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**Post-picturesque:
From the Sublime
to Land as Collector**

A exegesis presented in partial
fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

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Post-picturesque: From the Sublime to Land as Collector

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Abstract

In *Land as Collector*, I examine the notions of the picturesque and the sublime and its origins in the Romantic era. I investigate how this concept has evolved and transformed over four centuries to the present day, and how 'the view' is now acknowledged in contemporary New Zealand.

This exegesis – *Post-picturesque: From the Sublime to Land as Collector*, explores the idea that 'landscape', and 'the view' are a constructed concept. My thesis will follow the development of the idea of the view from the seventeenth century to the present day. Aspects examined include how changing ideas and focus on the land in society have been viewed and interpreted by artists.

I will look at the work of artists from different areas of contemporary and historical practice in order to show my understanding of the varying notions of the concept of 'landscape'. In my artistic practice I have used a specific landscape (site) to experiment with and show how a range of photographic processes can express my changing ideas around this 'landscape'. The results will show my understanding of the concept of *Post-picturesque: from the Sublime to Land as Collector*.

My journey led to a change in focus from looking at the Sublime landscape to *Land as a Collector*. This transformation of methodology followed the discovery of artefacts in the land I was studying and a comment about how they became critical.

Introduction

In this research project my intention is to show that the notion of 'the view' and 'the picturesque' in landscape is an ever-evolving constructed concept.

I will examine ideas generated from a seventeenth century view of the land and those generated out of contemporary perspectives. I use the term Post-picturesque to invoke a view of land since the seventeenth century. The notion of 'Land as Collector' is also important as it encompasses the history and artefacts of the past lives of those who inhabited this space.

This exegesis will follow the development of my ideas around the concept of the view, including the ideal landscape (incorporating the 'Arcadian' or 'bucolic'¹) the picturesque, the sublime, and romanticism.

It will show how the notion of the picturesque or sublime has developed, alongside the changing attitudes towards the land and environment. It will examine the post-picturesque landscape in the twenty-first century, specifically land as a memorial, and land as a marker of change.

My research trajectory follows discoveries and experiments with the following questions in mind:

- How do we see, and in turn, represent the land?
- What is the 'ideal' landscape?
- What are our cultural perspectives and artistic perceptions informed by?

¹ Arcadian – meaning rustic or rural; Bucolic – unspoilt or pastoral countryside. Oxford English Dictionary, (2012). 7th Revised edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford

The View

It starts with some kind of horizon line, with something of interest thrown into the foreground, and fading away in the background. A slightly vignettted edge draws your eye in to the centre of the image and an element of surprise – a house, a person, a tree might be there to pique your interest. The eye is drawn through the picture. It is ingrained in our culture as a constructed 'view' of the land.

My practice had its roots in the European tradition of the picturesque and the notion of 'the view'. I will explore how the concept of the picturesque came into being during the Romantic Movement. I track photography from its roots through the movements of Pictorialism, Modernism, The New Topographics, and into the Post-Picturesque era.

The Site

My photographs of these Red Rocks (Pari-whereo) landscapes could be anywhere. A picturesque scene set somewhere on the coast of New Zealand. In response to these images viewers may retrieve memories of similar seascapes they know of other sparse isolated beaches in New Zealand. They may recall of time spent, memories passed, connections to that landscape or people of the region. People that do recognize it are well versed in the extremes of weather and tide, the loneliness of the place.

The area I have chosen to photograph has substantial history. It is a place of food collection, of military use, of quarrying rock for use in the city, a place where there have been many shipwrecks, a dumping ground. It has now come back round almost full circle, and is partially a reserve.

I have chosen to photograph this place with notions of the *Sublime* in mind.

Why do we call it landscape and what is the 'ideal' landscape?

Romanticism

The birth of the concept of landscape has its roots in Romanticism. It was very much a reaction to the Enlightenment period that took place before the Industrial Revolution. The Enlightenment was about rational, scientific thinking, and Romanticism aimed to challenge that by focusing on emotions and the beauty of the natural world. The Romantics regarded themselves as led by intuition, rather than scientific thought. The French Revolution was also a major influence during that period, and though opinions were divided, there was a strong sense of optimism for change, which in turn influenced the art and literature of the time.

"Romanticism neither depends on choice of subject nor in exact truth, but a mode of feeling"

Charles Baudelaire (The Salon of 1846)

Intellectuals of the late Eighteenth Century and early Nineteenth Century were preoccupied with the concepts of violence, and radical change within the human condition. It was hoped this great period of change would bring about a restoration of peace to humankind, and its social and political turmoil. The countryside was a place to retreat to from the urban upheaval. This notion of the retreat has remained in our tradition today, in going to the seaside or the countryside.

Nature

During the mid to late eighteenth century there was a renewed interest in nature and the environment. This followed the popularity of landscape painting, especially the seventeenth century Italian and Dutch schools of art. Painters from this period favoured a more rugged scenery, often featuring medieval ruins, and rustic figures prominent in the foreground, for example, works by Claude Lorrain, Salvator Rosa, and Nicolas Poussin. The rise in popularity of this more rugged landscape aesthetic had a major effect on the style of landscape gardening. A more 'natural' park-like

aesthetic became popular, using carefully planned features such as the haha², and man-made lakes. The most important feature of these landscapes was 'the view'.

Poussin and Lorrain were both more concerned with concepts of Arcadian beauty, than the topographical mode, which characterized Dutch painting from seventeenth century. Poussin, Lorrain and Friedrich were also preoccupied with the inter-relationship of humankind, and nature, and operated exclusively through visual metaphor. Both used the arcadian figures and scenes set in the landscape.



Figure 1. Claude Lorrain, (1640), Flusslandschaft mit Ziegenhirt

Reacting against the onset of the Industrial Revolution and in longing for the return of some form of rural arcadia, the romantic style was created in the early 19th century by English painters such as Constable and Turner. The Romantic school of painting idealised the soft beauty of pastoral England. Places that had once seemed barren land, became awe-inspiring and beautiful. Romanticism invested in an emotional, subjective and imaginative response to nature. The picturesque became increasingly familiar and commodified the landscape. Paintings reflected how the inhabitants were using the countryside, both for agriculture and pleasurable pursuits. The wild had been tamed and the sublime evoked feelings of awe.

² Haha – A ha-ha is a recessed landscape design element that creates a vertical barrier while preserving an uninterrupted view of the landscape beyond. Wikipedia, The free encyclopedia. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ha-ha>, accessed on 21 September, 2017

The Picturesque and Landscape

The Picturesque was an artistic movement of the eighteenth century concerned with the aesthetic appreciation of landscape. Landscape had been widely acknowledged in Western culture as a source of powerful aesthetic experiences. The emotional appreciation of nature was considered an aesthetic goal in art, early tourism and exploration. Descriptions of the landscape presented an experience that was both deeply personal and spiritually transforming.³

An objective of an eighteenth-century painter or traveller would be to exhibit their knowledge and appreciation of aesthetic theory and to translate their experience of a picturesque view, through painting, poetry, or prose. The picturesque was a combination of the sublime in its grandeur and was beautiful in its detail, within the construction of a well-composed frame.

3 The Norton Anthology of English literature. "Romanticism". (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.wnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/welcome.htm>, accessed on 15 August, 2017.

What is the Sublime?

What is the sublime, and how do we distinguish it from a beautiful or idealised view?

Caspar Friedrich's 'Wanderer above the sea of Fog', Figure 2, was the seminal image of the Romantic period.⁴ It features a lone figure which dominates the foreground, surveying the misty, rugged landscape. One can surmise he is mesmerised by the view before him.



Figure 2. Caspar David Friedrich, (1818), Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog.

⁴ Romantic German art: Out of the darkness, Andrew Graham-Dixon. The BBC. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20130510-german-art-out-of-the-darkness>, accessed on 1 September, 2017.

The sublime can conjure up a feeling of almost indescribable energy or power – awe-inspiring. The Oxford English Dictionary expresses it as – elevated or lofty in thought; impressing the mind with a sense of grandeur or power; supreme or outstanding; complete, absolute, utter; of lofty bearing.⁵

The C18th Irish Philosopher Edward Burke wrote of his concept of the sublime in his book, '*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*' (1756). He surmised that we are moved by both the beautiful and sublime. According to Burke beautiful objects tend to be small, delicate attractive, and induce pleasurable feelings, however the sublime is usually on a different scale – vast, threatening and overwhelming. It may terrify but is still able to excite or exhilarate.⁶

Burke believed the reason the sublime had such an effect on our psyche was fear of the possibility of death, and that this fear triggered fundamental emotions of self-preservation. The idea of the sublime had a powerful influence on Romanticism, leading to the artistic movement extolling the untamed power of the natural world.

The picturesque emerged in the eighteenth century as a mixed concept combining the beautiful and sublime by blending principles of both. As aesthetic categories, the sublime and beautiful were not always adequate to describe certain visual experiences.

The picturesque may be thought of an amalgamation between the beautiful, with its emphasis on smoothness, regularity and order; and the sublime, which is about vastness, magnitude, and notions of power. The picturesque must combine aspects of both of those.

⁵ Oxford English Dictionary, (2012), 7th Revised edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford

⁶ "Edmund Burke, from *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*". The Norton Anthology of English literature. (2017). Retrieved from https://www.wnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_1/burke.htm, accessed on 15 August, 2017.



Figure 3. William Gilpin. (1782), Aquatint of Tintern Abbey.

The term 'picturesque' was first applied to scenery by Reverend William Gilpin in the late eighteenth century, in his series of guidebooks appreciating the British Countryside. His 'work formulated the picturesque and what would constitute a picturesque view'.⁷ Landscape was an object to be constructed with the aid of a Claude glass (named after the French painter who composed tranquil classical landscapes) into picturesque scenes to delight the viewer.

Economic and social upheaval were vastly changing the appearance of the land. Once wild landscape was transforming into neat hedge-rowed fields (Bermingham, 1986; Short, 1991). The picturesque movement grew in response to this – a desire for the untamed, wild landscapes of rural England, far away from the planned vistas of the landscape gardener or the agrarian landscape.

Claude Lorrain was admired especially for his idealised representations of the natural world, and English landscapes. He would start from an elevated viewpoint, painting in a brownish tint and he often used a framing device such as trees, or a mountain to draw the eye into the centre of the picture. (Andrews, 1989).⁸

7 "Edmund Burke, from *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*". The Norton Anthology of English literature. (2017). Retrieved from https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_1/burke.htm, accessed on 15 August, 2017.

8 "An eye made quiet" *The Claude Mirror & the Picturesque*. (2017). University of Michigan. Retrieved <https://www.lib.umich.edu/enchanting-ruin-tintern-abbey-romantic-tourism-wales/mirror.html>, accessed on 4 July, 2017.

Artists began to seek out their own landscapes to paint inspired by these ideas. As an aid to painting, an optical apparatus was developed after Gilpin's use of a mirror to reflect the view back to himself when painting. This became known as the Claude Glass, after the particularly desirable picturesque aesthetic of Claude Lorrain.⁹

Turn towards Realism

The fascination with the picturesque began to decline by the middle of the nineteenth century. There was a greater emphasis on the accurate representation of the natural world, and a move towards Realism. However, the idea of framing the view endured, and has become ingrained in our ritual when we take in the view.

⁹ Maillet, Arnaud. (2004). "The Claude Glass: use and meaning of the black mirror in western art". Translated by Jeff Fort, Zone Books, New York. (p 34).

Photography and Romanticism

The birth of photography¹⁰ evolved towards the end of the Romantic period. The invention was a consequential progression on from the long-used camera obscura. The development of each subsequent process of photography could be seen as a series of collective work: Joseph Nicephore Niepce – the first Heliograph or photograph; Louis-Jacques M. G. Daguerre – the Daguerrotype; Fox Talbot – the calotype; and Frederick Scott Archer – the wet collodion.



Figure 4. Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, (1827), View from the Window at Le Gras.

¹⁰ The word photography was derived from the Greek *photos* (light) and *graphein* (to draw), and was first used in the 1830s. (2017). Retrieved from <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=photography&searchmode=none>, accessed on 10 September, 2017.



Figure 5. Julia Margaret Cameron, (1872), Pomona.

From the outset, the most popular genre in photography was portraiture because at the time it was prohibitively expensive to have a painted likeness, or portrait made. Photographers like Felix Nadar, and Julia Margaret Cameron became well known for their portraits of the artists, poets, writers, scientists, politician, and socialites of the day. Wedding photographs and post-mortem Memento-Mori were also popular.



Figure 6. Roger Fenton, (1855), 8th Hussars Cooking Hut.

Photography was also used to document historic events like war, landscape and architecture. It was popular with artists, scientists, travelers and explorers. The influence of nostalgia and romanticism was also apparent in early landscape photography, often incorporating figures in the landscape.



Figure 7. Photographer unknown, (1912), Mr. and Mrs. Louis Bailey Audigier of Knoxville at Great Sphinx

Scientists, explorers, and botanists took up photography as a tool that would accurately record scenes, and flora and fauna. Early photographic equipment was relatively heavy, bulky, and complicated to use, but that did not detract from its popularity. The photograph was used to chart sites, and note the change that the human presence exacted on the landscape¹¹, due to colonisation, settlement, tourism, agriculture and industry (see fig 8 and 9).

¹¹ Wells, Liz. (2011). *Land Matters: Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity*. I.B. Tauris., London. p262



Figure 8. Photographer unknown, (1900), Felled kauri tree.



Figure 9. Photographer unknown, (1880s), The Pink and White Terraces.

Once celluloid film and the Kodak Box Brownie (1888), became widely available to the mass market, a new snapshot market arose. Professional photographers needed to differentiate their work from that of the public, either by technical excellence or by artistic merit. They used one of two methods: The daguerreotype, characterised by its sharp image detail, and high resolution; and the calotype, a process lending itself to a more romantic interpretation with a softer, grainier more ethereal feel. Both styles were used within the Pictorialism movement.

My practical enquiry

My practical enquiry during 2017 was preceded by a sensate dimension of exploration in 2016 where I investigated sensory associations between objects and memory. I wanted to approach places I had spent time in, with the rituals reserved only for nature: a drawing of breath, smelling of the air, a visual inhalation, sounds of nature, the rough and fine textures to the touch. How does one capture that in photography? I was interested in how do you translate feelings into your art?

I first approached the idea of landscape within a broad context - themes of fire, air, water, and earth. I used the sea as my starting point. I chose a wild landscape, with stark hills and valleys, fierce whipping winds, and heaving violent seas – Te Kopahou, and more specifically, Pariwhero.¹²

I had visited the South Coast many times before photographing there – taking in the lay of the land, and observing everything around me. I wanted my photographs to record my emotional response to the remote and bleak landscape. In my first visits, I recorded the coastline on my digital camera – experimenting both in colour and black and white. The photographs did not reflect my feelings and the sense of my experience of the location, as the aesthetic representation felt too static and graphic. I realized that I needed more of an ethereal feel to my images to mirror my mood. I felt this could be reflected in my choice of equipment to help me craft the image I had in mind. So the ideas of the landscape dictated a change in my technique.

I returned with my antiquated analogue equipment, which entailed a change in tempo. I hoped the slowing down of pace would do justice to and honour the location with its timelessness and mood. This I could make visible by abstraction. I had a plywood pinhole camera I made last year, based around a 4x5 inch film holder, yet untested. I liked the visual aesthetic from a pinhole camera. It has a very otherworldly sense of emotion, and I think is perfect for capturing the temporal sense of being in a space for that moment in time. There is uncertainty in the results of a pinhole photograph. This lack of control can add to the abstraction of the image. There is an inherent tactility in the process. The photograph becomes an object of memory.

¹² "Kupe (the Polynesian explorer) was gathering paua, when one clamped onto his hand. He bled and stained the rocks red. Kupe's daughters, fearing for their father's safety gashed themselves in grief over their father's absence. " (2017). Information gathered from the Information Panel Te Kopahou Visitor Centre, Owihoro Bay, Wellington.

A pinhole camera is a camera without a lens. Its exposures can range from seconds in duration to many months. It features an extreme depth of field, created by the tiny pinhole aperture. Images are captured on light sensitive materials like film and photographic paper. The pinhole lens converges light rays to form an image within the camera. Its signature characteristics are a surreal soft-focus or dream-like effect, full of expression and feeling, motion blur, extreme depth of field, and an exaggerated scale.¹³



Figure 10. Jess O'Brien (2017), Red Rocks Diptych

I used Harman positive photography paper which generates a positive image avoiding a negative step. This I thought could work as a great first test. I really liked the effect of the long slow shutter speed created by the slow 'film speed' of the Harman positive paper. But I felt that I needed to experiment further with the exposures. The Harman paper is high in contrast, and overexposure can blow out the highlight tonality. I wanted more detail in the sea and clouds to enhance the pinhole aesthetic of exaggerated scale. The first image I shot was of the sea, the second of the hills and coastline and as can be noted in the photographs, is a little more 'accurate' in exposure with some detail in the mid-tones. There is still not much of a tonal range in these exposures.

I took some pinhole images on my Diana 120mm camera to document my findings. There is a dedicated aperture setting for pinhole on the Diana camera lens. I used a long exposure – long enough to get the sea blurring with movement. The movement is an effect I wanted as for my 'picturesque view' as it reflected the constant ebb and flow of the sea. In still photography one activates the visual trope of movement by using a combination of blur and abstraction to imagine motion¹⁴ to present the appearance of movement in a still image.

13 Krummel, Brian J. (2009). "The Pinhole Camera : A Practical How-To Book for Making Pinhole Cameras and Images". Create Space Independent Publishing Platform.

14 Hornby, Louise. (2017). Still Modernism: Photography, Literature, Film. Oxford University Press, New York. (pp 21, 41)

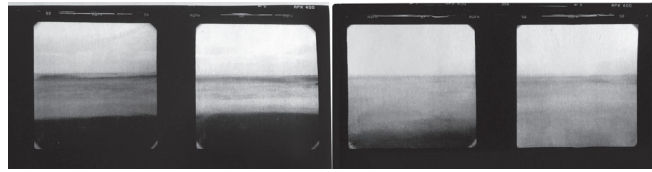


Figure 11. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Diana Pinhole 120mm tests

The Diana tests were soft and slightly surreal. They had captured the romantic atmosphere of my 'ideal view' of the place. My ideal/desired landscape for this site would be of a more sublime aesthetic, and could be achieved using the wider angle of the 4x5 inch pinhole. The use of a wide angle 'lens' in a pinhole camera can exaggerate the already expansive background of a view, and give it a sense of the otherworldly.

The film test was the better result in terms of being able to manipulate and reproduce in print form. I will try to slow down my exposure time even further with slower film. Using film had given me the latitude that I needed for a good tonal range, and the ability to print in large scale.



Figure 12. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Second 4x5 pinhole test with film

At this early testing stage I was keen to shoot some images in colour, continuing using the pinhole aesthetic. Using colour would dramatically change the emotional mood of my imagery, and give me the ability to shoot at different types of day according to the colour hue I was after.

I tested a pinhole camera body-cap on my digital camera to enable me to test different film speeds and exposures, and achieve more instantaneous results. I needed to know whether the dimension of adding colour would change my perception and my vision of the landscape.

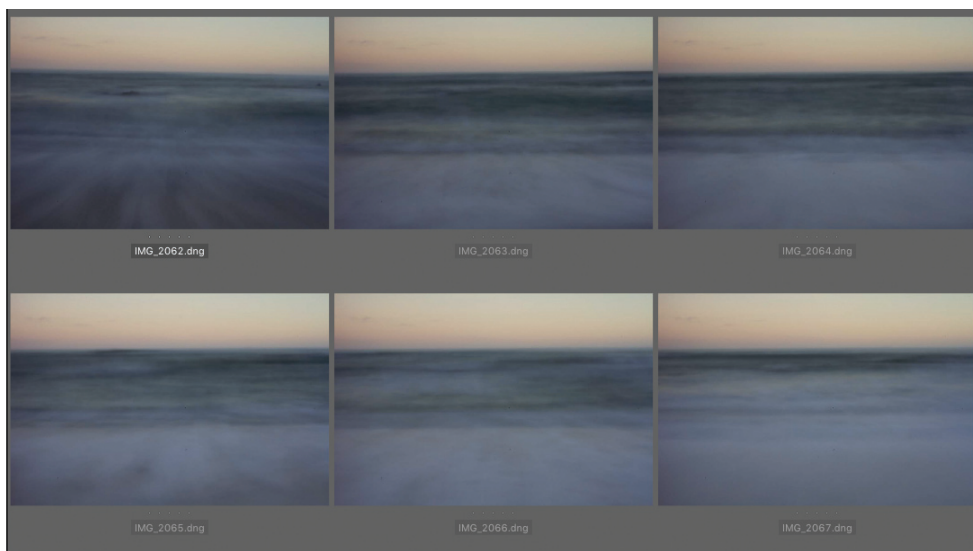


Figure 13. Jess O'Brien. (2017), 35mm Coloured pinholes.

The results were interesting – a graduated range of colour and tone. The sea and the sand took on the muted tones of the sky. But the focus was slightly out and not as 'precise'. The aperture was not as wide as my 4x5 pinhole, with its homemade tin pinhole, and wider film plane.

I think the colour was tremendously successful for an iteration of the work. But it was not the mood or effect I was after. Although it displayed aspects of the 'picturesque' and 'the view', it had none of the indicators of the sublime. The rendition of the landscape in black and white let me retain the classical sense of drama and a timeless quality of the site. The lack of colour allows our eye to travel throughout the scene following light, form and shadow. I have been able to construct the feeling of the sublime through the abstraction of the landscape in my image.

In my first year of Master of Fine Arts research I experimented extensively with the cyanotype process. I had notions of categorisation and scientific recording of objects in mind. My journey began in documenting objects I had collected using the camera-less photographic processes. This action of placing these three-dimensional objects directly on a canvas has been mirrored in my final series. Anna Atkins was an early inspiration. She was a botanist, who used the cyanotype process to illustrate her book of British algae. She felt the cyanotype gave a more accurate representation than sketching in recording the detail of her algae. It was a relatively quick, safe and inexpensive printing process compared to some of the early nineteenth century printing processes.¹⁵



Figure 14. Atkins, Anna, (1843), "British and Foreign Flowering Plants and Ferns".



Figure 15. Atkins, Anna, (1843), Algae, cyanotype.

I have used cyanotypes in my practice to loosely draw objects. Cyanotypes record traces of an object, and the image becomes an indexical sign of the referent. I like the ephemeral nature the process translates to the images.

¹⁵ "Blueprint to cyanotypes, exploring a historical alternative photographic process", (2011). Marlin Fabbri and Gary Fabbri and "Cyanotype workshop", Malin Fabbri, (2011). Alternative Photography. Retrieved from <http://www.AlternativePhotography.com/wp/book/free-downloads>, accessed 15 March, 2017.

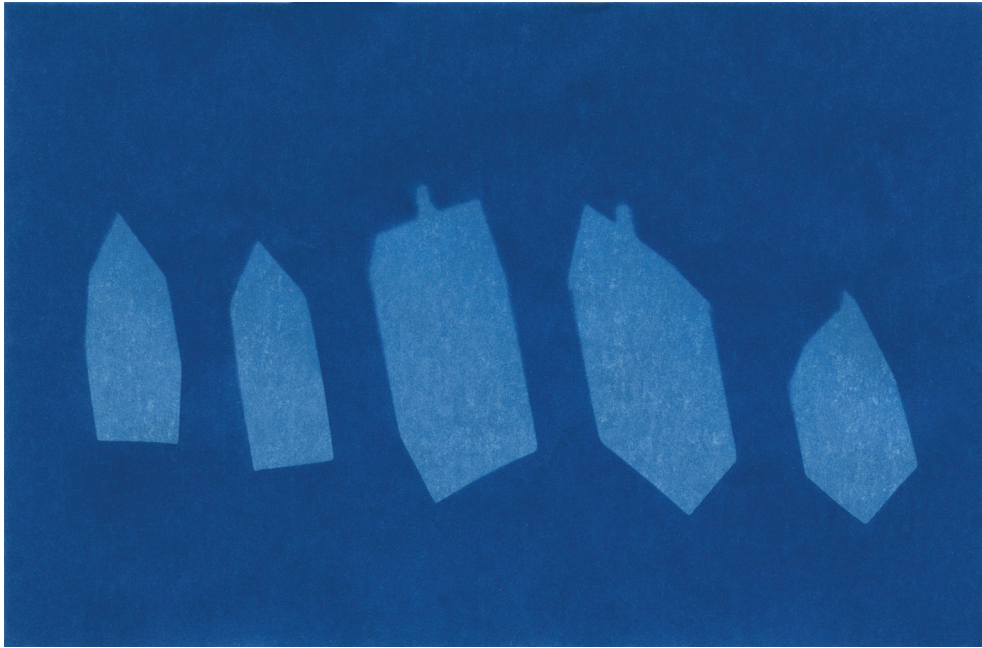


Figure 16. Jess O'Brien, (2015), Houses



Figure 17. Jess O'Brien, (2016), Trinkets

I have explored nineteenth-century photographic printing processes throughout my Masters practice. The 'slow movement' in my artwork has been a conscious choice and one in reaction to my commercial photography life. I am an analogue-trained photographer – using film, and printing work in the darkroom. It is very much a process of crafting work. It has been an intense shift moving to shooting digitally. This has translated to time spent processing work on a computer, and made for a vastly different user-experience. I have gone back to using a more traditional form of capturing landscape. I use the large format 4x5 inch for the effect it is famously capable for – fine grain, stillness of image, grandness in scale.

But I alter the schematics to add my own twist by using a homemade pinhole camera, based around the size of a 4x5 inch film holder.

I have been exploring the alternate processes in stages as I proceed through my Masters. So far I have worked with: Cyanotypes, Salt Printing, and Wet Collodion. The progression is to allow myself to learn the processes, then to work with them to find my own stylistic fit. This is a work in progress, time, preference, and style.

Salt Printing

I liked the process nature of experimenting with salted paper printing. There are many stages to a salt print – even though it is seen as one of the simpler alternative photographic processes. A salt print is constructed from a good quality handmade paper such as Hannemule or Arches printmaking paper. The paper is floated in a solution made from sea salt, water, and gelatin (which doubles as a size for the paper). Once dried, it is coated in a solution of silver nitrate just prior to exposure to UV light. The print is then developed once more in a solution of sea salt, and then washed and fixed accordingly.

When learning, there are a number of ways the process can show its flaws. From whether the base substrate is floated in gelatin or not, to whether you use a brush or glass rod for coating the silver nitrate. The images, even those with flaws, have an aesthetic entirely of their own. This constructed process would lend itself well in the recording of my construct of 'the view'.

At the start of the year, this was one of the working processes I wanted to use in my work. I had tested several methods of representing subject matter, and of a survey of collections of objects. The most sympathetic in terms of tactility and presence were salt printing and silver gelatin prints. The resulting images had good detail and had an overall soft-aesthetic to them.

With the introduction of a salt-water based landscape, salted paper printing felt rather appropriate. Salt printing felt intuitively a craft worthy of printing a photograph of an object found by or thrown up from the sea. The intrinsic connection of 'from the sea' to 'made of the sea' is an aesthetically pleasing concept.

I made a salt print from my 4x5 negative. It was very tactile and seductive. I now had an issue. I loved the salt printing of the 'view' but reproducing it in large scale would be difficult. Printing in large scale is important, as I want the viewer to feel as though they are immersed in the experience of place.



Figure 18. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Salt print of second 4x5 pinhole test

On my next expedition to the beach I went down to the high tide line to survey the types of seaweed along the shoreline. In my search, I came across my first item of detritus thrown up by the sea – an old distressed piece of metal. A tin billy can. It had such beauty – the silvery rolled edges and crinkled folds.



Figure 19. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Found Objects

The second artefact was a discarded single shoe. Grey plastic with trellis detail circa 1982. The next a trio of cans, battered and torn, tumbled by the waves.

I was discovering what others had thrown away: small clues to what had gone before in the land. I felt shocked, but not really surprised – to find so much rubbish in an area designated to Reserve.

My focus of the landscape had primarily centered on the horizon; it was not of the ground underfoot. Therefore, it was unexpected finding the objects. My initial survey was of place, a site, a landscape with the sensory threads that came to me.

In finding the objects at this stage, I had to reassess my criteria – of the project, and my direction. The project was becoming more about site, place, location and the way we even define these cultural terms.



Figure 19. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Found Objects

The Land /Te Whenua

There are three unique concepts ingrained in Maoridom that are relevant to looking at the land and nature in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The first is tangata whenua, or the people of the land. This is speaking of Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, and their deep relationship to the land. This is based on their being born into the land, and of their profound connection through their ancestors before them.¹⁶ To further understand this concept it is important to understand that the word 'whenua' is used for both the land, and the placenta.¹⁷

The second is Kaitiakitanga, which speaks broadly about the concept of guardianship of the land, based on Maori principles. Maori believe that all life is connected, and that there is a deep connection between humans and the natural world. This concept, Kaitiakitanga has long been observed by Maori, especially in the respect of interacting with the environment – only using the resources they need, respecting and reciprocating by feeding back into the environment.¹⁸

The third concept is Turangawaewae. This can be loosely translated as 'a place to stand'. This concept talks about being in a place where one feels connected and empowered by the land. It is a home or place in the world.¹⁹



Figure 21. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Pariwhero Diptych

16 Te Ahukaramu Charles Royal, (2007). 'Papatuanuku – the land - Whenua – the placenta', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Retrieved from <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/papatuanuku-the-land/page-4>, accessed 28 September 2017.

17 John Patterson discusses the significance of whenua. Patterson, John. (1992). "Exploring Maori values". Dunmore Press, Palmerston North. (p44)

18 Te Ahukaramu Charles Royal, (2007). 'Kaitiakitanga – guardianship and conservation - Understanding kaitiakitanga', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Retrieved from <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/kaitiakitanga-guardianship-and-conservation/page-1>, accessed 28 September 2017.

19 Te Ahukaramu Charles Royal, (2007). 'Papatuanuku – the land - Turangawaewae – a place to stand', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Retrieved from <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/papatuanuku-the-land/page-5>, accessed 28 September 2017.

Towards a resolution

I started to think about the context within which I wanted my work to be seen. I thought about developing a room installation with an oversized print on the wall, or in a large frame leaning against the wall (inspired by the large scale works of Anselm Kiefer or Sophie Calle). I wanted to draw out the idea of a human being a small part of the land/scape. I also had started to think about adding in some elements from the land – sand, seaweed, stone, to be installed on the ground. Ideally a large amount of sand could be used, creeping up the wall to my picture, giving the impression of sand pouring out of the frame, enveloping the room.

I reviewed the work of artists like Cildo Meireles and Ai Weiwei who make large room-scaled works. Both of these artists' works are based on highly political themes. The scale of their work immerses the viewer within their ideas of political consciousness and oppression.

I was interested in notions of 'the view' and the history of my 'found objects', or 'detritus' from the sea. I considered the possibility of adding additional sensory material – something that smelled of the sea, or contrarily, an abject smell of unease like rubbish. I thought about the aesthetic of my imagery. It was quite a minimalist aesthetic using the pinhole. And at this stage I wanted to express my ideas and constructs more photographically than in a sensory way.

For my first display, I made a test print of 'the view' on A0 size printed digitally. It was quite striking, with dark inky blacks, and an extended tonal range. Then I decided to test elements of the natural part of Pariwhero – sand, seaweed, and the objects I had found. How would I display them? Would I place the objects into the sand? Would I place them on a plinth? They were spectacular specimens – these objects pulled from the sea.



Figure 22. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Large scale Pariwhero with sand installation



Figure 23. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Objects on plinths



Figure 24 Jess O'Brien, (2017), Close-up, Objects on plinths

I had interesting feedback from this work. People were very interested in my discoveries on the beach. They liked the objects. The smell of the sand and seaweed in the room was just enough to allow the senses to drift to the beach. There was a consensus that the sand was not needed – the large-scale photograph as setting and the object elements were enough. I showed a small salt print separately, and there was interest in its materiality and tactility. I decided that I would trial a photographic-aesthetic in representing the objects in my next iteration of the project.

Post-Picturesque

How do we view the land/scape in the twenty first century?

There has been a shift in the way we view the land, following changes in the political, economic and social landscape. I will examine some of the artists who reveal or document the change in the land; and those who acknowledge the histories of the past.

In photography, a major shift occurred during the prominence of Modernism, and the influence of the f64 group. From there the rise of environmentalism, land art, and activism reflected the political and social current of the time and influenced artists in their subject matter. The 1970s New Topographics movement had a lasting impact on many photographers – a key change aesthetically, reflecting concerns and presenting unembellished reality in the recording of the landscape.

In the last two decades, there has been an emergence of a more sensitive practice of artists working together with local inhabitants, and an effort towards the understanding of cultural principles such as the Maori notions of tangata whenua and Kaitiakitanga.

Change in the Landscape



Figure 25. Jem Southam, (January 1997), The Pond at Upton Pyne (diptych)

In *The Pond at Upton Pyne*, Jem Southam documents a pond colloquially known as “The Black Pit”, an old abandoned manganese mine, now used as a dump. It forms part of a series of a view of the community trying to improve locally polluted (ecologically damaged) sites.

In an interview with Aaron Schuman²⁰, Jem Southam recalls his deciding factor in photographing the British Landscape. He had grown up amidst the influence of the early colour documentary photography of William Eggleston, Joel Sternfeld and Richard Misrach. He began to photograph the British landscape. Influenced by land artist Richard Long and wanderer Laurie Lee, he went walking – from Berwick-upon-Tweed to Bristol, which took him over two months. His inspiration was to experience the landscape in a slow way.

29

“On that walk I decided to photograph the English landscape. . . it is an astonishingly complex place. I eschew grandeur for the sake of it, preferring to revel in a subtler scale and history”

Jem Southam

Southam researches his site, working with texts to provide a context for his work. He then makes extended studies of his site over a long period of time. His intention is to make work that explores our history and memories, and influences our responses to the places we inhabit.

When approaching my own site, I used this model of revisiting a location – to experience it, and to form an understanding of place and its history. The land changed according to the weather and tidal patterns. As the land changed I found more objects in the field.

²⁰ Schuman, Aaron. (Feb 2005). “Landscape Stories: Interview with Jem Southam”. Seesaw magazine.. Retrieved from http://seesawmagazine.com/southam_pages/southam_interview.html, accessed 27 August, 2017.



Figure 26. Paul Gaffney, (2015), *We Make the Path by Walking*

UK photographer Paul Gaffney was one of nine artists²¹ to participate in an exhibition in 2015 called *Post-Picturesque: Photographing Ireland*. It showed a contemporary side of Ireland that reached beyond the traditional idyllic landscapes and images of village life. The work is very diverse and claimed the goal of 'disrupting clichés of national identity'²² by interrogating the current climate and by bringing together a wide range of stories.

Gaffney investigates different ways of experiencing and representing landscape in his practice. In his series, *We Make the Path by Walking*, he used the idea of walking long distance as a form of meditation in his work. Gaffney draws upon Arnold Berleant's theory²³ (*The Aesthetics of Environment*) to bring a 'participatory approach' to landscape, in which the artist, environment, and viewer are considered to be in continuous dialogue with each other. And his desire is to immerse the viewer in his experience of nature.²⁴

Gaffney's notion of walking through a site to experience it is not a new one, and recalls the writings of de Certeau, Bachelard, Lefebvre, and Perec. There are many artists and writers who use this method to extract their ideas, and indeed it also helped my formulation of ideas whilst in the field.

21 *Post-Picturesque: Photographing Ireland*. Artists: Gary Coyle, Martin Cregg, David Farrell, Paul Gaffney, Anthony Haughey, Miriam O'Connor, Jill Quigley, Anna Rackard and Ruby Wallis. "Post-Picturesque: Photographing Ireland", Carlton University. (2015), Retrieved from <https://apps.carleton.edu/museum/ireland/about/>, accessed 10 September, 2017.

22 Photo Ireland's goal catchphrase. "Post-Picturesque: Photographing Ireland", Carlton University. (2015), Retrieved from <https://apps.carleton.edu/museum/ireland/about/>, accessed 10 September, 2017.

23 Gaffney discusses Arnould Berleant. Berleant, Arnould. (1995). "The Aesthetics of Environment", Temple University Press

24 "We Make the Path by Walking". (n.d.). Paul Gaffney Photography. Retrieved from <http://www.paulgaffneyphotography.com/We-Make-the-Path-by-Walking>, accessed on 10 September, 2017.



Figure 27. Wayne Barrar, (2000), Beneath Bowen Falls To Mitre Peak, Fiordland

New Zealander Wayne Barrar chronicles the landscape. His images document man-made changes in nature, though no people appear in his photographs. He describes his work as sitting at the intersection of nature and culture.

*"The country in his pictures has been entirely cleared of human beings, but humans are without doubt the reason that the country appears as it does."*²⁵

Geoff Park

Barrar and the ecologist Geoff Park had a long standing friendship, and would often discuss the issues related to the land, environmentalism and ecology. Park wrote the front piece to Barrar's book, *Shifting Nature*.

Barrar's '*Beneath Bowen Falls to Mtire Peak*' references early Picturesque and referential photography (like the Burton Bros.' *The Sutherland Fall Expedition*')²⁶, with the subject matter and style of framing, but he is commenting on the humour of this walkway being built to show people where best to enjoy the view from. There is irony in a permanent structure being there to protect the environment being trampled, and it also changes the view by being there.

²⁵ Geoff Park (2001), "Beyond the beauty Spots of the Uninitiated", article in *Shifting Nature: Photographs by Wayne Barrar*, University of Otago Press, 2001. (pp 6-23).

²⁶ 'Wayne Barrar's Beneath Bowen Falls', (n.d.) New Zealand History. Retrieved from <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/wayne-barrars-beneath-bowen-falls>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 17-May-2017, accessed 20 August, 2017.



Figure 28. Figure 34. Burton Bros., (October 1888), The Sutherland Fall Expedition, Milford Sound, This is a 19th Century Burton Brothers photograph taken at the same location as Barrar's reference.

*"Photography can act as a record of the impact of human modification of the landscape, as well as drawing attention to the visual richness which it can sometimes generate."*²⁷

Wayne Barrar

Barrar was heavily influenced by the 1970s 'New Topographic' movement. Recording aspects of change in the landscape underpins his practice, and is evident in his approach to photographing the environment.

I have placed Barrar's work here as example as his nod to the picturesque is the approach I have taken in the representation of my site.

27 'Photographs Wayne Barrar & Miles Hargest', (1989). Bulletin, No.62, March/April 1989, p.5. Retrieved from <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/exhibitions/miles-hargest-and-wayne-barrar-photographs>, accessed 20 August, 2017.



Figure 29. Joyce Campbell, (2016), *Taniwha Whakaheke/Taniwha Descending*, for the 20th Biennale of Sydney.

Joyce Campbell is a New Zealand photographer who has a research-based practice delving into the areas of ecology, history, and mythology of place. In the work *Taniwha Whakaheke/Taniwha Descending*, 2016, she collaborated with Richard Niania (Ngai Kohatu), an historian and kaumatua, to produce part of an ongoing series investigating sites of spiritual and historical significance. This particular one explores the ecology of Lake Waikaremoana.

Her work is very evocative of the legends of the Taniwha, ancient serpentine creatures said to inhabit waterways – and the physical manifestation of the life force of a place. She uses nineteenth century photographic techniques – large format cameras, and rich hand-printed silver gelatin prints, to imbue her imagery with a spiritually atmospheric sensibility.²⁸

I was influenced by the work of Campbell in the way she translates the spiritual ambience of a place, and her use of antiquated photographic techniques.

²⁸ Joyce Campbell, Biennale of Sydney, (2016). Retrieved from <https://www.biennaleofsydney.com.au/20bos/artists/joyce-campbell/>, accessed 15 September 2017.



Figure 30. Mark Adams, (25.5.1988). Rapanui-Shag Rock. Opawaho-Otakaroro Hapua, Christchurch.
From Whenua i Maharatia Haehae Nga Takata-Land of Memories Scarred by People

Mark Adams is one of five²⁹ photographers who exhibited work in a post-earthquake Christchurch in 2016. Situated at In Situ Photo Project, the exhibition – On Site, expressed and represented the loss and change for each photographer around their city.

Adams is one of New Zealand's most revered photographers. He has a sensitive interest in Maori and Pacific cultures, fostered in him during his friendships with Tony Fomison and Theo Schoon.³⁰ He is renowned for his thoughtful studies of intertwined Maori and colonial histories.³¹

He uses realism to explore aspects of New Zealand and Pacific post-colonial history as a form of commentary. He likes the notion of 'art being that of a witness'.³²

Adams' photography has long been an inspiration in the respect he shows to the Tangata whenua and his thoughtful reflective photography. The apparent stillness in the image translates a spirituality.

29 (Mark Adams, Mitchell Bright, David Cook, Tim J. Veling and Ellie Waters). On Site Exhibition, (2016), In Situ Photo Project, Retrieved from <http://ispp.nz/exhibitions/on-site/>, accessed 10 September 2017.

30 "Mark Adams". (n.d.). Bowerbank Ninnow. Retrieved from <http://bowerbankninnow.com/mark-adams/>, accessed 5 September, 2017.

31 "Mark Adams: Cook's Sites". (2014). Christchurch Art Gallery. Retrieved from <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/exhibitions/mark-adams-cooks-sites>, accessed 5 September, 2017.

32 "Mark Adams". The Arts Foundation. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.thearts.co.nz/artists/mark-adams>, accessed 6 September, 2017.

Landscape as Memorial

The picturesque presented an idealistic nostalgic view of the past. It omitted to show the realities of the landscape and its history. How does one represent landscape as memorial in a photograph? Anne Ferran take a interesting path to describe loss in the landscape.

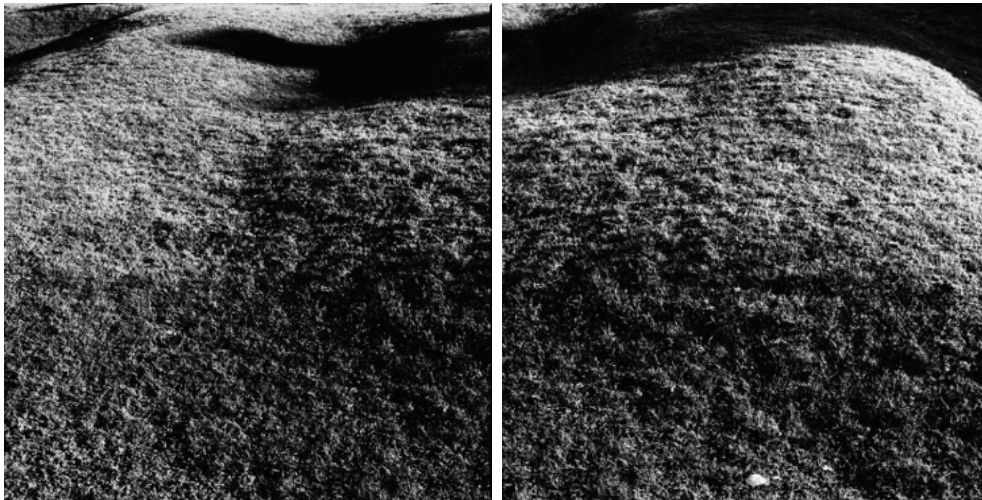


Figure 31. Anne Ferran, (2001), from the series – Lost to Worlds.

In *Lost to Worlds*, Anne Ferran depicts the grounds of the former Female Factory site at Ross, Tasmania. The women were sentenced to hard labour for petty crimes, and for getting pregnant out of wedlock. Hundreds of babies were buried in unmarked graves at the site, leaving behind only archaeological remains.

"Australia's past is full of unacknowledged ghosts; by waking them up we can hope to wake ourselves as well."

Anne Ferran

Denied any physical remains to use in her artworks (such as the clothing Ferran has previously used in her large format cyanotypes), this marks a departure for her in style.

In his critique of Ferran's work, *Looking Askance*, Geoffrey Batchen asks – How can photography bring the past into the present?³³ He reviews the strategies she uses to engage her viewers in her method of bearing witness to history. The work has hints of romanticism in its melancholic beauty, but her intentions are more firmly planted as that of a critical photographer. She uses a square format which creates a sense of stillness or detachment. Ferran presents the landscape, but doesn't show what has happened, instead focussing on the absences, requiring her audience to do some of their own investigation.

Ferran uses a romantic vision of the land to situate her viewer, and creates mystery to draw us. This method is very successful, and I felt I could learn from this lack of information she gave us as viewers.

33 Batchen, Geoffrey, and Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller, Jay Prosser, principal editor, (2012). "Picturing atrocity : photography in crisis", Reaktion Books, University of California. (pp 226-239).

Mapping

In the next iteration of my work, I explored the notion of mapping of the landscape. I looked at the way in which different artists use the concept of mapping in their work before undertaking my own explorations. There were some distinctly different takes on the concept of mapping.

Figure 32. Ed Ruscha, 1966, Every building on the Sunset strip, detail.

Ed Ruscha, in his vernacular style, created a survey of 'Every building on the Sunset Strip'. Ruscha is notable for his 'deadpan' approach to photography, and the humour of that is evident in this work with his literal recording of 'every building'. He is heavily influenced by his surroundings in Southern California and the Pop Art movement.

I approached this method at my site with an initial visual mapping of manmade structures on the site. It was a mode I did not continue with as the direction moved me away from my goal of envisaging the 'picturesque'.



Figure 33. Ólafur Elíasson, (1998), Green River.

Olafur Eliasson's concern is of the environmental changes transpiring in his native Iceland. He maps a particular region by systematically photographing a section of the location observed. He uses repetition to mark change, and displays his work using a grid of observational landscapes. He shoots in colour, and focuses on a single subject for each series: rivers, volcanoes, huts, hot springs.³⁴ His photographs are often shot from the air in a small plane, the mode of transport of a mapmaker. The grid arrangements are a nod to New Topographic photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher.³⁵

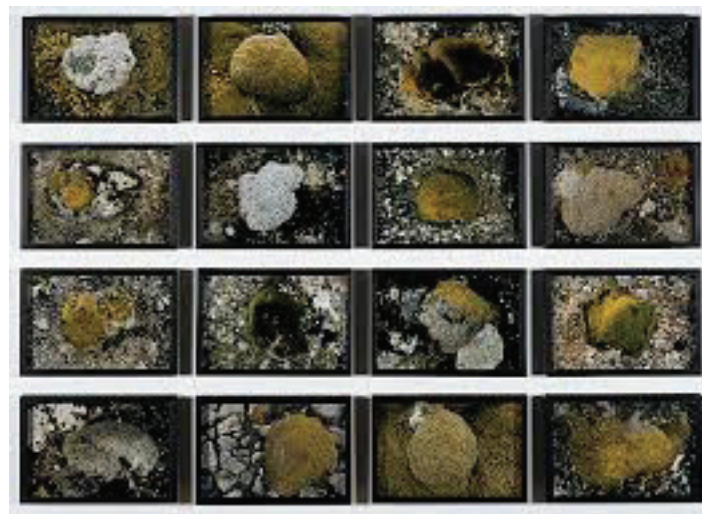


Figure 34. Ólafur Eliasson ,1999, Moss

This way of mapping was an influence on how I would present my salt printed objects in a final resolution. The use of a grid to represent an overall finding is an effective visual cue.

In thinking about mapping I explored my own visual documenting of the site, and of locations dotted along the coast that revealed its history. I used cyanotype photograms to record flora and 35mm film for a photographic visual mapping of the site.

34 Roberta Smith (November 15, 2012), Art in Review; Olafur Eliasson: 'Volcanoes and shelters', The New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/16/arts/design/olafur-eliasson-volcanoes-and-shelters.html>, accessed 27 September 2017

35 Dorothy Spears (September 2, 2007), "Thinking Glacially, Acting Artfully" The New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/02/arts/design/02spea.html>, accessed 27 September, 2017



Figure 35. Jess O'Brien, (2017), 35mm, Visual mapping

I also used topographical maps of the area, and of the possible points of origin of the objects I found. My visual mapping involved superimposing maps and text (digitally and analogue) onto my objects starting with the billycan. The circular framing of the billycan image is in reference to the historical use of the Claude Glass.



Figure 37. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Billy Can with Map.

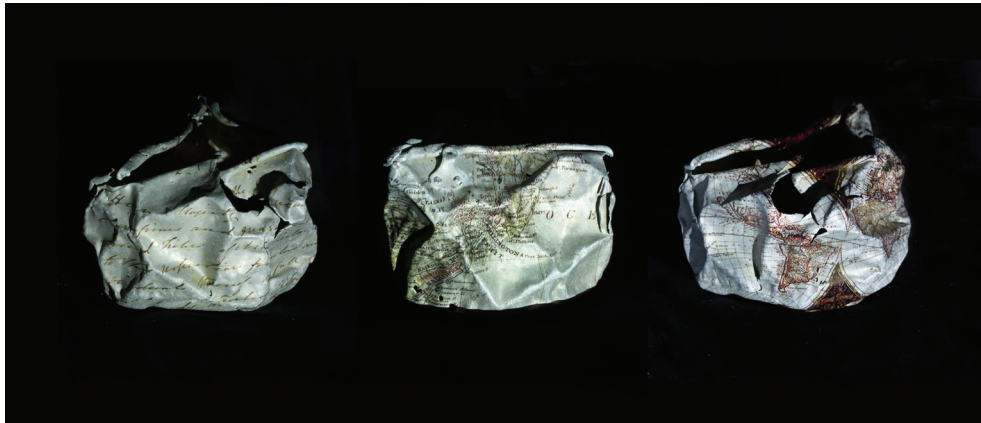


Figure 39. Jess O'Brien, 2017, Billy Cans with Projection

I photographed the objects in several ways: a pinhole 4x5, pinhole with digital camera, regular 35mm digital photographs, and digital photographs with maps projected onto them. I decided on digital photographs of the objects on black velvet – which look almost specimen-like. The map has been added digitally.

For my next room installation, I hung a 4x5 diptych on one wall, a series of four cyanotypes on the next, and on the far wall a picture of the billycan (with and without mapping, for commentary). The intention of bringing these disparate images together was to gain some feedback at this stage on the work to help me fine tune my concept of the 'the picturesque'.



Figure 38. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Room Installation 2, Pariwhero Diptych



Figure 39. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Room Installation 2, Fauna Cyanotypes



Figure 39. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Room Installation 2, Billy can

There was a mixed reaction to my images. Viewers wanted to see actual objects, to feel their materiality. This reaction I understood. There was a feeling of wanting to just have two elements to the work – the landscape and the objects. There were too many components in the room. I would have to think of a new approach to the objects. On each visit to photograph the site, my accumulation of detritus was growing, it was becoming a collection.

The Archaeology of Landscape

Professor Matthew H. Johnson believes that what makes us archaeologists as opposed to mindless collectors of old junk is the set of rules we use to translate facts into meaningful accounts of the past. From the artefacts they discover, archaeologists focus on past behaviours, attitudes and beliefs.³⁶

"...Archaeology for me is about everyone, all left traces in the material record..."³⁷

Professor M.H. Johnson

In taking the objects away from their origin of discovery, their context, the meaning was changing for their finder. I was becoming fond of my objects, the rubbish that others had left behind. I started to ponder on their histories – who had held this item, where did they come from, what was the item doing here?

In 'The Perfume of Garbage: Modernity and the Archaeological', – Shanks, Platt and Rathje offer an uncomfortable truth about archaeology. Ninety nine percent of what is dug up, recorded and analyzed in obsessive detail is what our ancestors threw away as worthless – broken ceramics, broken tools, food-making debris, food waste, broken glass, rusted metal.

Our predecessors dropped items on the ground when they became unwanted. When living in permanent settlements, they used old storage pits, privies, or custom-made rubbish pits. This was of interest to me because of the archaeological leaning my project was taking.

³⁶ Johnson, Matthew. (2010) "Archaeological Theory: An Introduction", Second Edition. Chichester, United Kingdom, John Wiley and Sons Ltd, Chichester.

³⁷ Interview with Matthew Johnson on medieval castles and archaeology, (2013), The Medievalists.Net. Retrieved from <http://www.medievalists.net/2013/09/interview-with-matthew-johnson-on-medieval-castles-and-archaeology/>, accessed 5 September, 2017

Conceptually Tony Cragg and Rob Cherry's work has influenced my presentation of sea/shore objects, and their grouping. In my third critique I gathered objects of similar colours and grouped them together in visually-pleasing collections. There was a conscious choosing of objects, but many were excluded due to the large size of the collection. I presented a grouping of natural objects (feathers) and others (manufactured items, showing traces of people – the billycan, rope, plastic, and fishing line).



Figure 40. Tony Cragg, (1981), 'Britain seen from the North'

Rob Cherry's work "A beautiful day for walking away", featured detritus gathered from Wellington's Evans Bay, and lined the edges of the gallery floor. He set himself a particular timeline, and colour pallet and worked within these confines – the equivalent of one working day.³⁸

The shift from a communal space (the beach) to the formal aesthetic space of the gallery alludes to the habit of sweeping environmental pollution 'under the carpet'. Cherry's work was placed in a line around the gallery's skirting partially obscured from view. Cherry's collection included many plastic and broken items.

While Cherry has come from an environmental perspective, I have been looking at my collection predominantly as being that of an archaeological find. That is not to say that I do not have environmental concerns about the area too, but I also see it as a way of extracting histories from the land. I see the traces of people and their lives in this material culture.

³⁸ Community Garden Essay, Abby Cunnane, Hirschfeld Gallery Curator (2010), City Gallery Wellington, downloaded from <http://citygallery.org.nz/>, accessed 21 August, 2017.

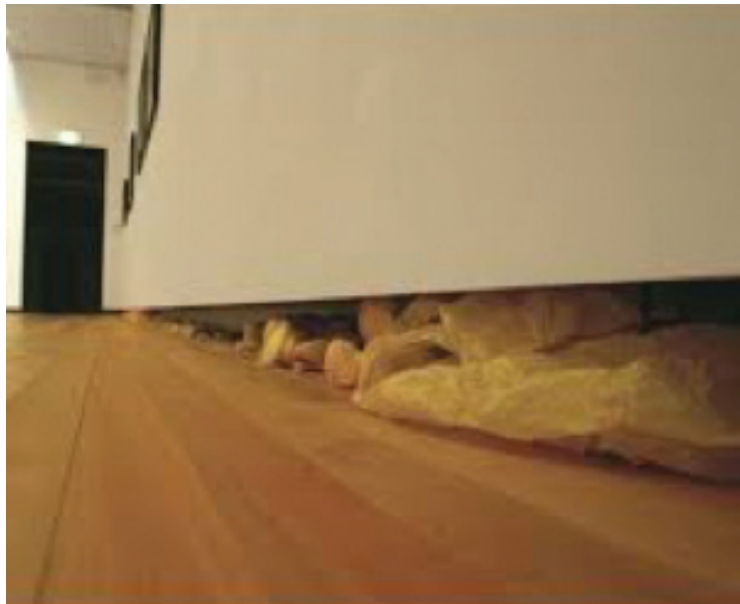
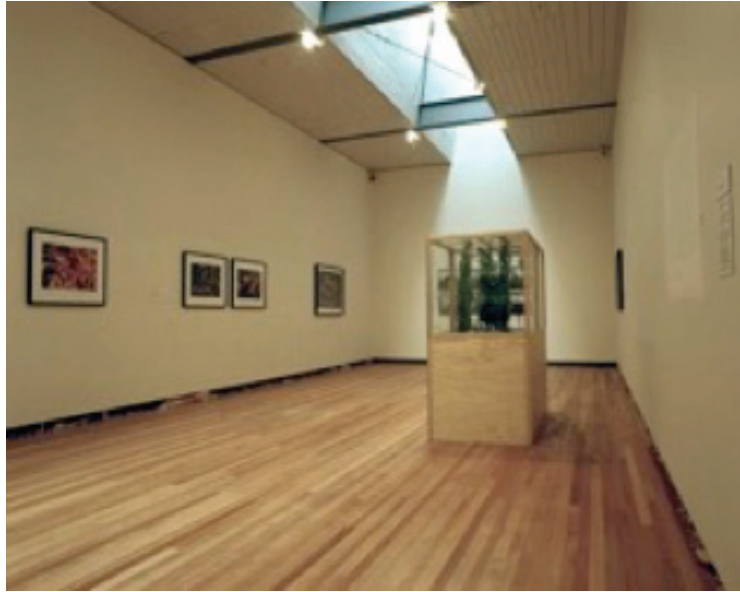


Figure 41. Beck, Andrew, (2010), Community Garden, City Gallery, Wellington (Installation view).



Figure 42. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Room Installation 3, Billy can and Pariwhereo



Figure 43. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Room Installation 3, Feathers and Pariwhereo



Figure 44. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Room Installation 3, Objects and Pariwhero diptych.



Figure 45. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Room Installation 3, Green Objects and Pariwhero

The representation of these objects is also an archive of items collected from the beach. Some were personal items, some historic, some 'rubbish', some common, some everyday objects. They were signs of our material culture and they contained their own story. In the collecting, I was overwhelmed by the splendor of some of these objects. I was moved by the way they had survived their first lives, rolled and buffeted around in the sea, and travelled from afar. There was a beauty inherent in them for me. When you take away the context of the beach, they began to have their own life, their own mauri.

For Maori, the concepts of mauri (life force), and wairua (spirit or soul) are critical in looking at their view of the world. Central to their beliefs is that everything has a mauri, and a wairua, and indeed should be treated with respect. This aspect is never more apparent than when looking at the approach of Maori working with harakeke (or flax), and the rituals observed for its harvesting.³⁹

Looking at a slightly different perspective, Jane Bennett, in her book, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, speaks of all matter, even the inanimate, as having "thing-power". She feels that we should engage in materialist politics that doesn't privilege living forms over inanimate matter. She wants to erase the differences that are often drawn between living and nonliving things.⁴⁰

"One moral of the story is that we are also nonhuman and that things, too, are vital players in the world"

Jane Bennett

My objects themselves are manifestations of histories past. Some are clues to what has gone before. Others are traces of the past, and of the lives of their owners. Some were discarded matter, some beautiful, some treasures lost.

Materiality and the object

Part of my process has been taken up with the consideration of the treatment of my found objects. The materiality was possibly one of the most important aspects about them. So the treatment must reflect this aspect.

I have indeed struggled with the desire to represent the objects in a referential photograph perhaps, thinking of Barthes words, – "In photography, an image of an object is inseparable from the object itself, and a photograph can indefinitely

39 Patterson, John. (1992). "Exploring Maori values". Dunmore Press, Palmerston North. (pp18, p77-78)

40 Bennett, Jane. (2010). "Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things". Duke University Press, Durham. (p4).

reproduce the presence of something long gone".⁴¹ In one manner I agree with this reflection, because if I choose to present my work as an installation, a photograph of it will be the lasting reminder of it, and I will see it as the event itself. But for the purposes of the work, the materiality of the objects stands apart from any other decision.

Elevating the status

Figure 49. Penn, Irving, 1972, Cigarettes.

Photographer and artist Irving Penn elevated the status of an everyday throwaway item of consumer society, in his series Cigarettes. He did this by removing the context, and photographing them in his studio, in minimalist compositions. He then hand-printed them using the Platinum Palladium process – further transforming them into precious objects of fine art.

'They are beautiful, though. There are surfaces like aerial views of landscapes and like skin. There are the lovely gradations of platinum, finding ever tinier nuances between one grey and the next. The backgrounds, sometimes paler, sometimes heavier, seem to vary like the weather.'

Francis Hodgson writer on history and culture of photography⁴²

41 Barthes, Roland. (1981). "Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography". (First Edition). Translated by Richard Howard, Hill & Wang, New York.

42 Francis Hodgson quoted in Irving Penn Platinum 'Cigarettes', (June 20, 2012). The Art of Platinum Printing. Retrieved from <https://artofplatinum.wordpress.com/2012/06/20/irving-penn-platinum-cigarettes/>, accessed 7 September, 2017.

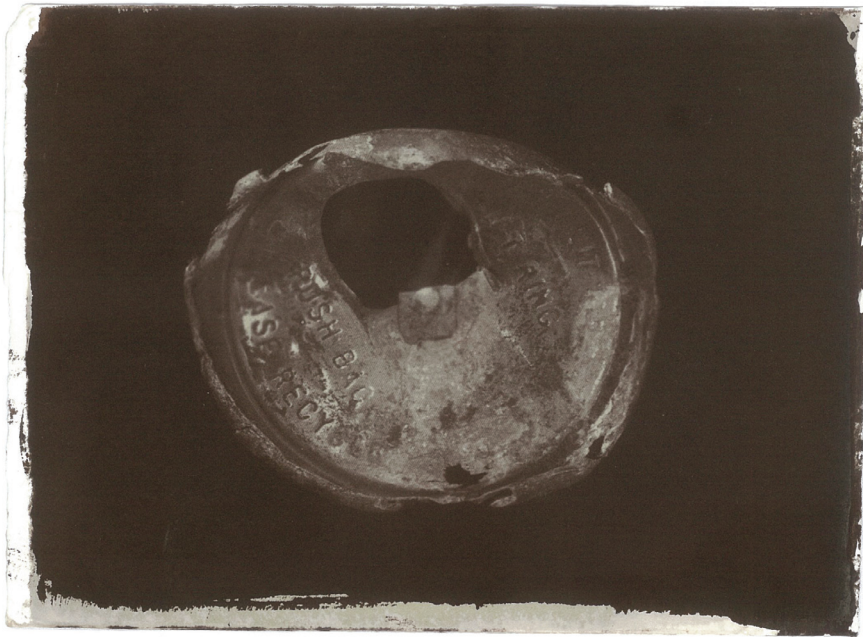


Figure 47. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Can, Salt Print

I hadn't shown my salt prints series in full to an audience yet, but felt certain that this was the way to proceed for my final resolution of my work: Very large black and white digitally-printed landscapes juxtaposed with a set of salt printed objects. Objectively shot on black background, the salt prints have their own life, a glow, a beauty, a mauri.

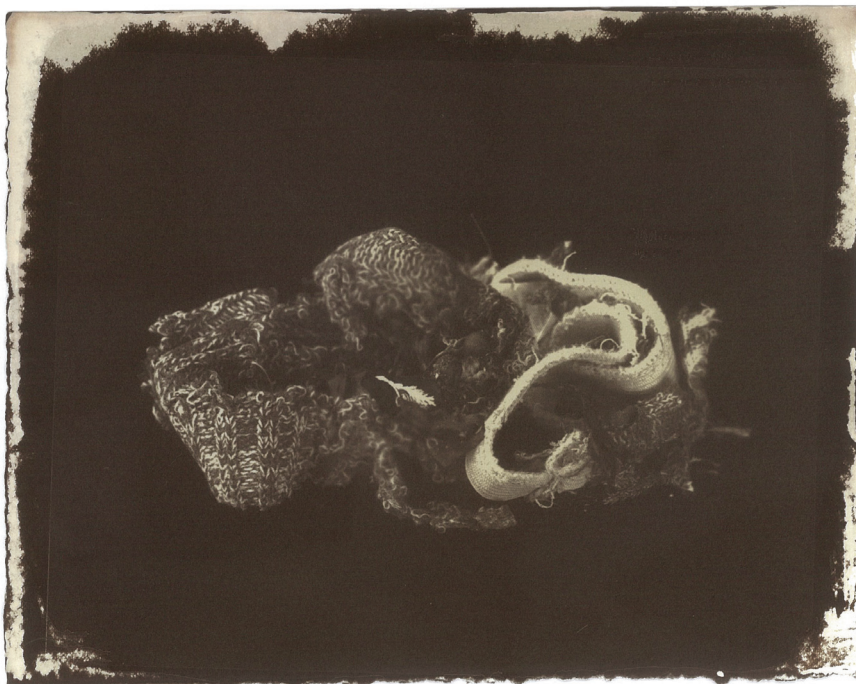


Figure 48. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Jersey, Salt Print

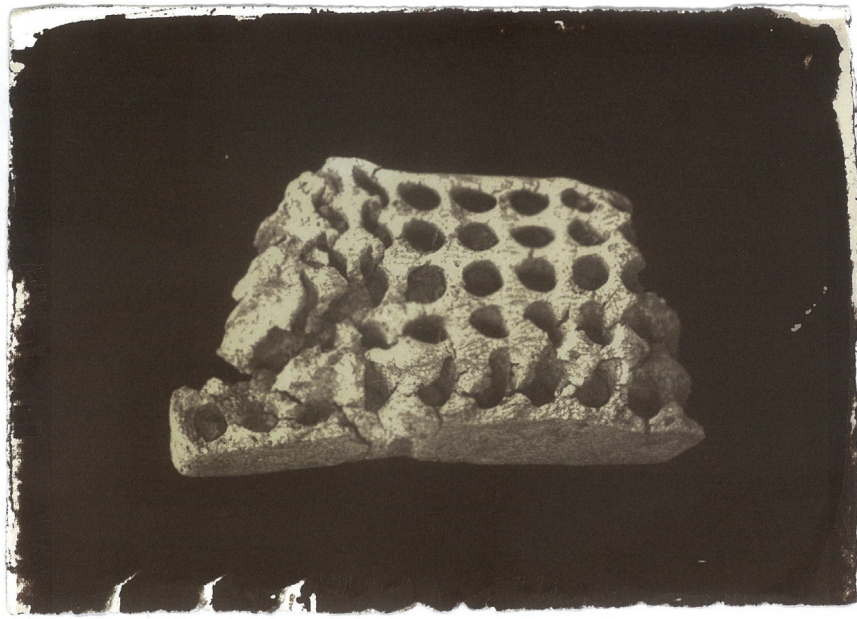


Figure 49. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Rubber Object, Salt Print

I felt the objects I used suited the salt print media. The objects are laid against a plain background and photographed in natural light. The black velvet absorbs any kind of reflections that could get in the way of viewing the object. The salt print seemed like a very natural process to use in my work – a surprisingly simple analogue process. In printing the objects from the sea I encapsulated with salt from the sea – a instinctual cyclical process. The objects within the images glow in an almost jewel-like way. I don't have a problem with this representation – I see it as changing it into a symbolic embodiment of contemporary culture.

Treatment of Photograph vs Object

How was I going to integrate the objects I found back into the landscape? I wanted to photograph the individual objects as artefacts. This would give them the respect I felt they were due. Alternatively, I could place the objects on a plinth, or a shelf close to the images of the landscapes. The public loved seeing the materiality of the tactile object, but didn't like the use of a plinth. Perhaps I was going to need to amalgamate them in some manner. I could lay the objects on the land, on the ground, within the landscape. Would I rephotograph them?

Many artists have used the combination of photographs and other three-dimensional objects to extend their vision in their art, and expression of ideas and philosophy.



Figure 50. Mari Mahr, (1985), *Geneva Motto*, from 'a few days in Geneva'

Mari Mahr is a photographic artist with an assemblage aesthetic to her work.⁴³ She uses collage, montage and bricolage, layering images on backgrounds made from her own photographic work. Mahr collects souvenirs that speak to her of past places, people, and experiences. She then translates them into a constructed narrative using her own images as setting. Her scale is often distorted dramatically, and the treatment of assemblage is of a collage aesthetic.

⁴³ Mari Mahr, interview with Duncan Forbes, Senior Curator, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, (January 2011). Source *Photographic Review*, issue 65. Retrieved from <http://www.source.ie/issues/issues0120/issue15/is15revbetour.html>, accessed 15 September, 2017.

Figure 51. John Stezaker, (2012), Betrayal XVIII

Figure 52. John Stezaker, (2007), Mask LXV

I really connected with this idea of assemblage, but was not certain whether I would rephotograph the imagery or not. John Stezaker is an collage artist who uses his actual original work to exhibit.

John Stezaker uses original film stills and vintage landscape postcards⁴⁴ from his collection – his ‘readymades’ (a nod to Marcel Duchamp).⁴⁵ Stezaker examines our connections to the photographic image in his work – documenter of truth, vessel of memory, and object of modern culture. He creates his collages by hand, taking them out of context and reappropriating them into witty renditions and commentary on life.

44 25th August 2017 John Stezaker talk at Massey University, Wellington.

45 "John Stezaker, Lost World." (2017). City Gallery, Wellington. Retrieved from <http://citygallery.org.nz/exhibitions/john-stezaker-lost-world/>, accessed 28 August, 2017.

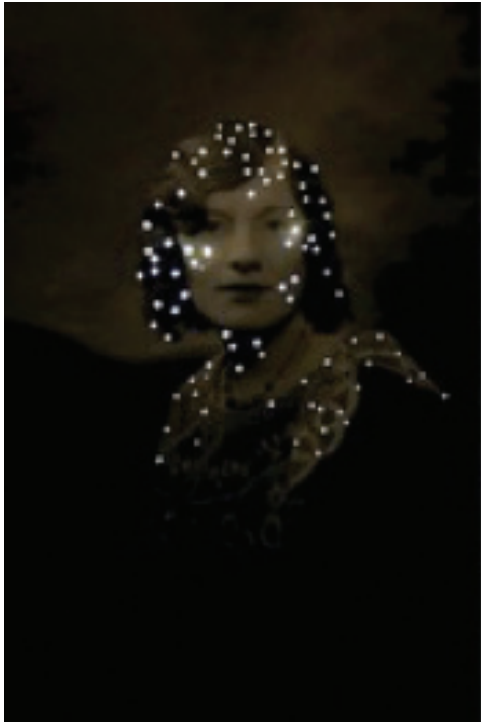


Figure 53. Amy Friend, (2012), Latent light.



Figure 54. Amy Friend, (2012), I Dream of that Day.

What could I do with lighting to highlight the mood of my work? I looked at Amy Friend's elegant artworks. Friend is a Canadian photographer who utilises her media to express the fragility of life – in this case with vintage photographs. She manipulates the photographs and reimagines them, with light. She then re-photographs the artworks. Metaphorically the reading is of rebirth, and her title of the series alludes to this – “Dare alla Luce” – to bring the light.

Friend's work was entirely different to mine, but I like the notion of lighting my artwork in some fashion to further bring out the emotions of either my objects or the landscape.

Mark Dion's work, *The Tate Thames Dig*, 1999, was an engaging project for me to consider over the course of the year. From the moment I discovered my 'specimen objects' in my site, my mind would wander back to his methods of representing his art. How could I use the objects to tell a story of place?

Mark Dion uses found objects in this work, and adopted pseudo-archaeological methods to collect, sort and show his work. He spent two weeks with a team of archaeological experts and volunteers beachcombing either side of the bank of the Thames. These sites, were chosen to gather any material the river with its daily tidal movements brought up. The work is site-specific. The objects were then



Figure 55. Mark Dion, (1999), Tate Thames Dig,



Figure 56. Mark Dion, (1999), Tate Thames Dig (beachcombing, sorting and cleaning, storage, display)

cleaned, identified, catalogued, and ordered according to type, weight, and colour; and then arranged and displayed within a large double-sided cabinet of curiosities – a container with strong reference to eighteenth and nineteenth century traditions of excavation, collection and display. In a 2009 lecture⁴⁶, Dion expanded on his finds as being material artefacts, archaeological treasures that are rich in social history. Their context is already destroyed – being washed up on the shores of the River Thames and buried under layers of mud, and Dion extends this by transferring his finds to his Wunderkammer at the Tate.

46 Dion, Mark. "Mark Dion Lecture, CCA Graduate Studies Lecture Series". California College of the Arts. (Recorded on October 15, 2009). Timken Lecture Hall, San Francisco campus. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5yB2thWxBI>, accessed 10th May, 2017.

Final Iterations

The fact the objects are so tactile, made it a difficult decision to leave them out of my final artwork. This has been a continuing issue for me. Because of that - I made the decision to go with using the objects, with all their dynamic materiality.

There was a considerable testing of placing the objects around the landscapes, first by setting the objects within the wall, in close proximity to the scene. This iteration, while aesthetically pleasing, still felt clunky in execution. They were two very separate/disparate presentations. Next was a play on placing the salt prints on the large-scale photographs. Then the objects placed on the floor; and then the large photographs on the floor. And finally, the objects placed back into the landscape – my large scale prints laid out on the ground – raw and vulnerable and open to movement, change, and the elements; and then the objects placed back into the scene – as they might have once been found.



Figure 57. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Mixed media Concept 1



Figure 58. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Mixed media Concept 2



Figure 59. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Mixed media Concept 3

This to me felt like an act of repopulating the landscape – providing a visual or ecological disruption to ‘the view’.

I had found the start of my resolution. My next decision to make was: how to present the work? As photographs? Rephotographed? As an actual site-specific installation?

The shadows formed by the daylight falling on the objects felt very natural, and added contrast and drama. The shadows would change depending on where the work was shown. My next experiments were of lighting tests with a spotlight in a darkened room. My intention was to highlight only the objects, and to vignette the light around the landscape, as so to appear like dusk or dawn light. There was a sublime quality to the landscape within the work.



Figure 60. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Lighting Test 1



Figure 61. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Lighting Test 2

The early tests from this exhibition idea were really successful. The objects simply came alive with the subtle spotlighting, and the shadows shaped the light around them to reveal their form and texture. Like Friedrich's *The Wanderer*, with his backlit figure looking out on the sublime landscape.

Within the dimly lit room the spotlight leads your eye through the installation. The objects look almost sculptural in appearance. The light falls across each of the five images, wrapping around each object, and models their shape.

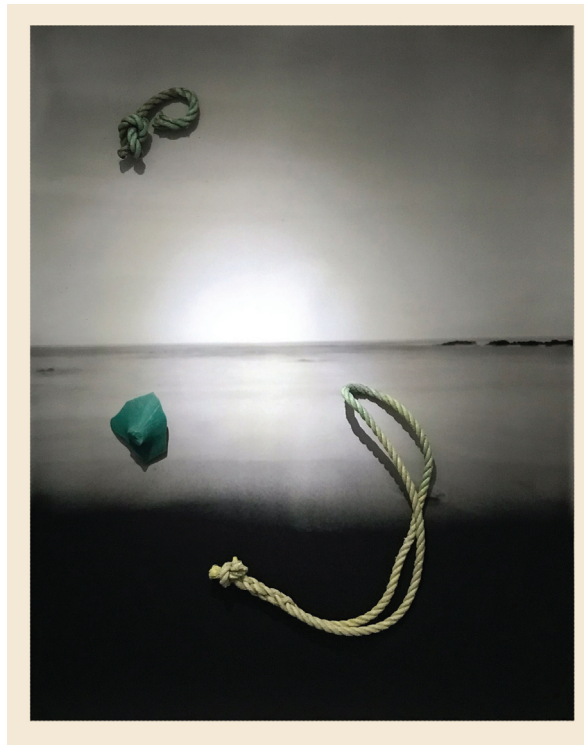


Figure 62. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Land as Collector 1



Figure 63. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Land as Collector 2



Figure 64. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Land as Collector 3



Figure 65. Jess O'Brien, (2017), Land as Collector 4



Figure 66. Jess O'Brien, (2017, Land as Collector 5

The audience responded very positively to the work and the embodied experience of being in the room. The consensus was that it was a successful resolution of the relationship between the objects and the photographs. There was a feeling of delight about the sculptural aspect of the installation, and one respondent felt it looked almost like a diorama. The feedback on the number of photographs was favourable – five landscapes in varying views of the land. I had played with the framing of my 'view' with a white border, taking this off and on through varying iterations. The final presentation was framed with a white border and it was felt that this framing was a successful objectifying of the landscape. My audience also felt that the level of light in the room was effective. They liked to see the trace of the landscape, and did not need to see the whole of the sublime imagery.

The use of scale in my work is important. I'm setting the scene, providing the grandeur. I want my audience to immerse themselves into the experience of place. The work lies on the floor. I want you to walk through the sublime landscape. As I have mentioned, I felt inspired by the use of large scale works like those of Anselm Kiefer and Sophie Calle to envelope the viewer. The materiality of the landscape is important in my message – it is of a commercial paper banner – a throw-away item; and that in part comments on the notion that this idealized view is not real. It is a constructed view. The placing of objects back into the environment is a repopulating of the land, because it is not empty, it has a history, it has a name, and a life before me.

Conclusion

In the process of looking at land, the terms and perceptions of place, site, and location reveal themselves. Serving as the background to this are the cultural, social and political views of humans. Our view of the land has filtered down from a seventeenth century western art perspective, and developed particularly over the last century into a post-picturesque view, taking into consideration concerns such as environmentalism, ecology, history, and indigenous culture in the representation of a twenty-first century landscape.

In my exegesis *Post-picturesque: From the Sublime to Land as Collector*, my journey has taken me through a familiarisation and use of the concept of 'the ideal landscape' from the Romantic Movement to the Post-picturesque. It has allowed me to experiment and change the focus of 'the view' of the landscape using these different principles: 'framing the view', showing 'the view' in a 'romantic' light, 'the sublime view', masking unwanted aspects of 'the view', spiritual awareness of the land, change in the 'landscape', bearing witness to history, and mapping of the landscape.

'The view' through all the concepts is a construct of the time in which it is recorded. It is not real. It is manipulated to suit the ideas and ideals of the artist, but the emotions of the creators are real, as is the image in terms of expressing the artist's feelings of the land and the view. The constructed reality changed alongside the changes of the land. The 'views' can be designed to represent a certain emotion, state of mind, or political stance.

I examine how in a seemingly 'empty' landscape, the traces or remains emerge to tell their story, their history of the land. I comment on how one can define a place not by its geographical location, but by the collections it has gathered. I explore the use of different photographic techniques, and modes of mixed media, and sculptural display and installation to define my view of the post-picturesque. It has remnants of the sublime, a seventeenth century trace that will never fully leave our collective consciousness. I investigate the varying notions around object theory to bring forth a narrative of the history of the land and its inhabitants.

By using a contemporary trace of the seventeenth century concept of the sublime, I engage you in the context for which we are viewing the artwork. The objects themselves disclose a framework in which we can 'see' and 'view' them. They are detritus certainly, but on closer inspection reveal a complex methodology for interpreting histories past through the material culture of the inhabitants.

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