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Boundary Lost

Postcards from New Albion

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the postgraduate degree of

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Abstract

Boundary Lost is a lyrical documentary photographic project, interrogating themes related to memory, meditating on how we interact with our physical and social environment. Through the exploration of architecture and landscape, I explore capitalist notions of commodification and colonial history as they sit within the built environments and landscapes of Aotearoa.

This project draws heavily from and is influenced by my Pākehā upbringing and historical research into the colonisation of Aotearoa. My work is explicitly an exploration of the world I know, the landscape in which I grew up and have lived in for many years. The work affords an audience the opportunity to consider the remnants of a 'dying empire' that litter the small and medium sized towns of our country.

Drawing from the relics of once prosperous towns and industry, *Boundary Lost* is a collection of ambiguous locations that come together to create a sense of commonality, forming common language through the creation of the colonial landscape. With this work, I explore how colonisation has shaped the built environment with cultural and capitalistic enterprise and conversely how the landscape has pushed back upon it. I am asking 'if we hold our landscape in such high reverence, why are we so blind to the inequalities of our people and infrastructure?'.

The use of traditional photographic methods both nods toward a historical positioning and also offers the most meditative practice for myself as the photographer.

The role of Pākehā culture is particularly relevant in the context of the increasingly conservative and reactionary stance of our current Government. The weaponisation of anti-intellectualism and anti-Māori rhetoric, reflects a colonial settler mentality, prioritising the perceived supremacy of British and imperialist traditions. Increasingly dictated to by neo-liberal imperialism, it is important to confront and examine the role of colonisation in the formation and influence in Pākehā identity. Boundary Lost navigates the journey of understanding the role of colonisation on the national image of New Zealand and how this identity emerges from the human landscape.

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Welcome to New Albion - Introduction

Figure 1. Jago, *266 Waikawa Road*, 2024.

The identity of Pākehā New Zealanders has been fundamentally shaped by colonial understandings of land, resulting in a lingering, uneasy search for belonging. This project, *Boundary Lost*, stems from a journey to understand conceptions of place within Aotearoa New Zealand, while also providing a space for others to reflect on their notion of home and the shared myths that unite New Zealand. This land has been shaped by narratives that portray it as *more than* —a place of opportunity, beauty, and cultural unity— foundational myths that obscure deeper realities of history and identity.

When I was six, my Mum, Dad, sister and I moved away from Christchurch. Behind us we left all of our family, both sets of grandparents, my aunty and uncle and my older sister. After we moved, my Grandfather became sick and the next year was spent moving between Blenheim and Christchurch. Every weekend, we would drive down and back, staring out of the back window, watching the dry hills of Marlborough break into the narrow coasts of North Canterbury. Watching as the sand dunes turned to hills to snow-capped mountains. Twisting through the heavily wooded slopes as the vast Canterbury plain opens to the south. My experience of this landscape was purely observational; aside from Kaikoura and Cheviot for food and petrol we never stopped. We never had time to stop.

Through this dramatic and varied landscape, I began to form a sense of connection to the towns and settlements that drape along the country roads. I never knew what happened in these places, the dark windows and closed doors became a stage for my imagination. As I got older, my imagination waned, and my perception of the places began to be augmented by conversations with my father. A child of the 1950's, Dad's understanding of this land was heavily shaped by the burgeoning nationalism of post-second world war New Zealand and the mythologies of antipodean egalitarianism and exceptionalism.

I was sixteen when Dad died; the foundations of my world were shattered. I continued to drive the back roads and explore country towns by myself. My imagination was no longer the thread that held this landscape together, it was the search for Dad's home, the landscape he saw.

In my early twenties, I began a lasting obsession with photography. Having lacked any ability to draw, paint or sculpt, I found photography became a tool, through which I have been able to explore my own notions of home. As I have engaged with the histories of colonisation in Aotearoa, my understanding of national mythologies has been expanded.

The beginnings of this project were rooted in sporadic trips to Marlborough and South Canterbury. Returning to visit family and friends, I began photographing the towns and the landscape, reflecting my fascination with industrial remnants and colonial legacies that shaped the places of my childhood. Factories, ports, discarded artefacts and religious institutions were imaged. These trips evoked personal nostalgia, yet also revealed contrasting cultural forces at play. Through my photography, I strive to represent how the past continues to shape the present, especially in relation to the remnants of industry and empire.

A central aspect of my thesis is charting the breakdown of nationalist myths within Pākehā New Zealand and using photography to provide a reflective space for myself and my audience. My research over the past two years has centred on questioning the relevance of a unifying national identity that derives its authenticity from settler colonialism.

Presented as an exhibition, the photographs of Boundary Lost chart locations within a fictional town New Albion. Taking on the role of surveyor, I have collected together photographs of sites from across Aotearoa New Zealand that speak to a Pākehā experience of place and presented them as though they are one medium-sized New Zealand town. Through a careful use of composition I am able to amalgamate a wide range of locations that share an architectural and cartographical language of New Zealand urbanism. My work is informed by the tenuous boundary between the urban and rural, natural and constructed, nation and place.

The constructed location of New Albion is not intended to be a direct representation of any town, nor located in any specific region. New Albion contains scenes that show varying geography collected from a range of different locations.

This project does not aim to be journalistic; rather, it invites viewers to meditate on how they share in the landscape of these ambiguous yet familiar scenes. These photographs are not intended to represent any single location but rather the common visual language that connects different parts of Aotearoa. The resulting body of work encourages reflection on the deeper layers of our national identity—one shaped by colonisation, capitalism, and ongoing social forces.

As a topic, colonisation is incredibly vast. Coloured by history and resulting effects, it can be a topic that is best forgotten by some and never to be forgotten by others. In order to understand the role colonisation has played in the formation of Aotearoa New Zealand one needs to explore the forces that drove it. Without a doubt, it is important, and central to any exploration of the subject, to acknowledge the effects of colonisation upon Māori. While this discussion will make reference to various ways in which Māori land was taken and symbolism co-opted, this is in no way a comprehensive history of this imbalance and this project does not tell Māori stories.

I am particularly interested in how capitalist notions of land as a commodity intersect with the colonial history of Aotearoa. The scars of colonisation—both physical and cultural—are visible in the landscape and continue to influence the lives of its people. *Boundary Lost* is a collection of fragmented yet connected scenes that together represent a shared history and identity. Through this project, I aim to explore how colonisation has shaped Pākehā identity and invite viewers to confront the complexities of their own relationship with the land and its history.

Positioning

A key challenge when exploring aspects of the past, especially in a visual sense, is steering away from connotations of the quaint and the nostalgic. Both concepts deal with a sense of romanticising and idealising the past. Daniel Harris explains the reductive nature of the quaint as 'Quaintness reproduces the past selectively, editing out its discomfort, inconvenience, misery, stench and filth'[1]. The lack of criticality in the aesthetic of the quaint, in Harris' assessment, 'disrespects[2]' the past. While it is often conceived of as mere admiration for the past, it serves to remove agency from the people and political forces that shaped its being. The importance of identifying and challenging notions of the quaint is particularly relevant to modern politics, with the exaltation of an idealised past being an inherent aspect of political conservatism.

This exegesis draws from a wide range of sources and explores various aspects of the development of nationalism and identity within Aotearoa New Zealand. Necessarily this begins with an examination of the founding of the colonial administration and how photography was utilised in its service. This is followed by further examination of how the independent nation New Zealand formed in the wake of the British Empire. It is important to examine these two areas as they form the basis of my photographic investigation and have been a key focus of my research.

It has been necessary for my research to investigate aspects of ecology, as much of our national symbolism draws heavily on the natural world[3]. Tourism in Aotearoa New Zealand focuses heavily on natural landscapes to attract overseas visitors. Highlighting the opportunities for adventure tourism, advertising material is often full of photographs showing snow-capped mountains, native forests, wide braided rivers and pastoral land. This is not at all a modern phenomenon and in this exegesis I will unpack the role photography has played historically in the Pākehā understanding of Aotearoa's landscape.

Small towns in New Zealand are often closely tied to the landscape around them and are heavily influenced by the industries that dominate these spaces. These can be roughly divided into two distinct categories, the tourist town and the industrial town. Firstly the tourist town, often placed close to a large geographical feature (Mountain, lake, fiord) these are towns that mainly

[1] Harris, *Cute, Quaint, Hungry And Romantic*, 25.
[2] Harris, *Cute, Quaint, Hungry And Romantic*, 28.
[3] Bell, *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 43.3, 122-143.

rely on the influx of tourists to maintain their population and commerce. Secondly, the industrial town is a hub for extractive industries, be it farming, mining, forestry or fishing, among others. Both categories of town exist across Aotearoa and are not necessarily mutually exclusive and many have changed focus over the course of history. I consider these categorisations to sit at opposite ends of a spectrum, with most towns falling somewhere between the two.

I grew up in Blenheim, the seat of the Marlborough District, in the northeast of Te Waipounamu South Island. Marlborough has many industries that dominate local life, specifically, farming and wine production. The presence of these two industries has had particular influence on Blenheim, whose population is heavily employed in aspects of direct and indirect support of agriculture. Blenheim is rather typical of small towns in New Zealand. The towns of Marlborough fall on various parts of the tourism-industrial spectrum, from the almost purely agricultural Seddon to the tourist towns of the Marlborough Sounds. While these towns have different geographies and industrial focus they share a common cultural foundation, one that draws from the mythologies of colonial New Zealand.

I consider it important that I avoid falling into nostalgia, so as to not compromise the authenticity of my work. This project is not a rose-tinted look at time gone by nor is it an idealistic look at the world my father came from or the towns I grew up in. *Boundary Lost* is an exploration of authenticity, it is charting my own path through the forces that shaped the land in which I grew up.

I have learned to be wary of the scenic; that is to say, that I cannot strive for authenticity while making photographs that fetishise the beauty of landscape in lieu of critical engagement. The search for visual interest is so often key to the act of photography, if I see a beautiful scene I instinctively reach for my camera, however shallow the resulting image may be. However, in this project I am not creating photographs purely for enjoyment (mine or an audience), I am using the tools of photography to create a space for critical reflection.

Throughout the course of this exegesis, I am making reference to New Zealand, Aotearoa and Aotearoa New Zealand, three names that can refer to the land in which I live and practise my art. I have made a purposeful distinction between where and how I have used these names. Aotearoa is used to refer to the land and the country in pre-colonial times, New Zealand is for the colonial and nationalistic state post 1840, and Aotearoa New Zealand is directly referencing the modern country.

Colony and Photography

Foundation of the Colony

Figure 2. Jago, *Conway River,* 2024.

'*I think that New Zealand has been ordained by Nature virtually to be the future Queen of the Pacific.*'[4] George Grey, 1883

The signing of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi* in February of 1840 established a formal presence of the British Empire in Aotearoa and the creation of the colony of New Zealand. Geoff Park, in his essay, *Theatre Country*, identifies the role of English romantic poets such as William Wordsworth as a key influence on the burgeoning settler population of Aotearoa. 'Wordsworth's forging of the nineteenth-century English passion for natural scenery… led to New Zealanders 'preserving' theirs in a process that forced human life and indigenous nature apart, and still does to this day'[5].

4 qtd. in Hoare, 18.
5 Park, *Theatre Country*, 104.

Wordsworth is associated with the Lake District, a (relatively) sparsely populated region of Cumbria in the north of England. Now widely appreciated for its natural beauty in the form of lakes and mountains, the area was once considered as a wasteland that only offered material value from mining and extractive industries. Coming to the area in the late 1790's, Wordsworth developed a passion for the District which soon became the focus of his poetry. The Romantic poetry of Wordsworth and his contemporaries reflected a growing desire for leisure and a more natural beauty. Owing to the industrial revolution, the working classes of Britain were urbanising at an increasing rate, leaving the pastoral existence of their ancestors for the opportunities of the polluted and crowded cities.[6]

Park identifies the strong influence of the English romantic poets upon the settlers that later emigrated to the colony of New Zealand. However, in the new colony, the perception of land became skewed into two states of use: actively utilised or uninhabited[7]. A distinction which offered little room for traditional uses of the land by Māori. Perceived underutilisation came from renaissance European understandings of agriculture and urbanism, particularly the industrialisation of farming. Where the settler saw agriculture as defined by British practices, land for the cultivation of livestock would be fenced and cleared of trees and crops would be grown in tilled fields that were monocultures of grain. For Māori, agriculture was complementary to the landscape, swamps could be utilised for the cultivation of crops like Kumara without large scale clearing, birds could be harvested seasonally from the trees[8]. Misunderstanding of Māori farming methods and the seasonal nature of their cultivation resulted in the crown confiscating large tracts of Māori land. The forming myth of the European landscape as wilderness had little space for indigeneity.[9]

[6] Park, *Theatre Country*, 102-8.
[7] Park, *Theatre Country*, 106-7.
[8] Park, *Theatre Country*, 108.
[9] Park, *Theatre Country*, 108.

Photography and New Zealand

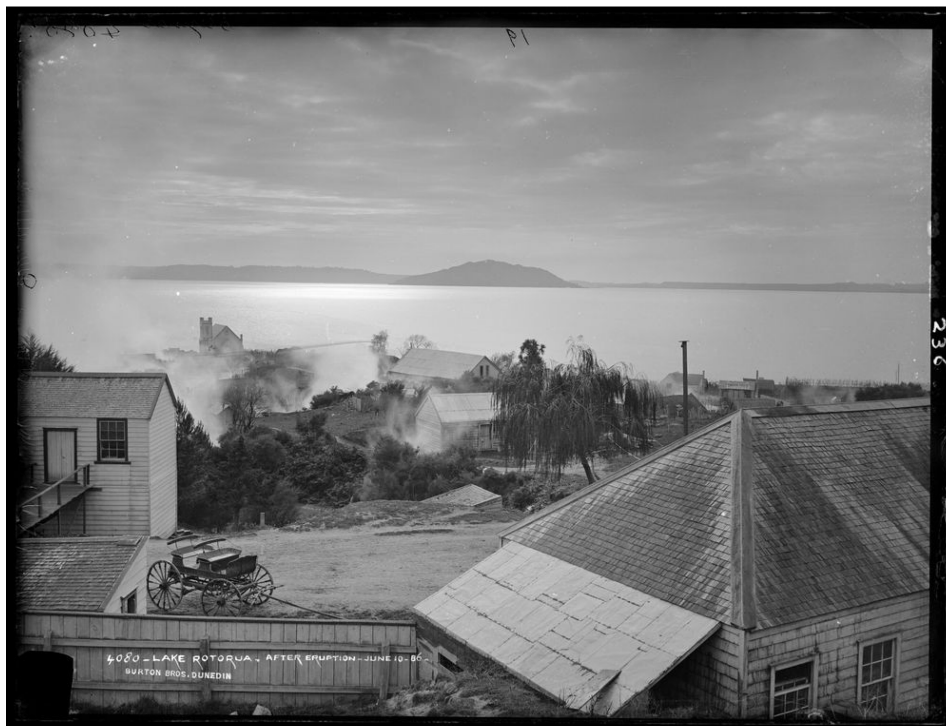

Figure 3. Lake Rotorua - after eruption June 10 - 86, 1886, North Island, by A A Ryan, Burton Brothers. Purchased 1943. Te Papa (C.010233)

'Until a few years back, New Zealand was a terra incognito [sic] to the great mass of mankind, and even now there are comparatively few persons living out of the Colony itself who have anything but the very faintest conception of the marvellous magnificence of this peerless land'
Thomas bracken, 1879[10]

The British colony of New Zealand formed in the mid 1800's, a time that is defined by large leaps forward in technological innovation, namely the industrialisation of agriculture and the creation of photography. The proliferation of photography in the mid-1800's coincides with the rapid expansion of the colonial project in Aotearoa. Alan Cocker states:

'It has been argued that "the history of New Zealand is unique because the period of pioneer colonization [sic] closely coincided with the invention and development of photography"' 'its

[10] qtd. in Cocker 93.

influence coincided more closely with the development of early tourism and with the exploration of and later promotion of the country's wild and remote places.'[11]

The photographic studio of Walter Burton and his brother Alfred, under the moniker of the Burton Brothers, is an example of photography's important role within the colonial project. Founded in 1886 in Dunedin, the Brothers travelled around the colony, creating an archive of settler life and constructing a narrative of New Zealand as a place that was being built by the powerful hand of industry and empire. From 1866 to 1914, the studio continued to chart the transformation of New Zealand from arcadian rural foundings to construction of cities.

The presentation of landscape in the Burton Brothers photographs are inherently dramatic and colonial. Homing in on a settler desire to romanticise the conquest of nature, the native landscape is used as backdrop for the scenes of imperial dominance. Backgrounding scenes of grand rail bridges, burgeoning hamlets and the settlers themselves, the photographs are designed to instill both awe and an excitement for the colonial project.

Figures 3 and 4 typify the duality of photographic representation. Figure 3, overlooking Ohinemutu and Lake Rotorua, was taken after the destructive eruption of Mount Tarawera in 1886. Depicting the idyllic life of settlers in the growing town of Rotorua the photograph positions the viewer as the overlooker. Symbols of British 'civilisation' frame the lower half of the image, wooden houses, shops and a church are interspersed with the steam of Rotorua's geothermal activity, the expansive lake and distant hills off in the distance. Especially when imbued with the context of the eruption, this image serves to augment the resilient and hardy image of the settler, celebrating their dominion over the colonised landscape.

[11] Cocker, *Back Story Journal of New Zealand Art, Media & Design History* 2, 93.

Figure 4. *View of Milford Sound*. Burton Brothers (Dunedin, N.Z.). Burton Brothers 1868-1898 :View of Milford Sound. Burton Bros. Ref: PA7-31-29. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/23081644

Figure 4 on the other hand leans away from the dominating hand of settlement, showing a still and quiet gravel beach beneath the majesty of Milford Sound. In the background, Large mountains disappear into clouds while the foreground is largely empty save for a small wooden dinghy. The postcard view serves to remind the audience of the settler's role as caretaker and benefactor of the tamed landscape. Cocker notes that 'Photography was promoted as presenting the world as it was, free of interpretation of the artist.' Identifying the perceived objective power of photographs and the resulting understanding of truth applied to them. [12]

[12] Cocker, *Back Story Journal of New Zealand Art, Media & Design History* 2, 93.

Figure 5. Barrar, Wayne. *Beneath Bowen Falls to Mitre Peak, Fiordland, 2000.* Image courtesy of the Artist

Wayne Barrar, a New Zealand photographer active since the 1980's, has drawn much inspiration from the romantic style of the colonial era. Concentrating his practice on human intervention upon the scenic landscape, Geoff Park in his essay *Beyond the Beauty Spots of the Uninitiated* notes that Barrars images often centre around the relationship between wilderness and 'the exclusion of humans from nature'[13]. While co-opting the aesthetic of the colonial photographer, Barrar confronts the scenic New Zealand landscape with ecological concern. Fig 5, *Beneath Bown Falls to Mitre Peak, Fiordland*, is an example of Barrars historically informed technique, recalling the work of the Burton Brothers, it was made only metres from Figure 4's vantage point.

Throughout the creation of *Boundary Lost*, I have been drawn to the idea of the postcard. I do not draw much fascination from the words written on the back of them, nor sender or recipient. I see the postcard as a token that purports to represent a specific place through the lens of a single location. A photograph printed onto a postcard is always scenic, it is a record of a place that can be shared, standing in for the experience the sender had and the beauty the sender wished to portray to the recipient.

[13] Park, *Shifting Nature*, 18.

Bjarne Rogan in *An Entangled Object*, identifies a golden age of the picture postcard as being between 1895 and 1920[14] largely in response to 'new technologies and production processes'. Rogan identifies four categorisations of the postcard; 'the aesthetics of the card'[15], 'the card as a souvenir'[16], ' the card as a collectible'[17] and 'the card as a means of communication'[18]. Rogan applies these categories across a large range of cards, from congratulatory, art reproduction, comic cards, erotic cards and topographical cards[19], the most relevant of which to a New Zealand context is that of the topographical, specifically 'the conventionalized [sic] and stereotypical motifs of the tourist cards.'[20]

The creation of the picture postcard is rooted in the need to sell. This sense of selling can be seen in two ways. Firstly, the need of the creator and merchant to create a product that is commercially viable, a scene that is both beautiful enough and relevant enough to give cause for a customer to purchase it. Secondly, in a more abstract sense, the way in which the sender identifies familiarity in the photographs (it reminds them of what they have seen) and another where the sender must consider how the recipient of the postcard will identify that the image is alluring, attractive and representational of the senders experience.

I have increasingly seen my own photographs as needing to fulfil the role of a postcard, in the sense that a singular scene can be a representation of a place. I do not, however, wish to portray 'New Albion' as scenic, rather I am using the postcards to portray a more truthful sense of place. A concept that arose in early versions of the project was that I was creating postcards from places you do not want to go to; however, I prefer to see them as postcards from somewhere you have already been, somewhere you are intimately familiar with and have a complicated relationship to. The nature of photography is that I cannot create these connections explicitly, instead I am offering a space that can be interpreted, allowing an audience to project their own esoteric relationship with a sense of 'New Zealand' upon the indeterminate and somewhat whimsical 'New Albion'.

[14] Rogan, 'An Entangled Object', 1.
[15] Rogan, 'An Entangled Object', 4.
[16] Rogan, 'An Entangled Object', 4-5.
[17] Rogan, 'An Entangled Object', 5.
[18] Rogan, 'An Entangled Object', 5-6.
[19] Rogan, 'An Entangled Object', 7.
[20] Rogan, 'An Entangled Object', 8.

The postcard is an increasingly antiquated object in the modern world. I have not sent or received a postcard within the last decade. To me, in my personal experience of them, they are an object of my childhood and adolescence. I have memories of relatives sending me cards from far off places. I would look at the photographs and imagine how grand these foreign locations would be. In the sense of a societal artifact, the postcard is a specific marker in time.

Figure 5. Jago, *Rotoiti Jetty (West),* 2018.

Boundary Lost charts my ongoing engagement with scenes that echo the discomfort found in being Pākehā. Buildings and locations that are common to the New Zealand experience are recorded as I stumble upon them: Churches, Schools, Pubs, Parks and other spaces. Figure 5, for example, was a foundational image in the creation of this project, inspired directly by traditional landscape photography, particularly that of colonial photographers such as the Burton Brothers.

Through my process of exploration and careful composition along with presentation and titling, the touristic scene can be elevated into both a representation and a statement. Composed in a way that brings natural landscape and the constructed landscape together, the recognisably New Zealand vista of mountains surrounding a glacial lake is intruded upon by a wooden jetty emerging from the old concrete and gravel of the foreground.

While this image was an important first step in my photographic journey, it falls short of capturing my vision in a few key areas. Figure 5 fails to bring any criticality to the examination of the New Zealand landscape; while there are aspects of the quaint and suggestions of human intervention within the scene, the image is fundamentally scenic. An inherent issue when photographing the scenic landscape, specifically in Aotearoa, is that it could easily be brushed off as a purely aesthetic affair.

Figure 6. Jago, *Duck Pond*, 2023.

I endeavour to capture scenes that speak to Pākehā unease, where tension between idealisation and reality converge. I am particularly driven by the meditative and reflective nature that photography can offer an audience. For example pulling from ambiguous landscapes that speak to a familiar sense of Pākehā-ness, opening a space for audiences to reflect on the complex history of the landscapes familiar to them.

In the creation of this work, I have utilised the traditional tool of the colonial landscape photographer, the view camera. The large and unwieldy nature of a view camera restricts its user, requiring a tripod and large amounts of light to render a usable image, often resulting in traditionally composed images that carry a sense of stillness. The large negative produced by this camera allows for heavily detailed representations of a scene aiding the immersive nature of photography.

The use of black and white film within this project helps to blur the temporal interpretation of the work, calling back to the first photographers of Aotearoa who brought with them early processes of photographic pioneers; Daguerre, Fox Talbot and Scott Archer. Black and white photography has a longstanding relationship to photojournalism, a factor in the perceived objectivity of photography as a medium and that (deservedly or not) imbues a sense of truthfulness to monochrome images. I have actively sought to utilise this perceived authority of the medium to further the tension within my images and colour their reading.

Colonial Identity

Figure 7. Jago, *662 Mill Road,* 2024.

The need to create a functional colony dictated a need for a uniting national mythology. What is now considered to be the national identity of New Zealand has its foundations in the so-called colonial spirit, hyper-masculine in nature, Pākehā New Zealanders were portrayed as hardy and egalitarian. This foundational myth was a useful tool in uniting people from across the British isles, empire and beyond[21].

Much of New Zealand's early national identity derived from a sense of Britishness. Considering the large differences in language and cultural practices between Britain and Aotearoa, the conception of Britain as an ideal was, by necessity, broad and somewhat fictionalised. The creation of national mythology was not new to New Zealand and is a core tenant of nation building, Anthony D Smith identifies the national myth as ‘ an approach that takes as given certain fundamental cleavages and attributes of humanity, notably race, religion, language and territory.’[22]. In the case of the British Empire, and specifically New Zealand, this myth centred on the shared aspects of culture and language.

[21] Bannister, *Kiwi Blokes*.
[22] Smith, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11.1, 6.

I have set out to create a body of work that responds to the changing and developing course of Pākehā identity. In order to help convey the evolution of this colonial identity, I have drawn inspiration from various methods of land use.

Throughout my life I have drawn particular interest from the underlying history of Aotearoa's landscape.. Gavin Hipkins, a New Zealand photographer who artistically engages with colonial symbolism, charges his work with 'the sense of unease that young nations face in defining nationhood'. Hipkins, through the exploration of landscape, playfully draws upon the observational nature of photography.

Of particular interest to my research are two of Hipkins most celebrated series, *The Homely* (1997-2001) and *The Homely II* (2001-17). Hipkins' work strives to draw connections between disparate places, pulling together scenes from across Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the United Kingdom. *The Homely I & II* explores how identity can be constructed and fostered through the shared notions of landscape while also bringing a sense of unease. Created with a compact camera of the style used by a tourist, Hipkins takes on the role of observer, a tourist searching for a sense of home.

Figure 8. Hipkins, Gavin. *Clandon (Hinemihi)*. Image courtesy of the Artist.

An example of Hipkins' sense of the familiar or *Homely*, is Figure 8 *Clandon (Hinemihi).* This colour photo is of a Wharenui, a Māori meeting house, bathing in the sunshine and contained in the serenity of a traditional English garden. Hinemihi, a Wharenui of the Ngati Hinemihi hapu, was brought to the grounds of Clandon Park, Surrey in 1892, the residence of then Governor of New Zealand William Onslow, 4th Earl of Onslow.

It may not be not immediately obvious to the viewer that the Wharenui they are seeing is not in Aotearoa New Zealand. Playing on this familiarity, its inclusion highlights the blurring between the colony and the 'mother country'. The photograph contains features that are likely recognisable to most New Zealanders, a park scene with well-manicured lawns, European trees and the traditional carvings and architecture of Marae. Yet these overly familiar scenes clash when examined together. The Wharenui feels uneasy within this scene, with small markers that identify it as divorced from the traditional place as the centre of a Marae, the solitary meeting house appears quiet and disused. The wooden park benches suggest that this symbol of Māoridom is a mere folly. 'Derived from the French term folie, meaning "madness" or

“foolishness”, the folly was a typically functionless structure that denied human inhabitation, but rather acted as a meditative element in a landscape.’ [23] The concept of a folly is quite central to my own interpretation of New Zealand's constructed landscape.

Benjamin Schneiderman identifies the role of a folly as being a physical marker, encouraging the viewer to ‘contemplate the natural world, the spirit of the place, and their relation to the surrounding environment.’[24]. Applying the viewpoint of a folly as a marker of philosophical positionality to the New Zealand landscape, Boundary Lost curates a collection of follies.

Figure 9. Jago, *58 Burnett Road,* 2024.

An iron gate bearing the words ‘England Expects’ (Fig 9) foregrounds a typical agricultural scene. This scene is one I first encountered in 2020, while exploring the many backroads of South Canterbury. The gate stands at the entrance to the Burnett Homestead just outside the small township of Cave, built by Scottish settlers Andrew and Cathrine Burnett as a more metropolitan home in contrast to their primary residence at Mount Cook Station in the southern alps. The gates were erected by their son and future MP, Thomas Burnett, in the 1930’s to honour his parents and other settlers ‘achievements’ in the MacKenzie Country [25].

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[23] Schneiderman, *Revisiting the architectural folly in the age of the Anthropocene,* 33.
[24] Schneiderman, *Revisiting the architectural folly in the age of the Anthropocene,* 35.
[25] *Burnett Homestead Gates.*

The pastoral scene behind the gate fence could easily be mistaken for that of an English manor house. Typical of European farming methods, the paddock is almost featureless save for some tufts of grass. This photograph, in contrast to Gavin Hipkins' *Hinemihi,* shows a transplantation of British settler ideals upon the Aotearoa New Zealand landscape. There is a metaphor of the industrial steel bridging the ornate stone wall to the wire and concrete of the more modern farm fence, symbolising Britain as the connector between old world and new.

The presence of text within this photograph, specifically the use of the word *England*, could be seen as didactic, however I find that it helps to draw upon the sense of dislocation within Pākehā identity. The words 'England Expects' are a reference to a call by Horatio Nelson, an admiral in the Royal Navy, during the Battle of Trafalgar[26]. Nelson's words, 'England expects every man to do his duty' were of course specific to the context of that naval battle, however they have continued on as a symbolic call to a sense of romanticism for the concept of England.

[26] Watson, 'England Expects' 132.

National Identity

Figure 10. Jago, *198 Queen Street,* 2024.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, national mythology and Pākehā identity began to take on a sense of independence from the overt Britishness of early settlement. The identity of Pākehā until the late twentieth century positioned itself within an idealistic relationship to Britain, with many still considering Britain 'home'. Belich identifies key aspects of the aspirational nature of our national image, that of an isolated colony that prioritised 'the need for homogeneity, conformity, and Britishness, for the security of sameness.'. What followed were three loose periods of large scale change in New Zealand's relationship with Britain and the wider international community.

The Gallipoli campaign of the First World War - in which British forces invaded the Dardanelles Strait in an attempt to hamper Ottoman efforts in the Mediterranean - is now seen as an important event in the creation myth of national identities in both Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, owing to the prominence of the ANZAC forces that included the NZEF or New Zealand Expeditionary forces[27]. Rowan Light identifies the experiences of the soldiers as something that

[27] Light, Rowan, *Reflections on the Commemoration of the First World War*, 74.

‘transcends war: a national memory, which provides New Zealanders with a shared emotional connection.’[28] The death of 16,703 New Zealanders over the course of the conflict left a significant impact on the remaining population, and was measurably higher than that of the Second World War[29].

The end of the Second World War saw many European powers, most notably the United Kingdom, begin a period of decolonisation, in which overseas colonies were granted increasing levels of independence. For New Zealand this came in the form of reluctant adoption of the *Statute of Westminster* in 1947, which granted full parliamentary independence from Britain[30]. Harshan Kumarasingham notes that the ratification of the statute in New Zealand (which was adopted by the British parliament in 1931) was not necessarily seen as inevitable, noting that popular sentiment believed it ‘would lessen the bonds of empire that upheld their country’s defence, financial and cultural needs’.[31]

The United Kingdom joined the European Economic Community in 1973, restricting trade between New Zealand and its former colonial master. While being a product of a global push toward free trade, this is often seen as being responsible for New Zealand's economic woes, beginning in the 1970s[32].

Aotearoa New Zealand of the twenty-first century often derives identity from multiculturalism and biculturalism. These two terms are of course interrelated but also, in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, have specific meanings. Katherine Smits identifies multiculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand as referring to ‘polyethnic diversity resulting from non-British immigration’[33] and Biculturalism being specific to ‘attitudes and policies relating to indigenous Maori [sic]’[34] and their relationship with the Pākehā majority.

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[28] Light, Rowan, *Reflections on the Commemoration of the First World War*, 75.
[29] Wilson, Nick, et al, *NZ Med J* 126.1385, 13.
[30] Kumarasingham, Harshan, *National Identities* 12.2, 147-160.
[31] Kumarasingham, Harshan, *National Identities* 12.2, 151.
[32] Gibbons, Kelly, et al, *Small States and the Changing Global Order,* 180-181.
[33] Smits, Katherine, *Multiculturalism in the British Commonwealth,* 104.
[34] Smits, Katherine, *Multiculturalism in the British Commonwealth,* 104.

The creation of a New Zealand nationalism was and is continued to be formed by a swinging of the proverbial political pendulum, one side's desire to correct the others over correction. The New Zealand ideal, that is to say the quaint imagining of New Zealand by the dominant Pākehā, is founded in the settler conception of the colony. Colonial structures (physically speaking); the humble bach (or crib), The town square, wooden villas, the local pub, a manicured garden, all draw from the visual language of the British colonial settler. Whilst the economic and nationalistic image of New Zealand moved away from the Britishness of settlement, the ideal continued to draw from the idea of the hyper-masculinised 'New Zealand bloke'. One who is egalitarian, resourceful, somewhat agricultural, tough. This conception of the average New Zealander hardly reflects the reality of a population that is now largely metropolitan.

The fetishised (or possibly idealised) home of this average bloke is the small town. Heavily rooted in nostalgia, the small town is quaint, filled with colonial era wooden buildings, often built around a town square (dominated by a clock tower or band rotunda), untouched by the modern hand. The true appearance of these small towns is often similar to its ideal, however this is skin deep, a quick turn down a side street reveals dilapidated remains of industry, derelict houses and cars.

In the creation of my body of work, I have drawn from these conceptions of small town New Zealand. In their role as a reservoir of Pākehā identity, I am able to mine these peripheral spaces of urban settlement. Utilising the inherent stereotypes of this constructed environment, I can invite an audience that is familiar with the mythology of Pākehā identity into a space that facilitates questioning, challenging, celebration and commiseration.

Figure 11. Laurence Aberhart, *Lodge Victory #40, Nelson, 28 January 1983.*, 1983/2009, silver gelatine gold and selenium toned, 304 x 255mm. Image courtesy of the Artist and Gow Langsford.

Exploration of New Zealand's post-settlement cultural landscape has been undertaken by many artists in the twentieth and twenty first centuries, however one that has been a key influence on my own work is Laurence Aberhart. Employing a large format camera and black and white film, Aberhart has explored many facets of Aotearoa New Zealand's landscape, with particular attention to institutional and domestic architecture.

Aberhart's work often takes the form of typological studies; a collection of ANZAC war memorials, Art Deco houses or, in the case of Figure 11, Masonic Lodges. *Lodge Victory #40*, is an example of Aberhart's objective style. Utilising a very traditional composition, the Masonic temple sits directly in the centre of the frame, leaving little doubt that it is the subject of the photograph. Taken in either the early or late hours of the day, Aberhart has consciously ensured that the white plaster of the building is the brightest object in the scene, drawing the viewer's eye directly to the characteristic architectural details.

There is a sense of monument to the building, something that no doubt drew Aberhart to this scene, the classical architecture recalls a sense of european authority that lends the building grandeur, this however contrasts with the obvious signs of decay in the building itself, signs of fading glory show in the build up of many years of dirt, cracking and chipped plaster.Through the creation of a typology, Aberhart is able to afford his audience the place to reflect on how and why such an institution is so ubiquitous. Aberhart has attributed his desire to photograph as an obligation to record scenes of daily life that might otherwise be deemed 'unimportant'[35], a conservator-like role that has motivated many of his photographic projects.

I feel a sense of commonality to Aberhart. I too am motivated by a need to photograph and capture aspects of the Aotearoa New Zealand landscape, however my desire is less to capture the unimportant or create typologies but is to instead explore the nationalistic forces that shaped the land I live in.

Figure 12, *Ranch. Northeast of Keota, Colorado*, 1969
© Robert Adams, courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

[35] O'Brien, *Aberhart*, 261

Another artist whose work has heavily influenced my practice, is Robert Adams, an American photographer who is prominent for his exploration of the changing landscape of the western United States, a landscape scarred by colonialism and aggressive industrialisation. Fuelled by the post-WWII industrial boom, Adams saw a need to document the expansion of urban areas as they encroached into the comparatively empty and serene prairies of the Great Plains. I have found that while I share much of my visual language with Adams, I derive a point of departure in my exploration of landscape that is possibly undergoing an opposite phenomenon. Exploring not the encroachment of industry and urbanity, I am exploring the decline and industrial bust.

Figure 13. Jago, *Cnr Hayes and Heaton Streets,* 2020.

Figure 13, is a photograph I made in the increasingly derelict area of the Port of Timaru. Standing just off the roadside, I pointed my lens toward the towering grain silos as if they were a grand statue or church steeple. To the left of the silo, an old brick building stands, showing the shadow of a building that previously stood next to it. This scene cannot help but invoke a sense of the passing of time, as the railway stretches off toward the distance the buildings become more visibly derelict.

Boundary Lost - Building New Albion

In the creation of Boundary Lost, I have drawn aspects of not just the traditional photographic elements of colonisation but have also applied cartographic conventions to my images. The names that settlers attached to the land in front of them was often referential to the specific places from which they came, with many towns and cities in New Zealand being named after a town or city in Britain. Some have also been named for various military or political figures that were prominent in British history. The name *New Albion* is intended to reflect the name of many colonial settlements and the colonial naming scheme, one that served to connect landscape to a recognisable identity, that of Britain. This naming scheme serves to both undermine and highlight the formulaic nature behind Pākehā naming of these new sites.

The word Albion has been a synonym of England since antiquity, being mentioned in the writings of ancient writers such as Pliny and Plato[36]. Albion is also tied to nationalistic mythology, most notably in William Blake's 1820 epic poem *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion*, whose title character, a mythological founder of Britain, is considered 'the form and embodiment of the entire universe.'[37]. Jerusalem which was put to music during WWI, has become a hymn to England as a utopia. Blake, along with Wordsworth, is still revered and recognised as a key force in the romantic movement of the late 1700's to mid 1800's[38].

In the creation of this work I have driven down many roads and navigated their intersections, using photography to interrogate aspects of colonial identity that have persisted in the places of my childhood. The development of this project has spanned from a focus on the purely industrial and commercial to a more lyrical approach that unpacks the features of a landscape. I have developed my photographic style to utilise stillness and atmosphere to communicate an uneasy nostalgia.

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[36] Ackroyd, *Albion,* xix.
[37] Worrall, *Studies in Romanticism*, 189.
[38] Simpson, *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake*, 169.

Presentation

Throughout the creation of this work I have been experimenting with various methods for exhibiting my photographs within a gallery setting, this has happened alongside experimentation with various imaging methods.

An important aspect of my practice is printing in a darkroom and the use of silver gelatine printing paper. To me, photography that is printed traditionally is important, I think of my role as the maker of the photographs as inherent to my experience of creating art. The use of traditional or optical printing methods extends me the opportunity to be intimately involved in all aspects of an image's creation while eschewing the clinical technicality of digital scanning and printing.

Due to the analogue nature of my practice, the display of my photographs has always been somewhat dictated by my own access to materials and facilities. Early work that was created with an 8x10" camera was restricted to being contact printed, where a negative is placed directly onto sensitised paper, as I did not have ready access to an enlarger that could accommodate its negatives. Contact printing, while producing an incredibly detailed and rich image, was unable to yield photographs any larger than 8x10" something that, with testing, became quite restrictive in terms of exhibition.

Encouraging an audience to engage closely with a photograph became a key focus of my early experimentation in display methods. A particular example of this research is Figure 14, in which I used laser cut sheets of MDF with small apertures cut into each sheet to reveal aspects of the image beneath. The use of an industrial material contrasted with the delicate detail of a contact printed photograph. There were certain failings in this display method, the largest being that I was unable to encourage the audience to remove the masks to expose the image underneath without directly instructing them to do so.

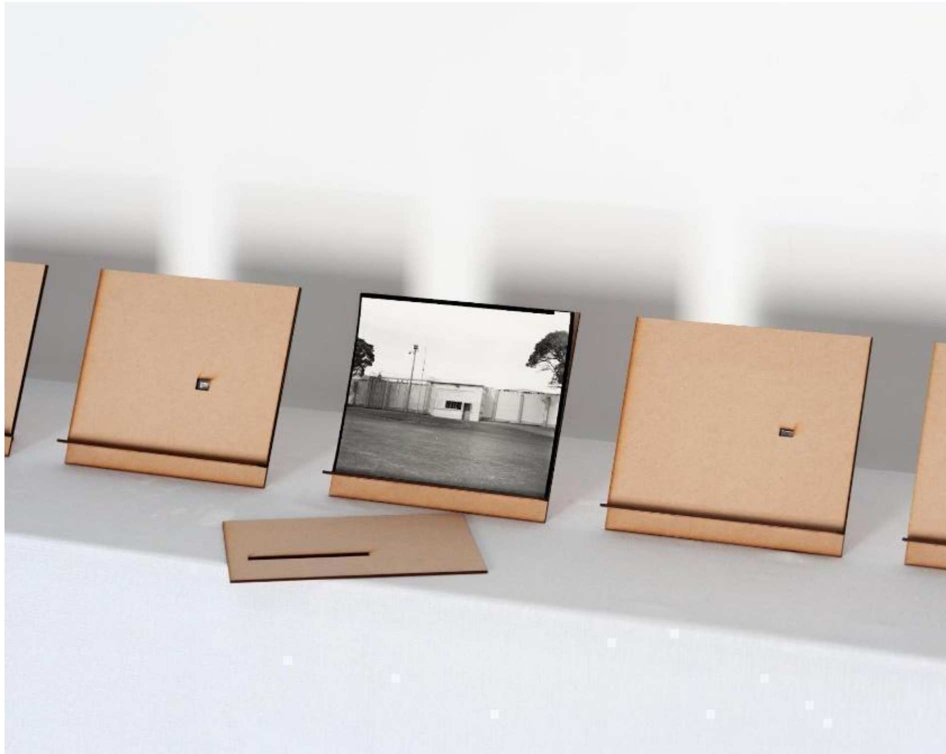

Figure 14. Jago, *Managed Frontier (install)*, 2023.

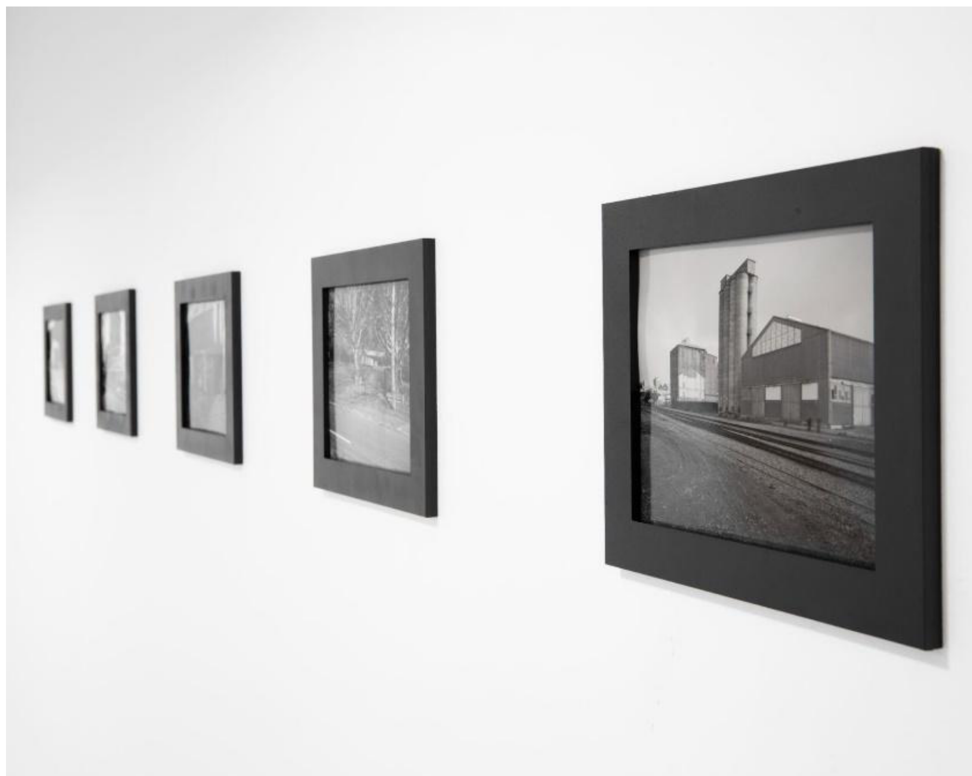

Figure 15. Jago, *The Boundary Lost (install)*, 2023.

Later test installs returned the whole image to view, however the work still felt hindered by the small size of the photographs. The subsequent decision to use a format that was easier to enlarge allowed for a richer viewing experience. The larger print sizes I was able to utilise allowed me to create large scale photographs that could encourage a viewer to deeply inspect, looking in on fine details and immerse themselves into.

The move to larger scale images increased the appearance of artefacts of the imaging process, grain was visible, dust, hair and scratches could now be seen on close inspection. The analogue nature of my practice was more present in the work, something that since embracing has allowed me a sense of freedom from my perfectionist tendencies.

Another aspect of presentation I have incorporated is the use of a single orientation, all of the photographs are horizontal or 'landscape' compositions. The use of which recalls not just the work of earlier colonial era photographers but also 20th century artists such as Aberhart and American photographer Robert Adams. While the use of the term 'landscape' to describe this orientation of image is not often literal, the wider dimension being horizontal does offer a more immersive sense to a scene and recalls the scenic connotations of the postcard.

Conclusion

Figure 16. Jago, *Waterworks Road,* 2024.

Boundary Lost utilises an experiential documentary mode of photography, archiving Aotearoa New Zealand's landscape, capturing the scars of colonisation while reflecting on the environment its inhabitants engage with every day. Inspired by writings on ecology and cultural motivations I explore the colonial mindset that constructed settlers as protectors and civilisers of the land, at the expense of profound cultural and environmental consequences.

I came into this project with a sense of unease. I have long been engaging with research around the relationship between photography and ‘post’-colonial Aotearoa New Zealand. However this exploration has by its nature asked me to wrangle with my own place within the cultural fabric of Aotearoa New Zealand. Colonisation is an unavoidable facet of life in this land, to take a hybridised approach to the integration of Māori and native flora symbols into the national psyche is merely bandaging the wound, failing to address the systematic and cultural forces that enforce hierarchy. Contemporary society is continuing to engage with the legacy of the settler project however the uniting nature of the settler identity is continuing to divide and be propagandised for continued enforcement of western settler ideals.

The identity of this country is both varied and, in many ways, strictly binary. While the role colonisation plays in modern society is less overt than in earlier periods of the nation’s existence, the symbolism of colonisation and its driving forces continue to inform modern political and cultural relationships to the land of Aotearoa.

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