

# **The Nature of Tasmanian Residence**

by  
**Anthony White**  
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## **Abstract**

### **The Nature of Tasmanian Residence**

**Anthony White**

Since their original settlement, European Tasmanians have dramatically transformed the landscape. The British found, in an ancient environment largely unaltered since the division of Gondwana Land, the southernmost indigenous culture of the world. No man, plant or animal on the land was unaffected by the colonial project. Sadly, this has meant the demise of many endemic species of flora and fauna and, most regrettably, the demise of the full-blooded Tasmanian Aboriginal. Alongside the Europeans' perceived entitlement to claim the discovered land was a conviction that European Tasmanians also had the right to exploit the natural environment for individual purposes.

My work contends that some of the colonial attitudes that validated the squander of natural resources and disrespect for human existence are still evident. There is an antagonistic social relationship between Tasmanians who believe in the value of the conserved natural environment and those whose livelihood relies on the resource-based extractive industries in the State. To illustrate how modern social attitudes are connected to the early colonisation process these relationships will be investigated within the visual work.

In Tasmania, the environment is deeply associated with all aspects of the modern identity and the way of life. For this reason, the environment remains the paramount Tasmanian icon. My research project examines the Tasmanian environment as a subject with which to analyse, address and project a Tasmanian identity.

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## **Introduction - The Nature of Tasmanian Residence**

The stereotypical image of a bushranger is that of a rugged, battered and ruthless outlaw. However, one early Tasmanian legendary character contradicts this image. Handsome, well-dressed and mounted on the finest horse, Matthew Brady was a young absconder aged just twenty-five when he casually rode up to the front door of the Royal Oak Hotel in Hobart Town. On the front door he pinned up his response to the Governor's reward placed on his head. In a defiant example of the spirit of colonial Tasmania, the note included the words: 'It has caused Matthew Brady much concern that such a person known as Sir (Governor) Arthur is at large. Twenty gallons of rum will be given to any persons that will deliver him unto me.' (Wannon 1963, p54). Like much of Tasmanian history, there are significantly different views surrounding the life of Brady. He was either a brutal murderer or a kind gentleman, but as Allan Nixon quotes 'the truth probably lies somewhere in between.' (1991, p24). Either way, he was a very popular colonial figure. In April 1826, thousands of men and women lined the streets to witness Brady's hanging when he was aged twenty-six. Brady's time in Tasmania was brutally iconic, and physically and psychologically redolent of colonialism. The artwork *A Life in the Day* [Fig. 2] is my portrayal of Matthew Brady. In this image his eyes convey a spirit of both innocence and youth that express the extremes of his short but complicated life. This is a metaphor for the short

time span of European existence in Tasmania; short, brutal, whitewashed over with innocence and tainted with ignorance.

The *Nature of Residence* series aims to depict the Tasmanian story from the first significant European sightings of Tasmania to the modern day. The history of Tasmania has all the elements of a phantasmagorical fiction. The island was shrouded in mystique as part of the Great Unknown South Land of the pre-industrial world. Rumours extended throughout the civilised world of a land of giants following Abel Tasman's brief sightings of stepped trees in 1642. (Tasman 2006) The artwork titled *The Great Inhabited South Land* [Fig. 1] visualises the unimaginable aura that surrounded the European vision of Tasmania prior to settlement. It is this point of Tasmanian history, and onward that is of interest to my research. For this reason *The Great Inhabited South Land* is the first work in the *Nature of Residence* series.

The initial years of European settlement contain many interesting characters, such as the previously-mentioned Matthew Brady. The Tasmanian story revolves around these countless characters in a new-found land of alien plants and animals, with a sub-plot of repression, greed and conflict. Over a short period of time an intricate web of experiences create challenging reading. The story is complete with rewarding tales of bravery and of triumph over adversity. It also contains emotionally charged situations that are bereft of hope and instilled with



despair, torture and savagery. At times it reads as a tale of good versus evil, innocence versus corruption; it is a timely battle for conquest. As Coultman Smith suggests '...the facts of the first fifty years of European-settled history [in Tasmania] are far more colourful than fiction could be.' (1978, p4) This is an engaging book: it becomes more akin to a consuming multiple player computer game in which one must keep playing, knowing that death awaits before reaching the end. The aim is to recognise Tasmania's brutal history, and to break free from the burdens it creates.

Tasmanian history contains definite periods of time which can be read as chapters. These chapters are represented throughout the state's body of visual artwork. At their simplest level of understanding, my artworks are storyboards for the developments within Tasmanian history that inform the current state of place. In a more complex view they are sketches of the physical, psychological and social patterns of Tasmanian society as progressions of colonisation. By visualising Tasmanian history into a series of works, it is intended that discussions and questions may be delivered concisely from this particular point in time. The works are not merely historical accounts, but are, rather, contemporary studies into the developments and outcomes of a colonised country and state. They are platforms from which to view nationally the childhood of a country that is emerging into adulthood. Collectively the *Nature of Residence* series of works encompass and describe the accumulated experience of Tasmania and detail a current modern Tasmanian identity. My works can be viewed

on an international level to gain insight and understanding into the repercussions of the relatively recent expansion of industrialised civilisation. For the viewer to be Tasmanian is not necessary. On the contrary, a viewer who has no knowledge of the history or development of Tasmania is in a position to view the images without inclination to ignore the historical atrocities depicted.

My study relates to all Australians, and any colonised land. It uses Tasmania as an isolated case study for the purposes of research into the identification of the long term and ongoing implications of colonisation. No colonised land can develop into a new state or country without recognising the original state of the place at the modern counterpoint as this would deny the childhood of its identity. Adolescent development, in any culture, encompasses the recognition of accountability. Adults are held accountable for their individual actions. This is because unacceptable behaviour is defined in childhood and no longer accepted in adulthood. It can be argued that the accountability for the colonial activities of early Australia has yet to be fully accepted. This would deny Australia that adolescent rite of passage to becoming an adult. David Tacy in his publication "Re-enchantment; the new Australian Spirituality" states that

...no colonised country can ever achieve spiritual integrity until the wrongs of colonialism have been addressed, so that a republic not based on racial reconciliation would represent a mere technical

arrangement and would not educate the soul of the nation. (2000, p57)

Tasmania also cannot claim to have accepted accountability for the past, and in this sense colonisation continues. Debates are ongoing that colonisation can take many forms, some of which have no clear conclusion. Australia, as an inhabited landmass has had a very long childhood, or more appropriately has lived one entire lifetime and has been reincarnated. It has the oldest continuing indigenous cultural lifetime on earth, and the youngest European childhood. Tasmania echoes this development on a smaller and easier scale to scrutinise. Since the flooding of the Bassian Plains between ten and twelve thousand years ago (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1995), the Tasmanian landmass has been acting as a metaphor for its accompanying continent. Townsley explains the potential of Tasmania as a case study in the following way:

The problems of demography, of race relations, of economic growth and stagnation, of the exercise and control of political power, of regional balance, of isolation and the drift of people, of cultural identity, of the impact of climatic changes and pollution on the environment are all issues that can be studied close at hand [in Tasmania] relatively free from extraneous influences. (1991, p IX)

It is the isolation of Tasmania that makes these studies possible. Isolation and the harsh environment, as considerations in the decision to transform Tasmania into a penal colony, have continued to impact on the daily lives

of the island's inhabitants. Preceding European settlement, the isolated environment was responsible for the evolution of a distinctly different indigenous culture on the Tasmanian landmass as opposed to the mainland of Australia. The seclusion of the land also ensured endemic flora and fauna species. It is apparent that the island of Tasmania has developed an engaging natural presence. It has demanded a new way of life from plants and men alike, and presented a unique fertile land. This distinct natural environment is the catalyst for much of the modern Tasmanian way of life, continually informing the arts, culture and society.

The European contribution to Tasmania, if considered in terms of its full-inhabited history, is miniscule in time. Despite the short time frame since European arrival, the State has earned a dark and scarred image. It has developed the demanding nature of the island into a stigma, or at best, a brooding displacement that is subconsciously imbedded in the Tasmanian psyche. The third work in the *Nature of Residence* series is titled *A Fearsome History Continues* [Fig 3]. It is a collection of images that aggregates the darker aspects of Tasmanian history. These aspects define the subconscious pensiveness present in modern Tasmania. Visually this work implies a continual pattern of exploitation toward all living things on the island of Tasmania from the outset of colonisation to the modern day. It insinuates that the pattern has no end in sight, which leads the viewer into the final image of the series titled *The Uncivil War* [Fig.4]. This image portrays the single most dividing aspect of the Tasmanian community

today. Essentially it implies the opposition that exists between those who believe in the value of the natural environment and those whose livelihoods rely on the resource-based extractive industries. A social war surrounds issues of land and resource usage in Tasmania that has essentially existed as a social conundrum for many years and has its origins planted alongside settlement itself.

The following chapters will detail the intentions of the artworks in the *Nature of Residence* series. Figures 5, 6 and 7 show other major works that were produced in the development of this degree however not included in the final series. Each of the final Nature of Residence works has a definite and important relationship to the others. Independently, they each tell a separate story; collectively, they embrace the short but colourful history of Tasmania, and metaphorically they speak for the development of a nation.

## Chapter 1 – The Accumulated Tasmanian Experience

As a family sits over a meal each day and has general discussions regarding their day or week, what might be termed a quiver of experience is shared and remembered by each person. They each accumulate a collective memory of one another's experiences. Those memories form a reference for each person to draw from as they continue to live. Through those shared experiences a new lexicon develops and informs family colloquialisms and 'in jokes'. The full understanding of these requires having accumulated those same shared experiences. Tasmania is much the same: it is as though it were an extended family sitting around a table sharing the memories of its colonisation. It has developed many colloquialisms, and a distinct vernacular. The atrocities and harshness of Tasmania's past have built up an apprehensive and troubled accumulated memory of experience. Richard Flanagan stated in conversation that: "I've always thought there's this enormous well of sub-conscious experience in Tasmania, going back generations and generations, and that if you could simply tap into it - and honour it - you could write something that would at least resonate with other people." (Wessman 1995) The intention of the *Nature of Residence* series is to tap into that sub-conscious experience, visualise it and record it in a contemporary way. Importantly, as Flanagan implies, to successfully examine or portray Tasmanian history from a modern viewpoint requires an honesty that is lacking from previous accounts. As an artist researching this topic I have aimed to create the

most honest visual account of Tasmanian history. The works each visualise real life situations that incorporate mythological and intangible social attitudes. They each have an underlying focus on the darker aspects of Tasmanian history, and speak in a truthful voice. Simply from having been produced in modern Tasmania, they are celebrations of the accomplishment of Tasmania as place. Each work is a visual prompt for Tasmanian self-assessment to aid the acknowledgement and accountability of the island's past. 'The violent and bloody origins of European settlement in Tasmania have only recently come to be explored in terms of how Tasmanians see themselves' (Robson, Roe 1997, pviii) This self-assessment has recently enabled Tasmanian artists also to visualise and theorise new ways to identify with the Tasmanian past. With this reflection the implications of colonialism become identifiable and autonomously activated in a process of subconscious thought followed by conscious recognition. This enables Tasmania to grow out of its past with integrity rather than denial.

Researching the implications of colonisation, particularly on a social level, one can hope to shed light on the identifying and imbedded personality traits of the resulting country or state. Tasmania is easy to examine on this level as it contains a social structure that judges itself in terms of genealogical connection to colonial times. To elaborate, a 'true' Tasmanian, to place a term on it, has a multiple-generation family history stretching back into colonialism. Their shared family experience is a

combination of folklore stories that their family has nurtured and passed down since arrival to the colony. These oral histories and the associated shared memories strengthen their self-perceived superiority through being a long-established Tasmanian family. To these true Tasmanian families, newcomers or recent migrants have little chance of ownership over the Tasmanian way of life because they have no genealogical connection to the hardships of the penal colony that shaped Tasmania. Strangely, in an ironic twist of the social structure, as Robson points out, some 'Tasmanians did not wish to be reminded of their history and indeed took active steps to in some cases remove incriminating evidence from old documentary convict records.' (Robson, Roe 1997, p127) This can be viewed as evidence of the ongoing social division created by a colonisation using a prison system. In the first hundred years of European Tasmanian history, there was certainly a massive class distinction between descendants of convicts and descendants of free settlers.

Tasmania had more convicts than any other colony and had them for a longer period; consequently Tasmania was less able to shake off the "convict taint" which was such a source of division in early colonial Australian society. (Ryan 1996, p259).

For modern Tasmania, the line of descendants appears less relevant than the number of generations. Where the multiple-generation Tasmanian is 'true', in his/her mind the current first<sup>1</sup> generation Tasmanian is not. In this mindset a staircase of 'Tasmanian-ism' prevails [Fig. 8]. On the ground level is a growing population of sea changers who have moved to



Tasmania from other places at some point in their lives. Be that five or fifty years previous, they will never be considered a true or real Tasmanian because they cannot step any further up the staircase towards colonial ancestry. This is a disturbingly short-sighted outlook for a society that is solely based on migration. It might well be argued that a person of any racial background should be within their rights to call themselves Tasmanian solely on the premise that they have made the choice to live in Tasmania. To be on this ground step of the staircase however requires little or no commitment of ownership or responsibility for the baggage associated with Tasmania's brutal history. There is the baseline exit clause, which states – 'but I wasn't born here'. For the true Tasmanian, whilst holding a perceived superiority, the lack of acknowledgment of their ancestral atrocities denies their independent accountability in many cases.

The isolation and harsh conditions of colonialism developed unique qualities that have segregated Tasmanians from the rest of Australia, indeed the western world. Being a 'true' Tasmanian carries much stigma. In jest, it is said to entail having two heads or a scar where one has been removed, all combined with a sexual need for union with one's own family members. This is part of the lasting impression with which other Australians have branded Tasmanians in the past. In contemporary society, Tasmanians are still perceived to have similar traits; they are considered sheltered, naïve, and in a world of their own. They are good drinkers, and slightly batty. These are all labels that directly spring from

isolated and harsh colonial beginnings. Tasmania is an unwelcoming world in many ways to the outsider. This can be analysed in the country mentality which determines that one will never be deemed a local unless the father and his father were born in that town. This is an analogy for the whole of the Tasmanian social attitude that has grown out of the nature of residence in early Tasmania.

The two mainstay characters in the development of this temperament are the Tasmanian environment and colonialism. The environment is at the centre of the accumulated Tasmanian experience, in modern times as it was for the colonial settlers. It remains iconic in representing the state now just as it does for representing past struggles. In discussing broadly literature that references the Tasmanian experience Martin Ball points out that

...these books focus on Tasmania's brutal history, its remoteness and cultural insularity. Such feelings are then transferred onto the landscape, which often becomes a character in its own right, and functions as a metaphor for whatever particular historical or cultural travesty is being depicted. (2003, p119)

It is through this metaphorical use of the environment that the shared experience of colonialism inevitably becomes interwoven with the Tasmanian wilderness not just physically but subconsciously and emotionally.

Reminders of colonial times are everywhere in Tasmania, from the early architecture of the cities, to the long standing farmhouses and the remaining convict establishments. Little secrets that tell of hard times can be found in the most unlikely places, and the most visited. The history of colonisation cannot be avoided, even to the remoteness of the far west coast. On the contrary, colonial remains are a stable contributor to a now booming tourism industry. Port Arthur for many years has been the most visited colonial site in Tasmania, and possibly Australia. It is arguably the most significant site of European cultural heritage in Australia. Despite debates of Port Arthur being sensationalized over the years, historians have argued strongly that life at Port Arthur and Tasmania in general was bliss in comparison to the homeland for some convicts. (Smith 1941, p10) Despite this Port Arthur has firmly imprinted itself as a shared experience of pain and suffering. It is imperative to note that Port Arthur did not begin operation as a penal establishment until the 1830's. To this day Port Arthur remains the icon of a tormented beginning, yet the suffering in early Tasmania was spread far more widely across the island.

It was between the first arrival of Europeans and the beginning of Port Arthur when the worst atrocities in Tasmanian history were committed. In the initial settlement years the clash between the native inhabitants and the British became increasingly destructive. The intensity of relations between the two groups largely related to the Europeans' exploitation of the land and the fauna and flora. As the Aboriginals' hunting grounds

began to be settled by Europeans, the Aboriginals became aware that their race was at great risk of depletion and the infamous Black War began. (Plomley 1992, p13) These were by far the hardest times ever faced by any class or race of people in Tasmania. The Black War, in terms of an accumulated memory for the colony, provided an unwelcoming wilderness experience for the white population. Part of the so-called war was the episode of the Black Line: this was a tactical strategy employed by the government in which every able-bodied male (of which there was an estimated 4000), was deployed in a single line to cross the state. (Rae-Ellis 1988, p60) The line attempted to capture the remaining aboriginals and drive them to the Tasman Peninsula. It must have had psychological ramifications for the colony. Together with the dismal failure of the manoeuvre, capturing only an old man and a small child (Rae-Ellis 1998, p65), a negative psychology was imposed onto the entire white male population during this exercise. Negativity toward the Aboriginal Tasmanians combined with the physically exhaustive task created a strong shared experience for the entire white population that literally stopped the colony for its duration. The lasting psychological implications of the Black Line can only be speculated on, however it must have strengthened the antipathy toward both the Tasmanian wilderness and the Tasmanian Aboriginals. If nothing else, the Black Line ensured that every male in the colony at that point in history had encountered the harshness of the Tasmanian bush.

Another important experience in the European outlook toward Tasmania was the completely intangible mythology and mystery that surrounded the existence of the Great South Land. This experience began over two thousand years before colonisation, nurtured in the minds of the European philosophers and explorers. It is difficult in today's modern world to grasp the anticipation and intrigue that must have existed toward the unknown landmass of the southern hemisphere. The theory of the existence of the antipodeans continent had been around since the time of Pythagoras, around 500 BC. (National Library of Australia 2006) The French, Greeks, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and English were all at some point in search of the mysterious land. Post settlement, this long-standing anticipation of a new land transferred down to the free settlers and convicts as an amazing possibility for a new start. For Europeans, in this way Tasmania was seen as a dreamy, mythological, unknown land full of promise for a better life. 'Van Diemen's Land...had offered the not so petty thieves that most convicts were, a golden opportunity to make good. It could be done and it was.' (Roe/Robson 1997, p152). In this sense, the European colonisation of Tasmania and Australia using a convict work force was a success despite the conditions, and the lasting social problems that it caused.

My work '*The Great inhabited South Land*' aims to portray this mystery surrounding the land of promise. In the bottom half of the image, text from Abel Tasman's journal entry of the first sighting of the coast of Van

Diemen's Land appears underneath the ocean. The Dutch writing under the waves crashing against the cliffs animates the experience of the seafaring explorers who relentlessly and vigilantly took journal after journal of notes and observations in the quest for unknown lands. The writing implies the endless days spent at sea, longing for the sighting of land. In the sky is a series of topographical sketches based on the Tasmanian coastlines as seen in Bea Maddock's *'Terra Spiritus'*. Maddock implies in her work that the colonisation of Tasmania was invasion. The Aboriginal naming of significant landmarks around the coastline of Tasmania alongside the inconspicuous European names for those locations suggests an intelligent people who knew the land well initially inhabited the island. *'Terra Spiritus'*, along with other previous works such as *'Tromemanner'* and *'Trouwerner'* are, as Tim Bonyhady has described, 'the most powerful visual – and written – evocations of Tasmania as an Aboriginal place at the time of European invasion.' (2002, p159) The end result of the physical rendering of the topographical coastline as part of my work *'The Great inhabited South Land'* was not as I had envisaged. It is the least successful aspect of this work. My intention of creating a dialogue with Maddock's contemporary work has been compromised through this, resulting in an imprecise connection for the viewer. It is unfortunate that this may lead to a questioning of the benefit and contribution that the coastline adds to the overall image. The topographical sketches coupled with the rendering of the sky depict a concerned aboriginal spirit watching over the island. As the title suggests I am implying, similarly to Maddock,

that an inhabited land is not discovered. The spirit's face is deliberately not recognisable as one of the well known Tasmanian Aboriginals. It would have been a far simpler process to use the well known images of Truganini or Lanney had it not been for my respect for the customs and wishes of Tasmanian Aboriginals to not see images of their deceased relatives. It has been fashioned instead by closely examining the features of the Tasmanian Aboriginals to obtain a likeness. The towering dolerite coastline in the image separates the anxiety the indigenous people must have felt at the sight of a European ship, from the very different anxiety experienced by the invaders: both were experiencing the doubt and fear of the unknown. The work encapsulates the intangible mystery surrounding the 'discovery' of Tasmania for Europeans and the Aboriginals. In the context of the series, *The Great Inhabited South Land* visualises that mystique as the first accumulated experience of Tasmania. The work's primary purpose is to visualise a peaceful and mysterious counterpoint to the more aggressive tones of the other works. It is a tertiary purpose of this work to spark debate about the brutal relationship that then developed between Europeans and the indigenous people, and the outcomes of colonisation. It is the important relationship *between* this work and the others in the series that identifies that from the outset of settlement, Europeans considered Van Diemen's Land as theirs to do with as they wished, and have used it accordingly ever since.

## Chapter 2 - Man and the Tasmanian Environment

The combination of the harshness of the wilderness, what might be called the roguish nature of the British migrants, the stealth of the indigenous inhabitants, and the pure isolation of Tasmania should have provided a recipe for disaster for European settlement. To simplify an obviously extremely complex situation, it could be said that for the European endeavor to be successful, some of the ingredients had to be removed from the recipe. I argue that two of these were: the Aborigines and the wilderness. This equation leaves behind only the factors that were desired by the colonists in their vision for a penal colony; essentially, a place to send the rogues of British society, and isolation. Predominantly out of these two factors has emerged the Tasmania of today. The intent of removing obstacles from the equation can be examined as the beginning of a pattern of exploitation in Tasmania that in effect still exists. It is connected strongly to the Europeans' perceived ownership of the land. To the British, Tasmania was uninhabited by a civilized race, it was to them *terra nullius*. To their minds, the land was theirs to do with as they wished. This is the key to understanding the exploitation that has followed. All of the atrocities of Tasmanian history and the exploitation of resources and human existence can be traced back to this fundamental psychological belief.

The single most important feature of the British expropriation of Aboriginal land was the belief that Australia in 1788 was a *terra nullius*, a land without owners. This enabled the settlers to convince themselves that they had a



legal right to the land because Australia had never actually become the property of the Aborigines. This idea had become accepted legal doctrine in the first generation of settlement... (Reynolds 1989, p61)

In discussing the same outlook, Plomley goes further to say that Europeans could:

...subdue the wilderness in accordance with their needs, that is, clear the forests, kill the native animals for their own use or because they preyed upon their domestic animals or crop plants, and remove any Aborigines who prevented them from making full use of the land they had acquired, ill-treating, injuring or even killing them as they wished. (Plomley 1993, pxi)

It is as though the shared accumulated memory of this period of time, passed down the generations possibly genetically or subconsciously, has instilled into the Tasmanian psyche an ability to accept, and even expect, the exploitation of the island and anything on it. A person higher on the staircase of Tasmanianism is synonymous with a greater related mental ownership of the land that increases their right to utilise it with less associated justification. This outlook toward the environment has been nurtured in the attitudes of the Tasmanian worker who relies on extractive industry.

The Bushman ethos (that is, the white Australian person living in the bush) can be examined closely in Australian literature. Through poetic license or otherwise, the Australian Bushman is depicted as a strong willed, hardworking man imbued with the attitude that man is superior to the environment. The persistence of that characteristic is echoed in the descriptions of that archetypal figure in

Australian history. Henry Lawson, in defending his interpretations of the Australian Bushmen, stereotypes that they are 'narrow-minded, densely ignorant [and], invulnerably thick-headed'. (Falkiner 1992, p62) These traits can be seen as products of colonial times if considered in relation to a perceived entitlement to the land. The working class has also carried a certain amount of the disrespect for human and animal existence. I grew up in the northwest of Tasmania and had many friends who worked in the forest industry. I was shocked by one of those friends who explained to me about the journeys travelling to and from whichever forests he was working in at the time. Competitions between workers were held to see who could hit the highest tally of native animals on the road on any particular trip. The psychological outlook of some workers in extractive resource-based industry that enables them to justify this type of disregard for wildlife must be connected to the previously mentioned colonial behaviour.

It is easy to trace the origins of resource-based industry back to colonial times. Economically, in one form or another, industry has constantly driven the growth of different sectors of the state. There is an overlap of these industries all the way back from the present to pre-British colonisation and all have had significant impact on the environment. This sets up a fair argument that the social division surrounding the environment versus industry debate in modern Tasmania is a development that has grown out of colonisation. It would be pertinent to closely examine the genealogical ancestral connections of industry workers in Tasmania however this is beyond the capabilities and scope of this particular research. It is

certain that for convicts in Tasmania to capitalise on the potential of the opportunities in the new colony, many entered industry-based occupations after completing their sentences. The majority of convicts were badly educated but had acquired labouring skills either prior to transportation or through the punishment system. It can be suggested also that out of the colonial workforce that consisted mostly of convicts has developed the industrial mindset that implies where a resource exists and creates jobs, it should do so outside the notion of conservation.

The third work of the series, *A Fearsome History Continues*, explains visually the continual trend of exploitation toward the land and the living in Tasmania. It depicts an overall image of a Tasmanian devil with a facial tumor. The devil is made up by a collage of independent images depicting the brutal history of Tasmania. It visually connects the string of exploitation that has continued on the Tasmanian landmass from colonisation to the present day. The tumor of the devil is in the image of a decapitated head of an Aboriginal Tasmanian. It implies that the past treatment by Europeans toward the Aboriginals is a facial tumor on Tasmanian history that will remain always visible as an appalling incurable disease. Elsewhere around the devil's face are depictions of the slaughter, rape and disrespect of Tasmanian Aboriginals and their culture. Other images include the sealing, whaling, penguin, and timber industries. Convicts, bushrangers and endangered or extinct species of flora and fauna are also evident, such as the Thylacene, Huon pine, King William pine, the fresh water crayfish, the Tasmanian emus and the mutton-bird. The image as a whole implies the

constant exploitation of the Tasmanian land by Europeans and suggests that the impending extinction of the Tasmanian devil will be the next sacrifice due to a lack of understanding of the need for sustainable land management. Jock Marshall in *The Great Extermination* states that 'Each State [of Australia] is the constitutional guardian of the flora and fauna [and cultures] within its boundaries. This is a relic from the bad old colonial days.'(1966, p216) The continuous mistreatment of Tasmanian land and animals defines that the 'bad old colonial days' continue, in effect, to exist.

To trace the origins of Tasmanian industry is also the most pertinent way to trace back the thought processes that can be seen as a precursor for the Tasmanian conservation movement. There does exist through the whole of Tasmania's European history individual examples of calls for conservation, although it would appear they have been in the minority. It is recorded that in 1803, the same year that Governor King decided to settle Tasmania to claim British sovereignty, officials called for the conservation of seals in Bass Strait, attempting to put in place restrictions on the age of seals to be taken and protection for females with pups. The sealers ignorantly dismissed these calls. (Lines 1991, p33)

'Sustainability' is a key word in today's society, and is central to much debate surrounding the use of Tasmanian land. For some, the word 'sustainable' is a dirty word that simply implies opposition to industry, or a green political imposition. As with much of the civilised world, it has been taken for granted in

Tasmania that wherever resource exists, humans reserve the right to exploit those resources. The isolated environment of Tasmania that has nurtured the individuality of the ancient landscape descended from Gondwana Land is rich in unique resources. It continues to suffer from heavy exploitation. At the time of colonisation, the word abundant would most likely have been a term used for Tasmanian resources. It is easy to conceive that the common view would have been that the seemingly endless forests of Tasmania would never run out of resource. This viewpoint seems to have continued into modern Tasmania despite the dramatically different state of the world today as compared with colonial times, and despite the massive changes that have occurred to the Tasmanian landscape. The early Europeans' perceived right to the land, coupled with the apparent abundance of resource, has developed in the Tasmanian psyche an inherent characteristic that deems resource and social exploitation acceptable. This temperament sets up a disconnection between those Tasmanians and their environment that has emerged from colonial attitudes. 'The environment crisis is not just a moral problem or an economic issue relating to how we manage our natural resources; fundamentally it is a spiritual problem about how we experience ourselves in the world.'(Tacy 2000, p62)

The colonisation of Tasmania wasn't a grab for wealth of resource. Nor was the colonisation of Australia, although in fact it was and had to be a consideration. The decision to colonise Australia rather than any other possibly easier to access land, such as the east of Africa, was relative to its perceived fertility and productivity. (Falkiner 1992, p10) The land did offer all the essential elements

needed for a new settlement; timber, water, and edible fauna to name a few. The abundance of woodlands clearly represented fertility to the colonists and the potential for prosperity. From the outset of the decision to colonise Tasmania, any obstacle that would stand in the way of European progression was simply dealt with. The Europeans went quickly about possessing, exploiting, transforming and clearing the land. For example:

Since first settlement of Van Diemen's Land, timber had been exploited wherever such very valuable and unique species as Huon pine, King William and pencil pine, as well as the common stringy bark variety, could be found. (Robson, Roe 1997, p56)

There was little consideration for the longevity of flora, fauna or human species. There was one simply goal: to create a colony.

The British strategy of sending the social misfits of the mother country to create a remote colony was problematic on many levels. The problems were manifold. The administration must have had great conviction in their abilities to reform criminal behaviour to undertake such a task in minority. Looking back, we are able to assess the difficulties of colonising using a convict system. Just as there was little consideration for the sustainability of the land, there was little or no room in this strategy for the long-term assessment of the psychological ramifications for the inhabitants of a new country born from a punishment system. Indeed, there was little thought given to a future that might contain European Tasmanians and Aboriginal Tasmanians as equals. Therefore it can be stated that the potential for the suppressed race to become contributors to

modern Tasmania was certainly never considered. Arguments over the deliberate intentions of the early government in Tasmania to commit genocide (the deliberate and systematic extermination of a national, racial, political, or cultural group) may never be fully resolved.

Comparisons between the attitudes of the colonists held toward the environment and those held toward the Tasmanian Aboriginals in the conquest for colonisation paint a picture of a ruthless oppressor. These two perceived 'obstacles' in the settlement of Tasmania are also present in the founding of Australia. The overcoming of the Australian environment and the suppression of the Australian Aboriginals can be seen in retrospect as the greatest physical and psychological struggles in the development of the nation. They are interconnected in many ways. In *Taming the Great South Land* by William Lines, the history of land usage in Australia and the demise of the Australian Aboriginal people are interwoven continually through the entire text. Issues surrounding the Tasmanian wilderness and the Tasmanian Aboriginal people are both constant items on the modern political agenda of the state and the nation. On a national level, these have been independent key issues in the previous two federal elections, highlighting an ongoing division regarding those issues. The recent (February 2008) apology given by the Prime Minister of Australia to the indigenous community is the first indication in European Australian history of accountability for the ill treatment of the indigenous people. The apology however failed to address the mistreatment of their land. Despite having transformed the landscape through the clearing of transport routes and feeding

grounds, and the relatively small scale mining of ochre, the Tasmanian Aboriginals had over tens of thousands of years gained a far greater idea of sustainability and conservation than Europeans. Lines explains broadly about the aboriginals' relationship with the Australian land when he states that

60 000 years of Aboriginal occupation only lightly touched the environment and did not fundamentally alter the natural fecundity of the land, nor greatly disturb relationships within the community of plants or animals living in Australia (1991: p11)

It cannot be denied that in this sustainable sense the Aboriginals have a superior understanding than Europeans. Aboriginal elder and activist Michael Mansell was quoted in the Mercury Newspaper on February 11, 1990 as saying: 'We know much more than white man about the environment and conservation. All the damage to the environment was done after the white man came.' (Ryan 1996, p284) This would naturally and consciously make the Tasmanian Aboriginals the first group of Tasmanians in opposition to resource-based industry in Tasmania. This is evident in the change of attitude of the once relatively peaceful Aboriginals toward the colonists as they watched the landscape transform and their food supplies became depleted, resulting in the Black War.

The Tasmanian environment continues to divide the State's social structure. There are many debates within the wide framework of environmental management, all of which are a struggle between industry and conservation. This is where sustainability returns to the argument, depending on which side of



the fence one occupies, pro-conservation or pro-development. Differing perceptions of what constituted conservation resulted in the formation of the green movement during the 1970's, and this has grown to become a formidable political force, on a state and national level, and internationally. Although long before the movement itself was actually recognized there were individuals and groups who looked to the preservation of Tasmania's unique environment. Gustav Weindorfer, in his acclaimed battle for the conservation of Cradle Mountain, is one example of an earlier pioneering character whose foresight created one of the most visited locations in Tasmania. In c.1914 Gustav was quoted as saying 'Except on the part of a dedicated few, there was little understanding of the value of the wilderness.'(Giordano 1987, p47) Today there is greater consideration for the value of wilderness although it is still a minority that is willing to stand up and speak out for its preservation.

To further understand why there was little appreciation of the Tasmanian wilderness in the past it is necessary to examine more closely the initial experiences of the settlers. An important psychological position of the colonists was the belief that Tasmania needed to be transformed into a new England. It was the general endeavor of the colony to grow English gardens, seeds and fruits and animals at any opportunity. (Lines 1991, p112) The Tasmanian wilderness held little or no value for English ideals except for the isolation it provided when needed for the reprimanding of the most severe convicts. In this outlook, like much of the rest of Australia, natural forest was a nuisance and was not to stand in the way

of the progression of the colony at any cost. Lines quotes the Social Darwinist Thomas Huxley who used Tasmania to exemplify how the

State of Nature must give way to Civilisation: a shipload of English colonists there put an end to the wilderness; they cleared away the native vegetation, extirpated or drove out the indigenous populations of animals and people, and took measures to defend themselves against the recovery or re-immigration of either. (1991: p112)

Whilst this reads as a short summary, it does encompass the inherent intent to conquer nature, and its limited usefulness to the colonists.

Another important reference that cannot be overstated in the perception of the environment came from those who explored the land and absconded to it. The most prolific of European land explorers in Tasmania in the initial years were the bushrangers. Their experiences of the wilderness were far from pleasant, although for the most part they survived in it with considerable skill. The wilderness provided them a safeguard, places to hide and a means to travel across the state without detection. To gain an insight for this research into colonial times and the development of those attitudes toward the environment, the life of bushranger Matthew Brady has been examined. His story is complete with an ironic modern day outcome that details how Tasmania has grown out of its past. The irony arises from the way in which his life is now celebrated. There are 'Brady's Lookouts' across the state, some signposted (Exeter lookout), others

that are held in folklore.<sup>1</sup> There is a walk in state forest reserves to view a reputed hideout in a hollowed tree. We celebrate the life of this bushranger even though the truth of his life, like much of Tasmanian history, is somewhere between legend and fact. The same short passages are written about Brady everywhere although there are contradictions. There seems to be two different accounts of why Brady was transported, one for stealing food as seen on the signage at Brady's Lookout at Exeter [Fig 9], and the more credible and fitting account of forgery. (Nixon 1991, p24) Either way, he was a strapping young man who, obviously at odds with the convict system, was not willing to submit to its controls. He had received hundreds of lashes within a very short time in Tasmania. He fits within a cruel recurring pattern, which clearly defines that most of the men who turned to bushranging in the early Australian colonies had suffered repeated lashings. (Ward 1958, p148) Lashings were a hideous scenario that is difficult to comprehend in the modern world. They give a chilling account of colonial Tasmanian life, yet were seen by many in those times as a form of entertainment.

Two dozen lashes, which was considered a light sentence, always left the victim's back a complete jelly of bruised flesh and congealed blood. A pool of blood and pieces of flesh are no uncommon sight at the triangle after a dozen have been flogged. (Smith, 1978: p90)

This form of punishment if viewed as adding to the intentions of escape was a shared experience that culminated in a Tasmanian wilderness

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<sup>1</sup> Reputedly there is a rounded rock on the north side of the Fingal Valley, which was used by Brady to view east and west along the valley. The existence and naming of this rock as 'Brady's Lookout' only exists orally.

experience. This psychological connection must have negatively imposed on the absconders' view of the wilderness.

Brady's complete disregard for authority and the cheeky nature of his time on the run explains intricately the social ideology of Van Diemen's Land society in those early years. His rise to fame, as it were, was testament to this. The willingness to show up authority with a sense of rogue humour gained Brady the respect of many. With convict and civilian numbers far outweighing the administration, it can be estimated that Brady had a fair portion of society on his side. It was not however, as mentioned in the previous chapter, in their best interest for the government to be overthrown. Through this duplicitous relationship the legend grows. It is almost natural that with a history like that of Tasmania's, with a good versus evil setting, that triumphant characters will develop into legends. At the conclusion of his life it is true that his cell in Hobart Town in which he awaited execution was lined with fruit, cakes, and flowers from the adoring women and men of Hobart Town and beyond. (Wannon 1978, p25 This gives weight to the idea that he was a gentleman to the ladies and would not let any of his gang members harm or mistreat a woman, although this too has been disputed by some historians. He did however earn the title of 'Gentleman Bushranger'. The artwork *A Life in the Day* [Fig. 2] does more than merely discuss the life of Matthew Brady as it might initially appear to be doing. To further clarify my intentions it is necessary to critically analyse this work in closer detail. A thumbnail

courthouse drawing by Thomas Bock c. 1825 [Fig. 10] is the only existing representation of Brady's face. (State Library of N.S.W) This image was my only visual source material for the rendering of his likeness. For this reason I felt it important to animate my portrait of Brady with the events of his life without distorting or distracting from the view of his face. The portrayal of his youth was also imperative. All of the individual elements that are depicted throughout the work are events from his short life or are images that I have related to his experiences. For example: flowers, muffins, grapes, apples, fish and nuts all appear in the portrait along with a small line of weeping mourners [Fig. 11]. Collectively this group of images relate to the adornment of Brady's cell while he awaited execution. A large eagle, considered by many convicts as a symbol of freedom, dominates the central upper section of Brady's head. [Fig.12] Directly over the eagle are a number of soldiers firing their rifles in front of the British flag. These soldiers have been paired with the eagle as a reminder that the establishment was an always present force standing between the convicts and their freedom. A pair of flintlock pistols adds drama to the image by suggesting the action of gunfire battles. [Fig. 13] Over and above the descriptive and storytelling nature of the work, it is commenting on the development of the legend behind the figure. The artwork draws on the metaphoric relationship that Brady holds to the colonial experience of Tasmania. It visualises the ethereal mythology of an early Tasmanian wilderness experience as projected through the colony by the life of a bushranger. Matthew Brady and his gang seemed to 'range Van Diemen's

Land with lightning speed'. (Wannon 1978, p56) The illustration of a man on a horse is homage to their horse riding abilities. [Fig. 12] They were able to quickly descend onto properties to make raids and seemingly vanish into the wilderness. These raids are represented by a collection of rings, watches and coins immediately above the man and horse. [Fig. 11] Ironically, part of Brady's final conviction was for the burning of 'Billop', a property near Lake River. It is disputed whether or not Brady was even present at that particular raid and for this reason the man on the horse is holding a fire stick and appears in front of a burning building. Two figures have also been discreetly hidden among shrubbery to emphasise the evasive nature of the bushranger's experience. These figures would go unseen to any viewer not willing to seek them out. The capturing of bushrangers in Tasmania, and indeed Australia, was an outcome only bestowed to the most formidable and vigilant of hunters. In the same sense, the two hidden figures are an added reward for the most explorative audience. The nature of Brady's residence in Tasmania was not by any means a comfortable one. Whether during his periods of incarceration or periods of so-called freedom in the bush, it is mostly Brady's interaction with and intrepid conquering of the harsh Tasmanian native environment that has elevated his status. He was one of the first great European explorers of Tasmania. Brady described his experiences of the wilderness when he said shortly before his death:

A bushranger's life is wretched and miserable. There is constant fear of capture and the least noise in the bush is startling. There is no peace day or night. (Nixon, 1991: p26)

Brady's time in the Tasmanian bush is represented in the work by the use of two icons: the fern and the myrtle leaf. [Fig. 13] From the moment that Brady and a group of convicts seized a whaleboat and sailed it from the notorious Sarah Island, their ability to explore and navigate the island was their biggest strength in remaining uncaptured. This has been highlighted in the image by the conglomeration of the modern road to Brady's Lookout with the image of Brady and his gang sailing the whaling boat. Disregarding the far northwest and southwest areas, Brady rode on horseback nearly every track that is now a main road in Tasmania.

Through the central highlands, the Norfolk region, Sorell to east of Hobart, The Fingal Valley, the West and East Tamar etc... Historian James Boswick wrote in 1856: 'Under other circumstances Brady might have been a successful explorer in savage lands, a distinguished warrior or a prominent chieftain in some revolutionary struggle'. (Harmen 2005) This was a valid and confident tribute, considering that it was made only three decades after Brady's death. One hundred and fifty-two years later, it appears that he *was* all of the above under the circumstances he was in. Brady has places named after him like great explorers; he is attributed as the first Australian sex symbol and led a gang of many men in a way akin to that of a distinguished warrior; and as one of the first Australian bushrangers, he led in an absolute revolutionary struggle. The stories of

the bushrangers passed very quickly around the colony in gossip-like tales of triumph over the administration. By the mid-1830's, 593 convicts had escaped without recovery and were either at large around the island, deceased, or enjoying life in another country. (Smith 1978, p5) During that same period up to seventy-five percent of the population were convicts, had been convicts or were convict descendants. (Robson, Roe 1997, p18) It is sure that the bushranger stories formed a very definite early Tasmanian identity that in part encompassed a pride in being able to overcome the formidable Tasmanian bush. The need to conquer the fear of environment has transferred through generations of Tasmanians, adding to the acceptance of exploitation.



### **Chapter 3 – Environmental Storyboards**

The shared accumulated experience of Tasmania has created a vernacular characteristic in Tasmanian art that separates it from similar styles on mainland Australia, and throughout the world. A proportion of art in Tasmania could be understood by anyone educated in national or international arts, however a full understanding requires some knowledge of the Tasmanian experience. Just as Tasmania has compelled from flora and fauna a different way of life, it has encouraged the evolution of an endemic artistic cultural life. Tasmanian Indigenous culture and art is a prime example. Whilst it can be viewed as Australian Indigenous art and culture it is distinctly different from that of the mainland Aboriginals. The dot paintings and carvings of Northern Territory Aboriginal art remain the international export vision of Australian Aboriginal art. This is entirely separate from the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have created and understood their own vocabulary of symbolism in a way that relates to their specific way of life. The contemporary European Tasmanian artist has shared the same fate. There is a separate visual language that has evolved, very quickly, from the same variables; isolation and environment, and a shared collective memory.

At increments across the chronological development of Australian art, Tasmanian art is parallel, and coherent with the whole; this is evident especially in colonial art where artists across the nation were providing an

image base that was informing the parent country. Comparatively, the earliest convict art of the Port Jackson Painter and examples from Van Diemen's Land had the same integrity of documentation, and a similar crude execution. Depictions of the indigenous people, the flora and the fauna were carried out in a manner of discovery that often relied very little on the facts presented to the respective artists. The truth became easily distorted when using a visual language that was entirely un-adapted and inadequate. It is not my intention in this research to completely decipher Australian art in all its developments but simply to imply this as the beginning point for the argument of the evolution of a separate Tasmanian/Europeanised visual language. As more prominent artists began to depict Tasmania, a new language quickly developed. Artists learned a new palette and new techniques to tackle the visualisation of Tasmania, just as they did for the rest of Australia. John Glover, who is claimed as one of Tasmania's greatest colonial painters, successfully adapted to the challenge of painting the Tasmanian landscape, although at times his representations are questionable. The twisting, curling branches of the gum trees in some of Glover's works are unlike any species I have ever witnessed first-hand. They are a hybrid of Australian foliage and European branch structure. This demonstrates that even for an accomplished artist, the new land was so different from the homeland and required an almost total abandonment of prior painting knowledge from the European school of teaching.

Contemporary Tasmanian artists have at their disposal a vocabulary of styles, mediums and systems of visual organisation. This bank of available variables has built up from the development of national and international arts. It has also eventuated through process of artistic self-assessment of modern colonised countries. New Zealand artist Colin McCahon has had a profound effect on international arts, and especially Australian art. There are many similarities between the colonisations of New Zealand and Australia. This has made it easy for ideas surrounding postcolonial reconstructions in art to be transferred between the two countries. McCahon has instigated a visual vocabulary that is shared and drawn on regularly by artists in Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere in colonised countries.

McCahon's work was grounded in the landscapes of New Zealand and it was the landscape that served predominantly as a vehicle for his propositions regarding the relation of the individual to physical and metaphysical worlds. The search for a sense of place...as well as fundamental questions of identity and human existence, are forceful and preoccupying themes in McCahon's work. (Smith 2001)

This search for sense of place and identity is inevitable in a country that has suffered a colonial invasion resulting in the suppression of an indigenous culture. The art of Gordon Bennett is an example of Australian art that has grown out of reflection on colonisation. Bennett, who is of European and Aboriginal descent, portrays through art the personal

struggle shared by many Australians to find their place in a new national culture. He has

...achieved international critical acclaim for the complex ways in which his work engages with historical and contemporary questions of cultural and personal identity, with a specific focus on Australia's colonial past and its postcolonial present. (National Gallery of Victoria 2007)

It is difficult to do a study of Australian contemporary postcolonial art without mentioning Bennett. He appropriates images from colonial history, draws from indigenous and western painting techniques and often references contemporary visual systems in his work. Brought together, these technical approaches conform to a visual language that is distinctly Australian. The relationship that Bennett investigates between the atrocities of colonialism and the present can be discussed colloquially using this visual language that has been developing in Australian art since settlement. Through postcolonial works such as Bennett's, the Australian art vernacular also incorporates the ancient indigenous vocabulary. The visual dialect that results from this education amalgamates broad cultural practice into a tool for reconstructing the histories of colonised lands. Imants Tillers has similarly developed a long-standing artistic career from exploring the psychological ramifications of place and cultural memory. Tillers and Bennett have been heavily influenced by McCahon and have reiterated his visual vocabulary in the Australian language by appropriating his symbolism and imagery. This is an example of the

sharing of postcolonial language between colonised countries. As Australian and international artists reference and share the visual language with their practice, the vocabulary grows. Likewise, the understanding of postcolonial ideas and psychology enlarges through the expansion of the language. In this way it reflects the global expansion of the English Language, which is understood generally as one language despite regional and national accents. Other important artists who have contributed to the development of this modern postcolonial visual discourse are Peter Haley, Ken Orchid, Rosalie Gascoigne, Bea Maddock, and Shane Cotton, to name just a few. Each of these artists as well as Bennett, Tillers and McCahon use the landscape and the physical environment as the storyboard onto which these organisational visual systems and languages are applied for the artist's individual investigations of identity. Therefore I am suggesting the underlying constant in the visual language used for postcolonial examination is the environment. Tasmania also exemplifies this.

The environment is a constant theme in Tasmanian Art. It is as dominant in art as it is in the history and the psychology of the island. Just as it has done in much of the literature, the wilderness in Tasmanian art continually sets the scene for any subject that the artist desires. This is a direct outcome of the close association of the environment with the Tasmanian way of life. Of Tasmania's most recognised artists, from colonial art through to contemporary art, the vast majority have, through different

approaches, dealt with the interaction of Tasmanians with their natural environment. It is satirical that the first Tasmanian born artist of great acclaim, W. C. Piguenit, painted such romantic views of the Tasmanian wilderness. It is not surprising, considering the perceptions held toward environment in colonial Tasmania that Piguenit's splendid paintings have fallen in and out of appreciation. He warranted the following description from Robert Hughes. 'W.C. Piguenit, like most minor romantics, enjoyed a good crag; but his mist-shrouded *Mount Olympus*, 1874, is ineffably dank, and the dust of the schoolroom lies thick upon it.' (1970: p50) Disregarding popularity, similarities can be drawn between Piguenit's images and the sublime representations of contemporary artist Phillip Wolfhagen. Each offers a direct response to their environment that fulfills a sense of vast space and enigma. Comparisons between colonial art and recent art in Tasmania offer the conclusion that there has always remained a mystery, wonder and trepidation surrounding the Tasmanian environment. The tendency in artists to depict the subliminal enigmatic Tasmania may be the only tangible link to suggest that the dreaming of the great Greek philosophers has impacted on the modern psychology of the island.

An element that has matured in more recent times is the concern for the human destruction of the land. In some colonial works, the changing landscape is undoubtedly depicted, although from a descriptive, documenting point of view. The works of John Skinner Prout, for example,

were recordings of the development of the landscape in colonial terms, describing the people and their surroundings. The works of John Glover, Joseph Lycett and most of the early Tasmanian artists can be viewed in the same way. The pastoral growth and the assault on the natural resources in colonial Tasmania were not seen as threatening, instead they were considered essential. Today the conversion of native land is a contentious issue in the environmental debate, and is often repeated in artworks. This can be seen in the works of Michael McWilliams, Patrick Grieve, Richard Wastell, Geoff Dyer, Geoff Parr, Ray Arnold and David Keeling among others who are currently working in Tasmania. Each of these artists utilises and contributes to the expansion of the Australian visual vernacular. It is worth noting here that each of the winners of the Glover Prize for landscape painting in its initial four years all had underlying themes of wilderness protection. The current works of Richard Wastell in particular draw close attention to the forest practices of clear-felling and high intensity burning. Wastell manages to find an aesthetic in an otherwise apocalyptic landscape; at the same time he highlights the destructive nature of these practices as outcomes of human intervention and economic drive. His images of the charred remains of old growth forest, if compared with the early wondrous Australian oil paintings of Von Guerard, are in stark contrast although not without similarities. Guerard's paintings of the Australian landscape are statements of awe drawing inspiration from the vastness and immensity of the space. Von Guerard's paintings are excellent examples of the ability and desire of the human

mind to perceive things as it expects to perceive them, rather than as they are'. (Falkiner 1992, p12) His landscapes are seemingly endless, and abound in natural wonders [Fig. 14]. In Wastell's paintings, the vastness is replaced by the repetition of forest destruction. In the image *The Hard Water Fern* [Fig. 15] charcoal remains dominate the canvas, from which a young fern emerges. It is an image in which repetition creates a sense of distance, recalling Guerard's ability to create a mystic space. This comparison explains in some depth how the colonial attitudes of conquest have later expressed themselves in an obliteration of resources. It also indicates that artists have followed suit in depicting these attitudes.

The pivotal moment of art representing the Tasmanian environment with a political motive was the use of Peter Dombrovskis' image '*Rock Island Bend, Franklin River*' which in 1983 appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald just before the federal election. (Holmes 2006, p8) The photographs of Olegas Truchanas and Dombrovskis were at the forefront of the political campaigns in the 1970's opposing the damming of Lake Pedder and the Franklin River wilderness areas. Their significance to the current Tasmanian identity cannot be overstated. It was their iconic imagery that spearheaded the Tasmanian environment into the eyes of other Australian states and to an international audience. Ironically, along with the perseverance of Gustav Weindorfer's crusade to protect cradle Mountain, the current wilderness based eco-tourism industry owes a great deal to the commercialisation of Dombrovskis' photographs. The true



impact of this industry however is on the areas in which earlier artists and conservationists were fighting and are only now beginning to be recognised. The introductions of fees and restricted visitor numbers on the overland track in the Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair National Park have resulted from the growth of the national and international tourism markets. The exposure that came with the conservationists' passion to save these wilderness areas has become detrimental to their sustainability. Cradle Mountain can no longer be considered a pristine wilderness environment. In some areas such as this, the Tasmanian wilderness has become the victim of its own success, while in others its beauty is being lost to extractive industry at an incredible rate.

The final image in the *Nature of Residence* series is titled *The Uncivil War*. The opposition that exists within the community between Tasmanians who believe in the value of the conserved natural environment and those whose livelihoods rely on extractive resource-based industries is defined in the appropriation of Dombrovskis' *Rock Island Bend, Franklin River*. The digital printing of this image firstly reflects on the original photograph, but also metaphorically speaks for the role played by the Tasmanian media in the ambiguous portrayal of this ongoing social struggle. In *The Uncivil War* the community is represented as divided. On the left side of the Franklin River, a collage of protest imagery and slogans represents the environmentally conscious portion of Tasmanian society. These have been a familiar sight in newspapers, the media and in the landscape since the

early 1970's. They are set into the hill of trees as seen in the original photograph, essentially untouched or saved from industry. On the right side of the river however, the industrialised landscape is bereft of trees, reduced to a rocky cliff. Images related to extractive resource based industry dominate this cliff with the mechanical geometry of their machines. It does in this way also pay homage to the extremes that Tasmanian industry workers have endured for their livelihoods. There is a certain aesthetic in the man-made engineered structures that have been put in place to transport or utilise the resources, such as the tramways and train bridges of the remote west coast. The resilience but also the inherent sub ordinance of the industry worker is exemplified by a crew of miners who are standing at the entrance to a shaft that enters from the river into Rock Island. The lone chainsaw operator on top of Rock Island who is diligently removing the last standing tree reinforces this relentless drive for resource. The statement is that without the conservationists on the left hand side of the image, the entire environment would be deemed available for exploitation, down to the very last tree. It is evident from the barren cliffs behind the industrial representations that Tasmania, if left to the greed of industry and the government, would be a very different unnatural environment.

The wilderness is still a constant inspiration to artists, designers and filmmakers in Tasmania. Images and icons of the environment are continually utilised for export products, proving that it is the basis still for

projecting a Tasmanian identity. The State government could be viewed as having a unique formula for sustaining the economics of the resource sector. By striving to protect the jobs of workers in the extractive industries, the government has encouraged the continuation of the colonial attitudes of entitlement and the associated validated exploitation. The justification of the current rate of land clearing in the forest industry remains within the continuation of the European Tasmanians' perceived right to exploit the land. Richard Flanagan, in his catalogue essay for Wastell's exhibition, *We Are Making a New World*, continues this argument in saying that:

Both major parties in Tasmania and much of the Tasmanian media frequently give the appearance of existing only as clients of the woodchippers. State interest and those of this industry are now so identifiable as identical that anyone questioning the woodchipping industry's actions is attacked as a traitor to Tasmania. (2006, p5)

In modern Tasmania many people now take the squandering of resource as an issue of pride: it is held up as a talisman of 'progress'. Yet, the wilderness as icon remains paramount in this equation. Jonathan Holmes, in his catalogue essay for the Tasmanian exhibition '*Senses of Place*', explains that following the conservation fights of the 70's that placed Tasmania on a world stage 'in a perverse and ironical twist of fate, ...subsequent Tasmanian governments market the "clean and green" qualities of the wilderness and natural environment of Tasmania whilst one of its most powerful institutions, Forestry Tasmania, continues to

support the devastation of the State's old growth forests.' (2006, p8) This marketing happens across many economic sectors and is the combination of the clever use of iconography with cunning psychological indoctrination. The problem in the long-term is that the iconography is opposite to the dark reality of Tasmania's brutal history and the continuous neglect for the island. The icons oppose the lingering attitudes that accept the mistreatment of the native environment. On a day to day basis, working in the hospitality industry, I converse with tourists who have been confronted by a reality of land management in Tasmania far different from the postcard images that persuaded them to travel to the State. Cascade's Premium beer range, for example, features an image of the Tasmanian tiger, an animal that suffered extinction through colonial conquest. The tiger is also used as the State government icon. It is a source of amusement to the author that the icon is supported by the new phrase 'explore the possibilities'. This phrase, alongside the logo of the tiger, explains the formula of economic drive for Tasmania. Quite simply it is; turn atrocities into possibilities. In doing this, Tasmania has discovered a way to economically prosper two-fold, firstly through physical exploitation, and secondly through iconographic trickery. Many artists make up a proportion of the society that is the least fooled by these projections. To further arguments that current Tasmanian artists are in opposition to industries that adversely affect wilderness areas, the boycotting of the Ten Days on the Island arts festival by many participating artists in 2005 was the direct outcome of a major sponsorship deal between the festival

and Forestry Tasmania. The ability of artists to see through the iconic blindfolds tied up by the State government is surely connected to the artists' understanding of the potential power of imagery. This is why contemporary fine art cannot be confused with environmental iconography. Where the icon is used as an important creative influence on the branding of Tasmania as place, the fine arts have taken on the role of challenging those projections. Like the art of Bennett and McCahon, Tasmanian artists in the pursuit of identifying their relationship with their immediate environment and identity are reconstructing the image of Tasmania as place. The importance of this self-assessing role taken on by artists cannot be overstated in the changing of social attitudes held toward the Tasmanian environment.

## **Concluding Comments**

My research connects the short and long-term outcomes of the colonisation process. By examining Tasmania as it now is, in the year 2008, my research concludes that there are lasting physical, social and psychological ramifications arising from colonisation. Given the relatively short time frame of two hundred years, the research suggests that in some respects, the current Tasmanian state of place is a linear progression which contains no clear divisional point in time separating colonial Tasmania from the present. It is commonly thought that either the cessation of transportation of convicts or that the changing of place name from Van Diemen's Land to Tasmania or even Federation marked the end of colonialism. The arts terminology of post-colonialism would infer an end also. Whilst each of these changes has in turn had some effect on the social and psychological outlook of Tasmania's inhabitants, they did not cease any of the activities that make up colonisation. These points in time did in some way mark a transition from Tasmania as a penal colony to being simply, a colony. The oppression of the original inhabitants, the transformation of the land, and psychological patterns of colonisation have remained strongly evident in today's society. In demonstrating that some of the attitudes of colonial Tasmania still exist, especially in the outlook toward and treatment of the environment, it is apparent that some forms of colonisation continue to exist in Tasmania. For this reason I cannot claim that my work is postcolonial although it

encompasses many of the necessary criteria. The deconstruction and reconstruction of colonial history is certainly evident, as is the self-assessment of identity and place. From the outcomes it has to be repeated that to the Tasmanian identity, the environment is paramount. In gaining an understanding of attitudes held for the environment by Tasmanians, colonialism is the fundamental place to begin.

To summarise colonial attitudes toward the environment; the Europeans' perceived entitlement to the discovered land was intrinsic, along with a conviction that the exploitation of the natural environment was perfectly acceptable. The Tasmanian Aboriginals were, as stated, the first opposed to the massive transformation of the land. The earliest explorers, the bushrangers, were thrown into the wilderness, in their minds with limited choice, and had little inclination to appreciate the aesthetics of their surrounds. Therefore, it could be said that on one hand were the Tasmanian Aboriginals, who wished to be in the wilderness, and who knew the wilderness, yet were being driven from it. On the other hand was a group which was being driven into the wilderness and knew nothing of it. The only similarity is that both of these groups were hunted out from the wilderness on which they relied for their survival. There are recorded examples of the Aboriginals and bushrangers helping each other with their respective causes. 'As late as 1824, Aboriginals assisted bushrangers to escape from Europeans. Until 1825, European farmers found bushrangers a more serious threat to their existence than Aboriginals.' (Ryan 1996,

p78) It is probable in assessing this situation that from these two minority groups grew an accumulated distrust and anguish in the main colonial population toward the Tasmanian wilderness. Therefore not only was the Tasmanian wilderness one of the ingredients that needed to be overcome for the recipe of European domination, it also housed the two greatest threats to a successful colonisation. This anguish and the acceptability of exploitation have been subconsciously passed down generations of Tasmanians to the modern day and have culminated in some of the community having a spiritual disconnection with the Tasmanian environment. Despite this detachment, and the continuation of exploitation on the island of Tasmania, the environment is the most commonly used identifying aspect for the analysis and projection of the State. In literature, art, and theatre or simply in day-to-day life, the Tasmanian environment acts as a versatile storyboard that can plot any emotional, psychological, or physiological travesty or accomplishment. The environment constantly informs the Tasmanian way of life and yet passionately remains the single most dividing factor in the State's social structure.

It is the shared Tasmanian memory of experience that is depicted in the works. Each work has a distinct relationship to the Tasmanian wilderness. It is important to the integrity of this body of work that images and stories are historically accurate, although it is not the intention of the work to be simply documentation, or a museum display of events in the history of



Tasmania. There is definitely an aspect of the production of the work that discusses Tasmanian history as portrayed in the museum setting. Each of the images in the series is framed to museum standards and as a whole they are to be displayed in a clean gallery environment, under controlled conditions with lighting flooding the entire walls. Couch seating will be provided to encourage the contemplative space that museums often seek. The museums of Tasmania have contributed largely to the reading of Tasmanian history from an ignorant European perspective. The displaying of Truganinni's skeleton against her dying wishes for a hundred years after her death, labeled as 'the Last Tasmanian Aboriginal' (Ray-Ellis 1981, p157) was not only morally bereft but simply incorrect. The lasting implications of that particular display on the social understanding of Tasmanian history are immeasurable. 'Art, in the traditional museum sense, gives us pleasure while sciences improve our minds. One appeals to the senses, the other to intellect.' (Mainardi 1988, p1) The *Nature of Residence* series is crossing these two traditional ways of viewing within the museum context with the intention of inviting a reappraisal of the way Tasmanian history is viewed. Situations of atrocity are celebrated as achievements in the conquest of the obstacles that faced Europeans in the colonisation of Tasmania. It is for this reason that the series will be displayed in the museum context, posing the question: how should the history and identity of Tasmania be displayed, with celebration or severe regret? This body of work explains that with the examination of attitudes held toward the environment in the past, Tasmanians may come to hold a

greater value for the natural splendor of the State. The unique modern Tasmanian identity is reliant on the appreciation of this above all other contributors to the Tasmanian way of life and the nature of residence.

## List of Figures

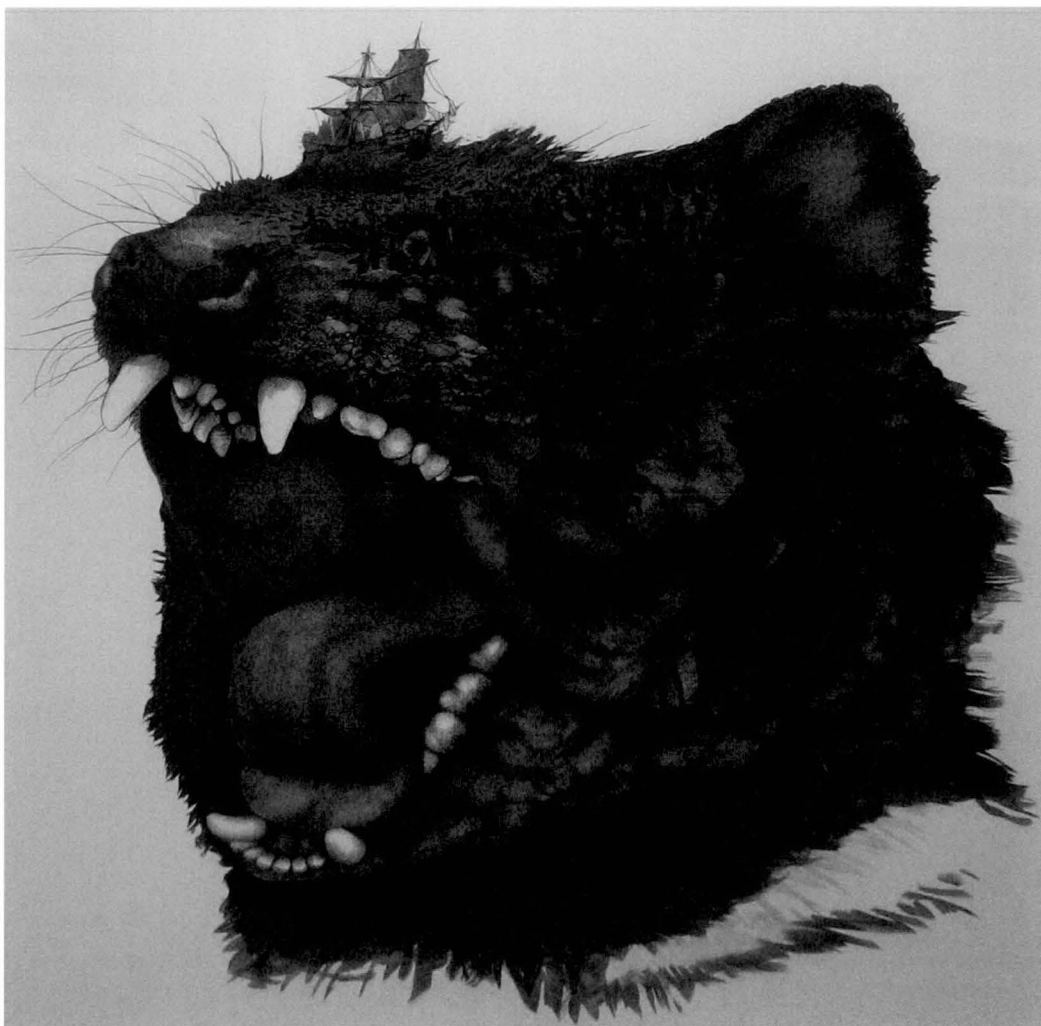
1. White, Anthony, 2008, *The Great Inhabited South Land*, Ink wash and pen on paper, framed. 112cm x 100cm.
2. White, Anthony, 2007, *A Life in the Day*, Ink wash and pen on paper, framed. 112cm x 100cm.
3. White, Anthony, 2007, *A Fearsome History Continues*, Ink wash and pen on paper, framed. 112cm x 100cm.
4. White, Anthony, 2008, *The Uncivil War*, Digital print on fine arts paper, framed. 112cm x 100cm.
5. White, Anthony, 2004, *Journey*, Acrylic on canvas. 120cm x 90cm.
6. White, Anthony 2005, *Chain-Logging*, Acrylic on Canvas, Framed. 170cm x100cm.
7. White, Anthony, 2005, *The Dying Smile*, Acrylic on Canvas, Framed. 170cm x100cm.
8. White, Anthony, 2008, *The Staircase of Tasmanian-ism*, digital graph
9. *Brady's Lookout Signage*, 2007, Exeter, Tasmania. Photograph credit: Anthony White.
10. Bock, Thomas, c.1825, *Matthew Brady*, Pencil on paper, Thumbnail Courthouse sketch. (State Library of N.S.W.)
11. White, Anthony, 2007, Excerpts from journal thumbnail sketches for the work *A Life in the Day*.
12. White, Anthony, 2007, Excerpts from journal thumbnail sketches for the work *A Life in the Day*.
13. White, Anthony, 2007, Excerpts from journal thumbnail sketches for the work *A Life in the Day*.
14. Von Guerard, Eugene, 1857, *Ferntree Gully in the Dandenong Ranges*, Oil on canvas. 92cm x 138cm. National Gallery of Canberra (Johns 1998, p156).
15. Wastell, Richard, 2006, *The Hard Water Fern*, Oil and marble dust on linen. 132cm x 122cm. (Wastell 2006, p17).



**Fig. 1**



Fig. 2

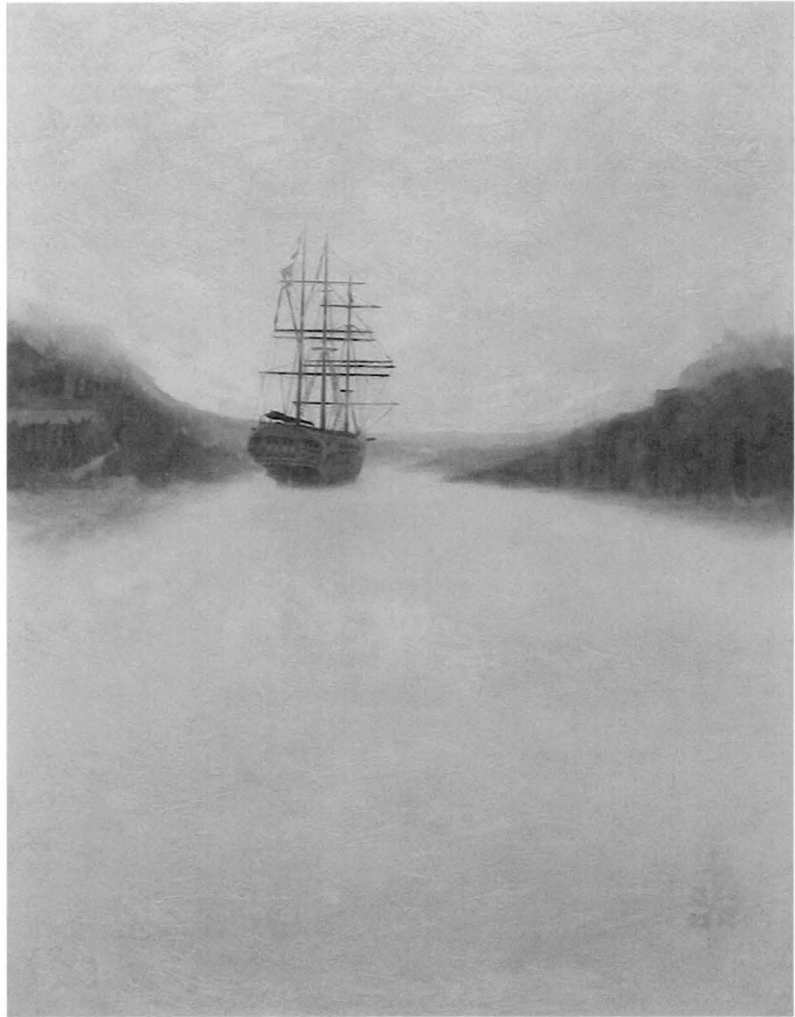


**Fig. 3**





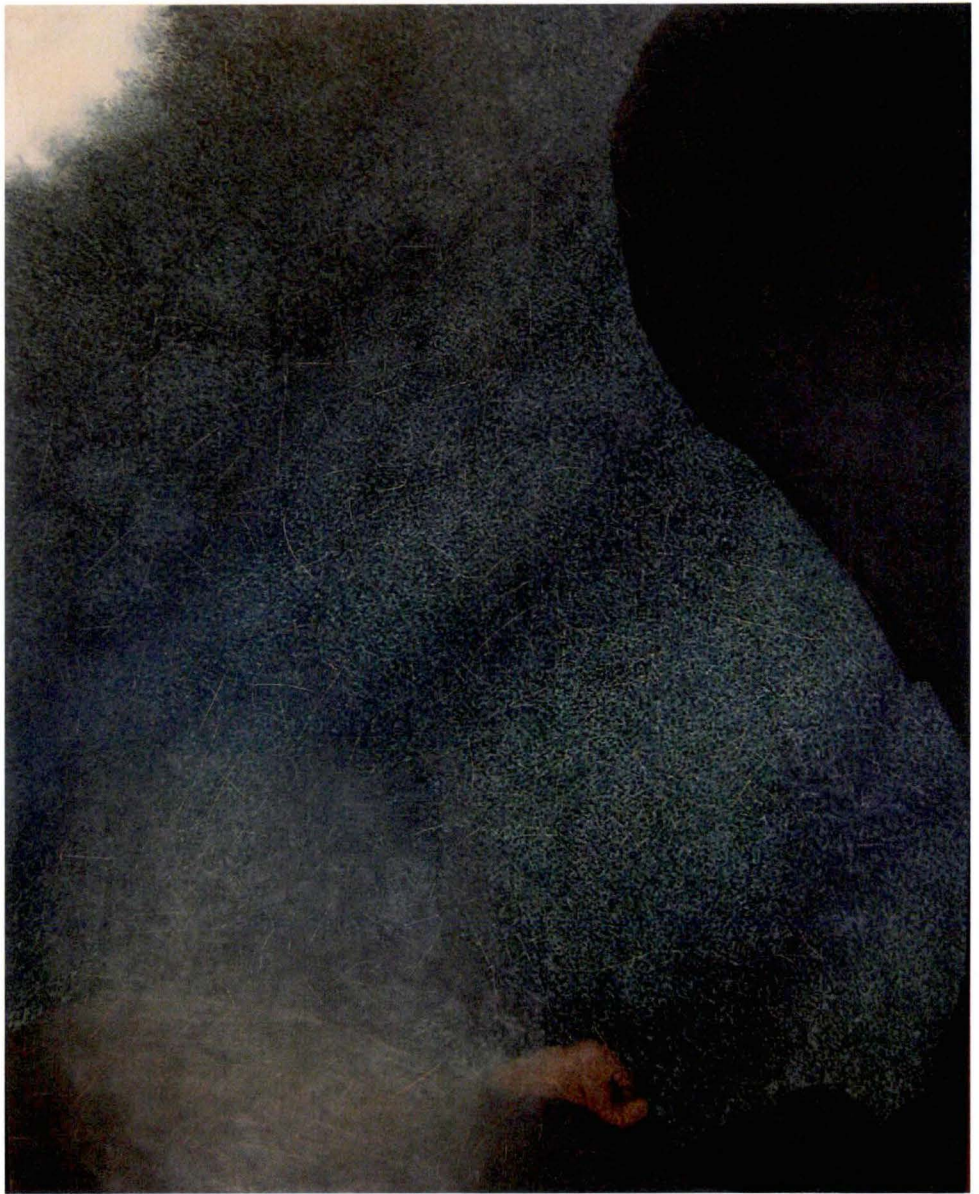
Fig. 4



**Fig. 5**

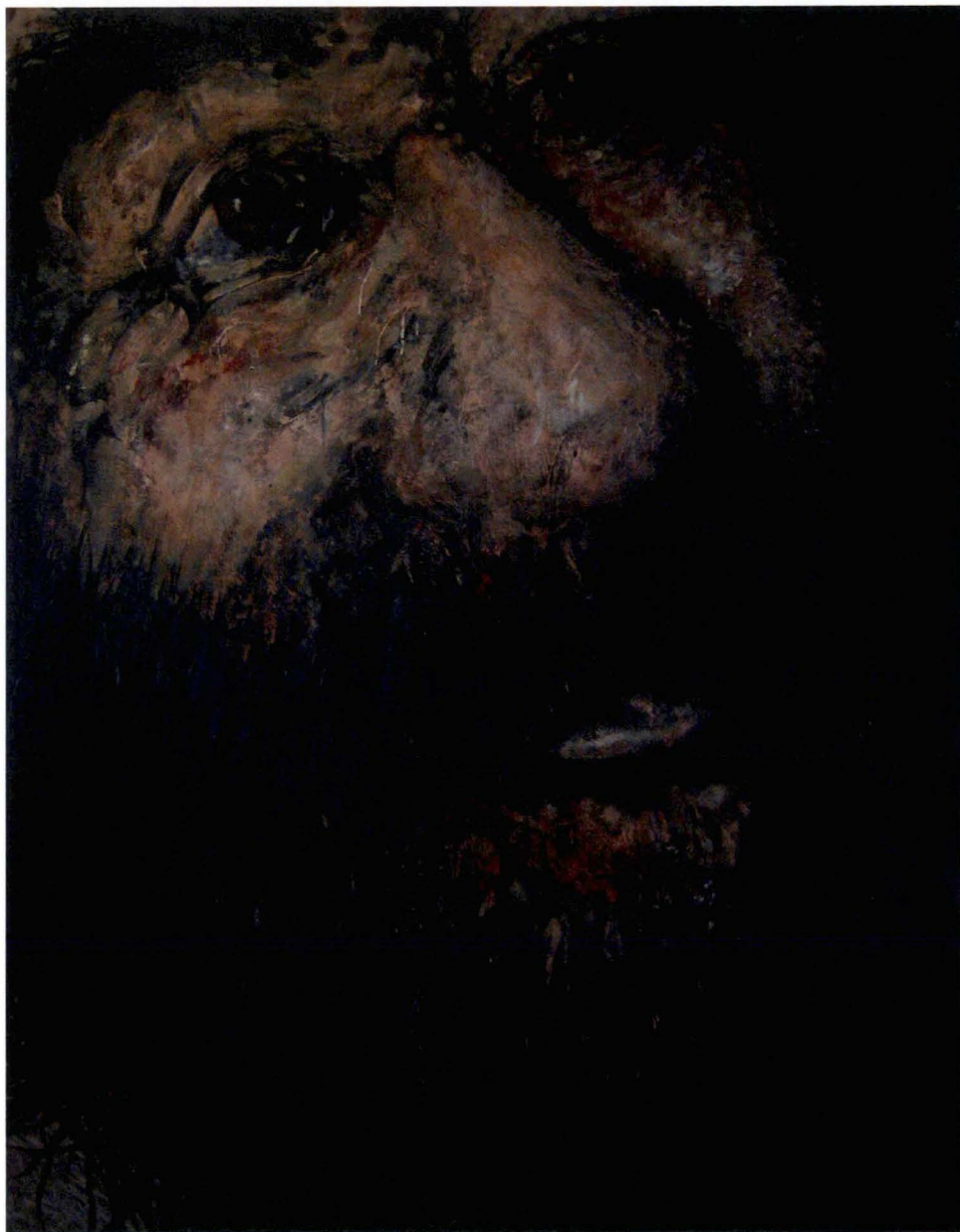
Image of a tall ship on the Tamar River with surreal river banks





**Fig. 6**

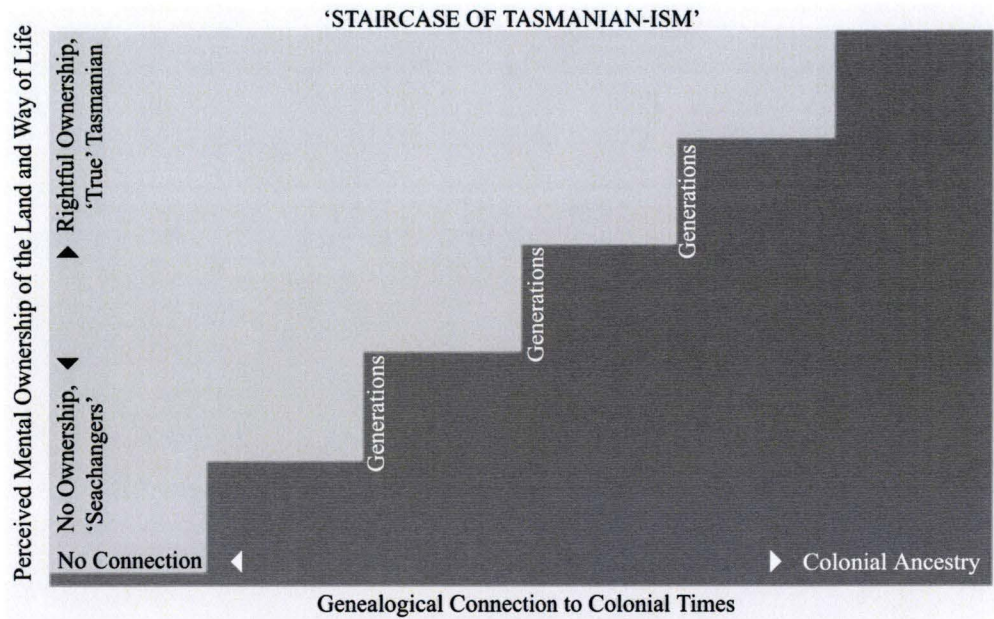
Image of convicts in a chain gang in the first person view



**Fig. 7**

Image of bushranger Michael 'Governor of the Ranges' Howe





**Fig. 8**

## Mathew Brady (1799 - 1826)

In 1820 Mathew Brady, described as a labourer, was sentenced by the Lancashire Quarter Sessions to be transported for seven years for stealing food.

Brady was transported in the 'Juliana' and during four years under convict discipline, received a total of 350 lashes for attempts to abscond and for other misdemeanours. In 1823 Brady was sent to Sarah Island - Macquarie Harbour but escaped next year with a group of confederates. During the two years that Brady was at large he fought a number of running battles with government troops and private settlers.

Prior to Brady's capture in 1826 he and his gang camped quietly in the thick bush on the castellated rocky outcrops overlooking the Tamar River at Rosevears. In the back of Brady's mind was always the thought that when Tasmania became too hot to hold him he would pirate a ship on the Tamar River and escape by sea. Several attempts were made to take over ships 'Duke of York', 'Glory', but lack of enthusiasm by his non-seafaring gang saw these efforts come to naught.

Whilst raiding Mr. Dry's Elphin Farm in Launceston, Brady was captured after a shootout looking for supplies.

In April 1826 Brady was brought to Hobart to stand trial and his firm deportment excited much attention. With others he was charged with stealing a musket and a bayonet, with setting fire to the premises of W.E. Lawrence at the Lake River, with stealing horses from him and with the murder of Thomas Kenton.

Brady was convicted and was hanged 4th May, 1826.

**Fig. 9**



**Fig. 10**

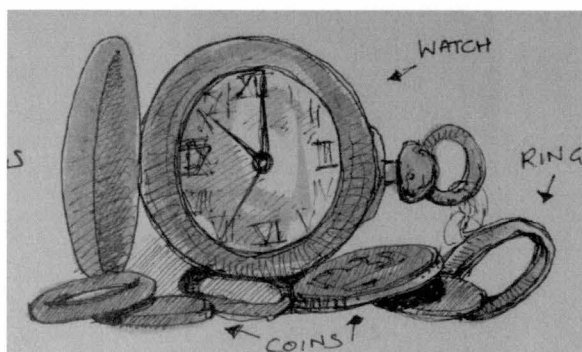
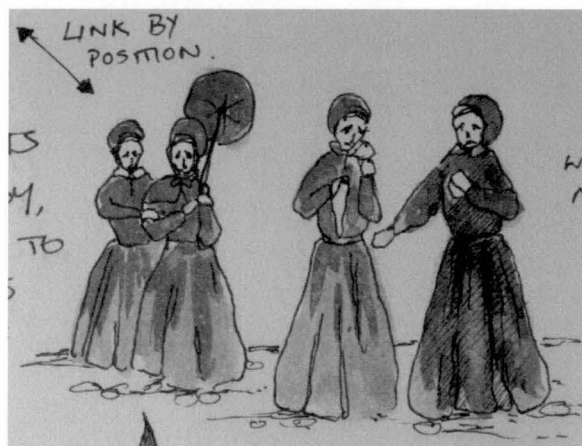
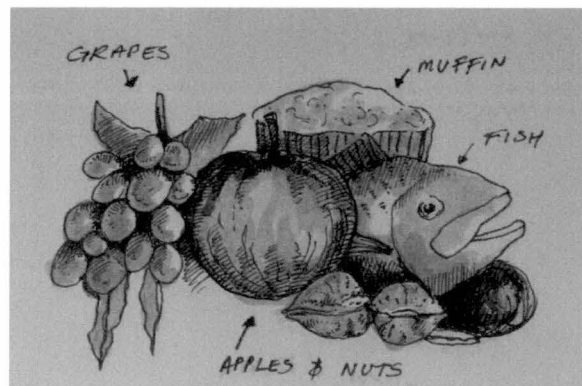


Fig. 11

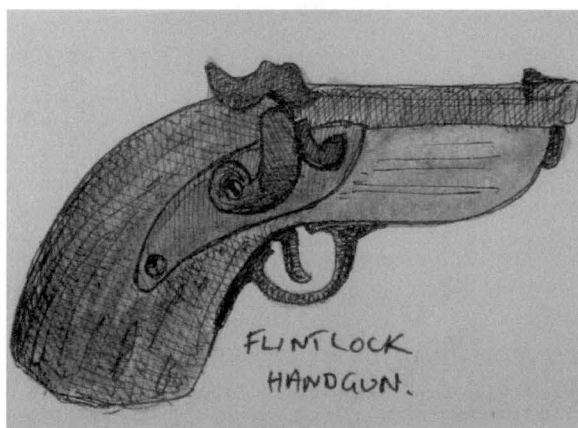
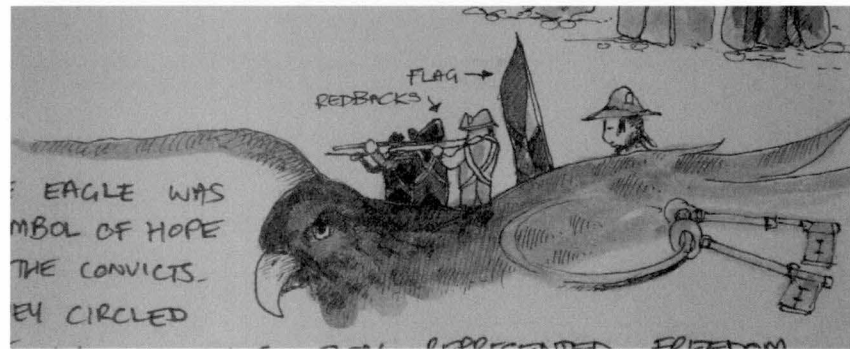


Fig. 12



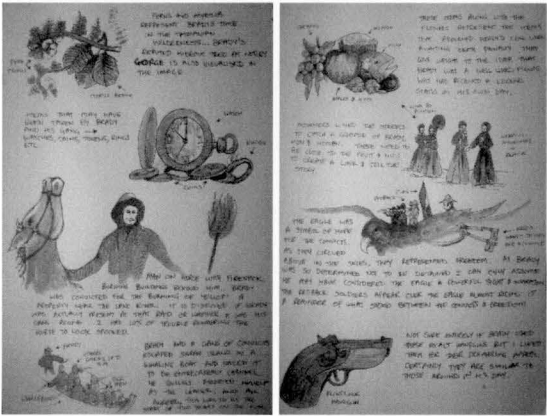
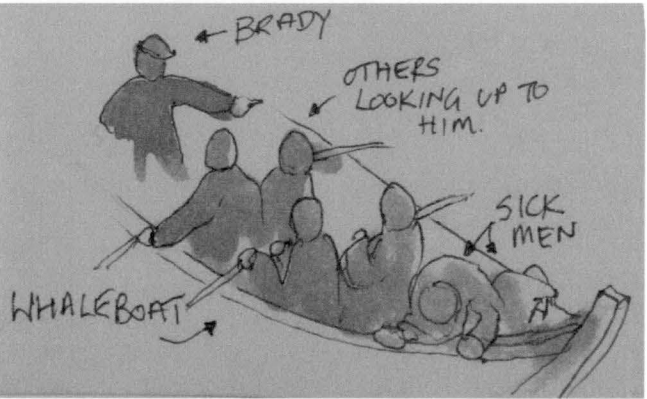
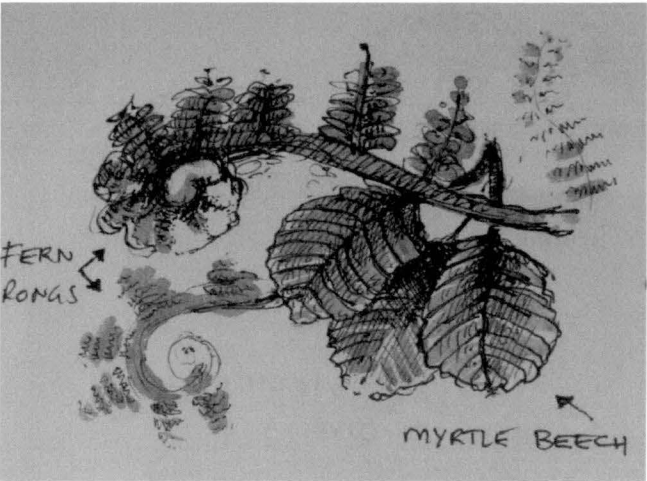


Fig. 13



Fig. 14

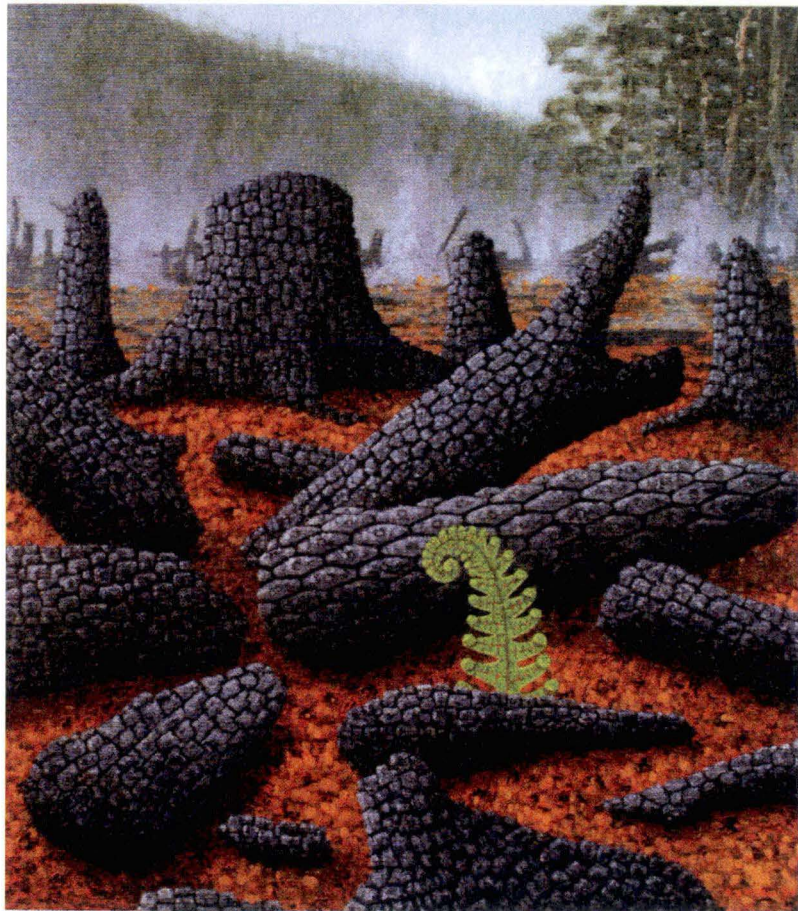


Fig. 15



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