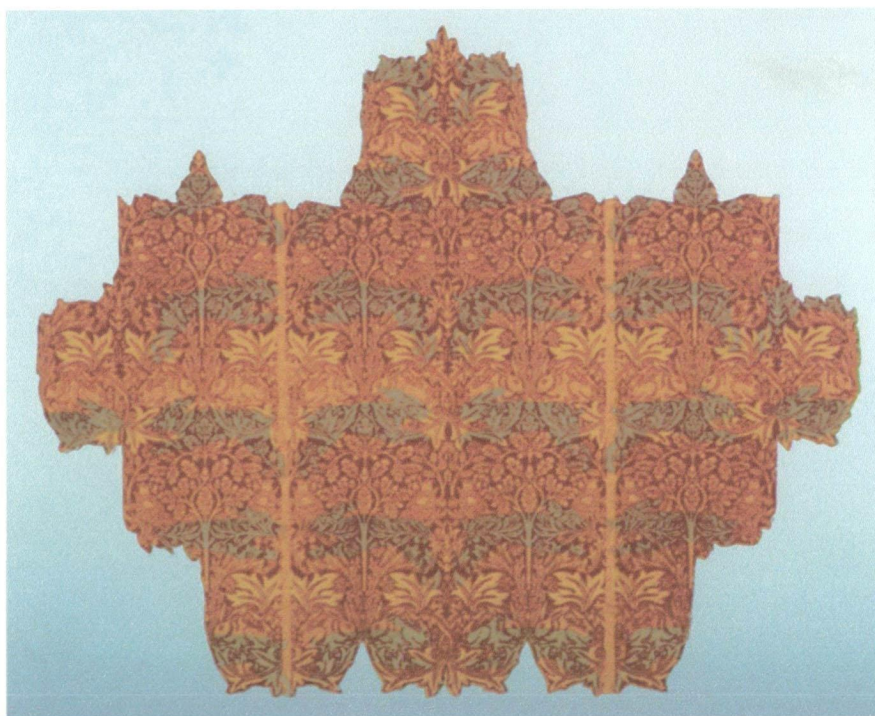
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## APPENDIX 1 – PREVIOUS WORKS

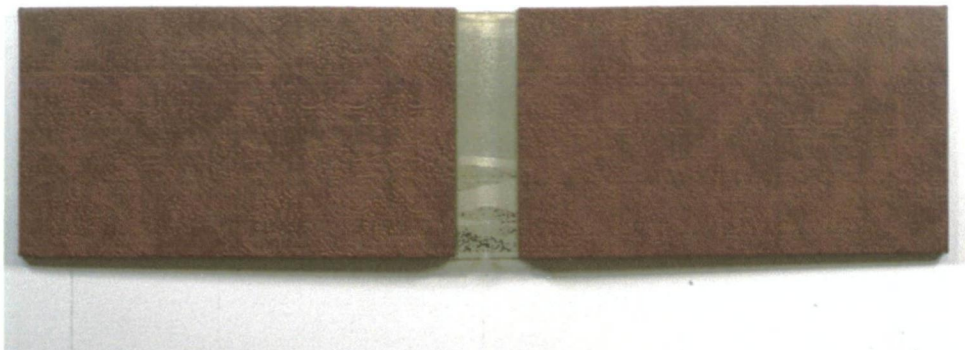


Tracey Cockburn, *Enclosure*, 1999, screen-print, 12 x 70cm.

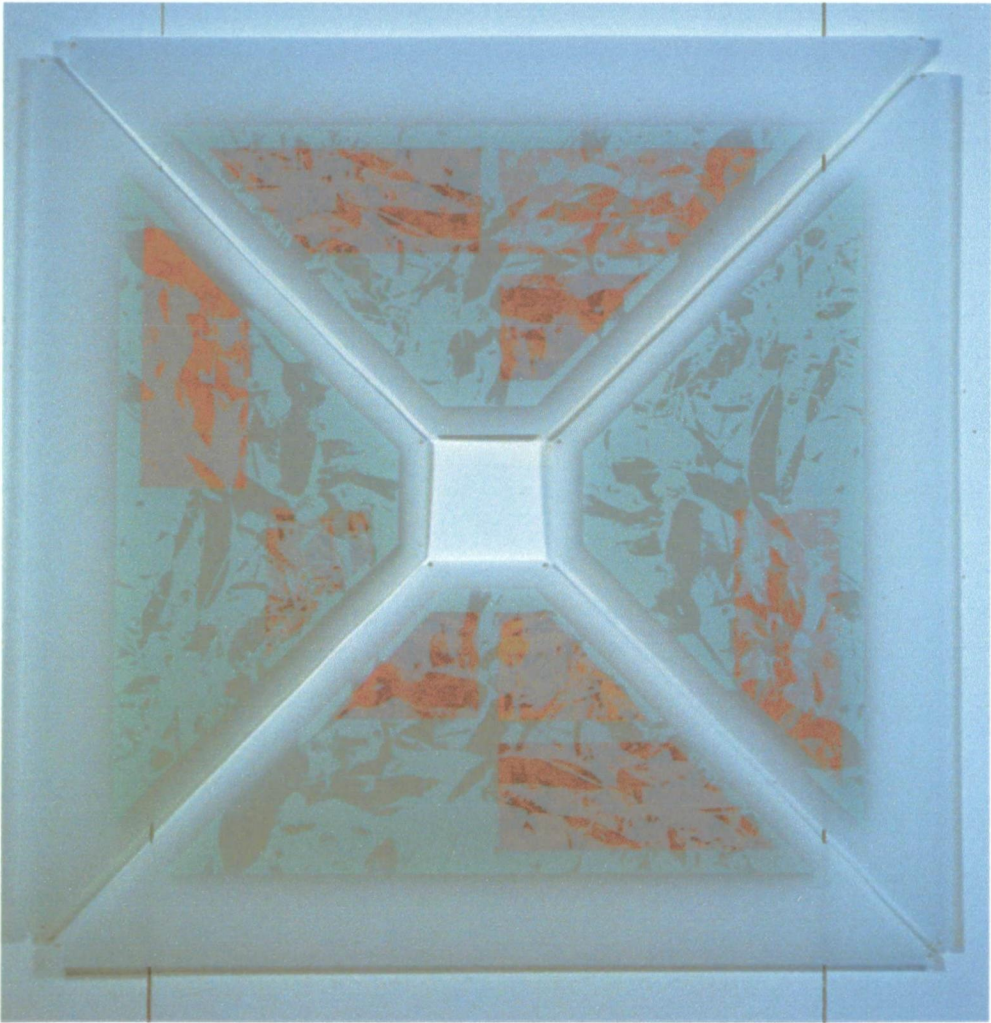


Tracey Cockburn, *Brother Rabbit*, 1997, screen-print, 90 x 72cm.

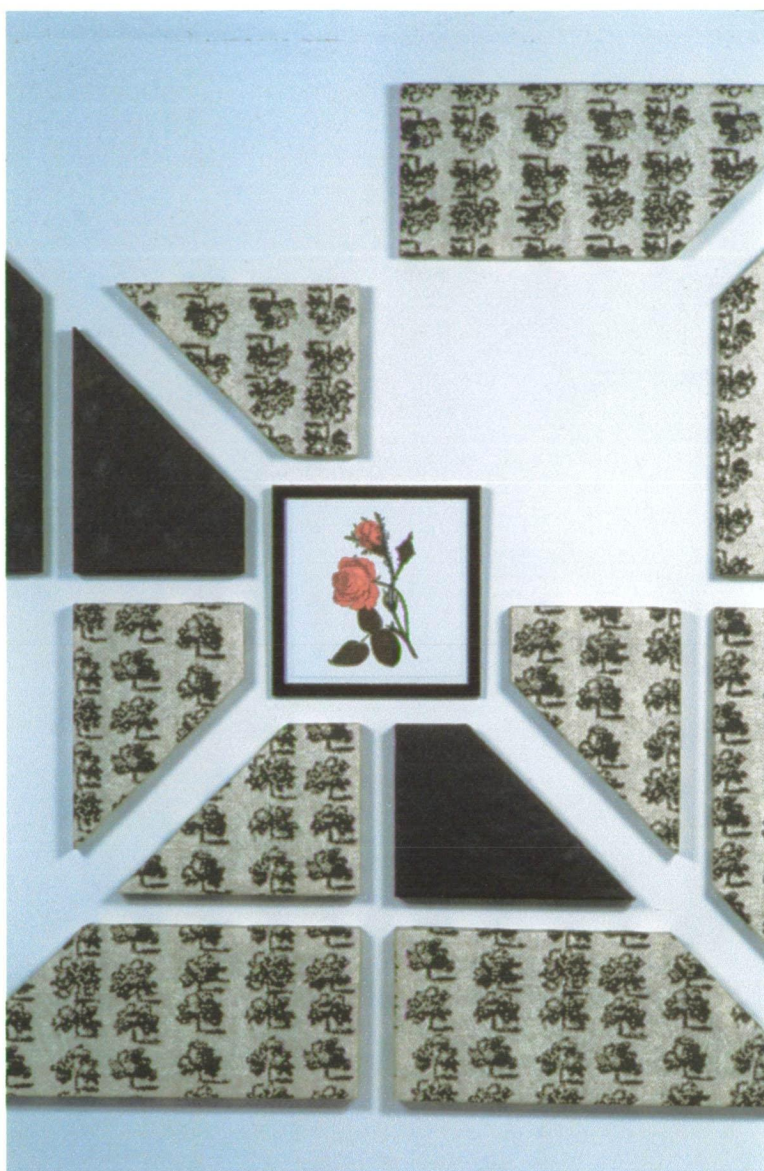




Tracey Cockburn, *Home*, 1999, screen-print on canvas, 140 x 30cm.



Tracey Cockburn, *Sanctuary*, 1999, screen-print on film, 220 x 220cm.



Tracey Cockburn, *The Garden* (detail), 2000, screen-prints, 220 x 220cm.



## APPENDIX 2 – CURRICULUM VITAE

**(Eleanor) Tracey Cockburn**

### **BIOGRAPHY**

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1964	Born Berwick-Upon-Tweed, England.
1980 - 1981	<b>Foundation Course in Design</b> - Worcester Tech. College, U.K.
1982 - 1985	<b>Bachelor of Design (Product Design)</b> - South Australian College of Advanced Education
1996 - 1998	<b>Bachelor of Fine Art</b> - University of Tasmania
1999	<b>BFA Honours</b> - University of Tasmania
2001 - 2005	<b>MFA</b> - University of Tasmania

### **SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

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Feb 2005	MFA Exhibition, Plimsoll Gallery
Sept 2004	<i>Recent Large Prints</i> , Gallery J111, UNISA
August 2003	<i>Unearthed</i> , Blue Oyster Gallery, Dunedin, New Zealand
May 2003	<i>Unearthed</i> , Gorman house, Canberra Contemporary Art Space
Jan/Feb 2001	<i>Re-vegetation</i> , Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens
June 1998	<i>Issues of Taste</i> , Entrepot, University of Tasmania

### **SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

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Oct 2004	<i>From a Constructed Tasmanian World: Recent Work by seven contemporary Tasmanian Artists</i> , Port Jackson Press, Melbourne
Jan 2004	<i>IXL Art</i> , Plimsoll Gallery
Aug 2003	Tasmanian Living Artists Week
April 2003	<i>Books</i> , University of Tasmania Fine Arts gallery
Sept 2002	<i>Sex/Land</i> , University of Tasmania Fine Arts gallery
Dec 2001	<i>Half Way There: Recent Work by Current Postgraduate Students</i> , Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania
Dec 2001	<i>C.A.S.T. Members Exhibition</i>
Oct 2001	<i>Hutchins Art Prize Finalists' Exhibition</i> , Long Gallery, SAC

Sept 2001	<i>Transistor</i> University of Tasmania Fine Arts Gallery
Dec 2000	<i>C.A.S.T. Members Exhibition</i>
Nov 2000	<i>Hutchins Art Prize Finalists' Exhibition</i> , Long Gallery, SAC
Nov1999	<i>Showing Off</i> , work by Honours students, Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania
Feb 1999	<i>AND...</i> , Entrepot, University of Tasmania
Dec 1998	<i>C.A.S.T. Members Exhibition</i>
June 1998	<i>A Flourishing Ecology</i> , Long Gallery, Salamanca Arts Centre
Oct 1998	<i>The Illawarra Print Award Exhibition</i> , Wollongong
Aug 1998	<i>A Winter's Delight</i> , Handmark Gallery, Hobart

## **PRIZES AND COMMISSIONS**

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2003	<b>City of Burnie TASART prize for 'works in another medium'</b>
2002	<b>University of Tasmania Postgraduate Research Scholarship</b>
2001	<b>Arts Tasmania, Art for Public Buildings Scheme Commission, King Island District School</b>
1998	<b>University of Tasmania Mt. Nelson Prize (Art) - For excellence in vocational and practical aspects of an undergraduate course</b>