



SEA SINGS, LUMEN & WINGS REALM

Jo Darvall, Martin King and Clare Humphries

1 - 22 September 2023

PRINT COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA GALLERY

Gallery hours Tuesday to Friday 10am-4pm | Studio 2 Guild, 152 Sturt St, Southbank VIC 3006 | (03) 9416 015

The artists acknowledge that they each live and create within the lands, waters, and skies of Australian First Nations peoples, including Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation in Narm/Melbourne, the Gadigal of the Eora Nation in Sydney, and the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation in Walyalup/Freemantle. Always Was, Always Will Be Aboriginal Land.

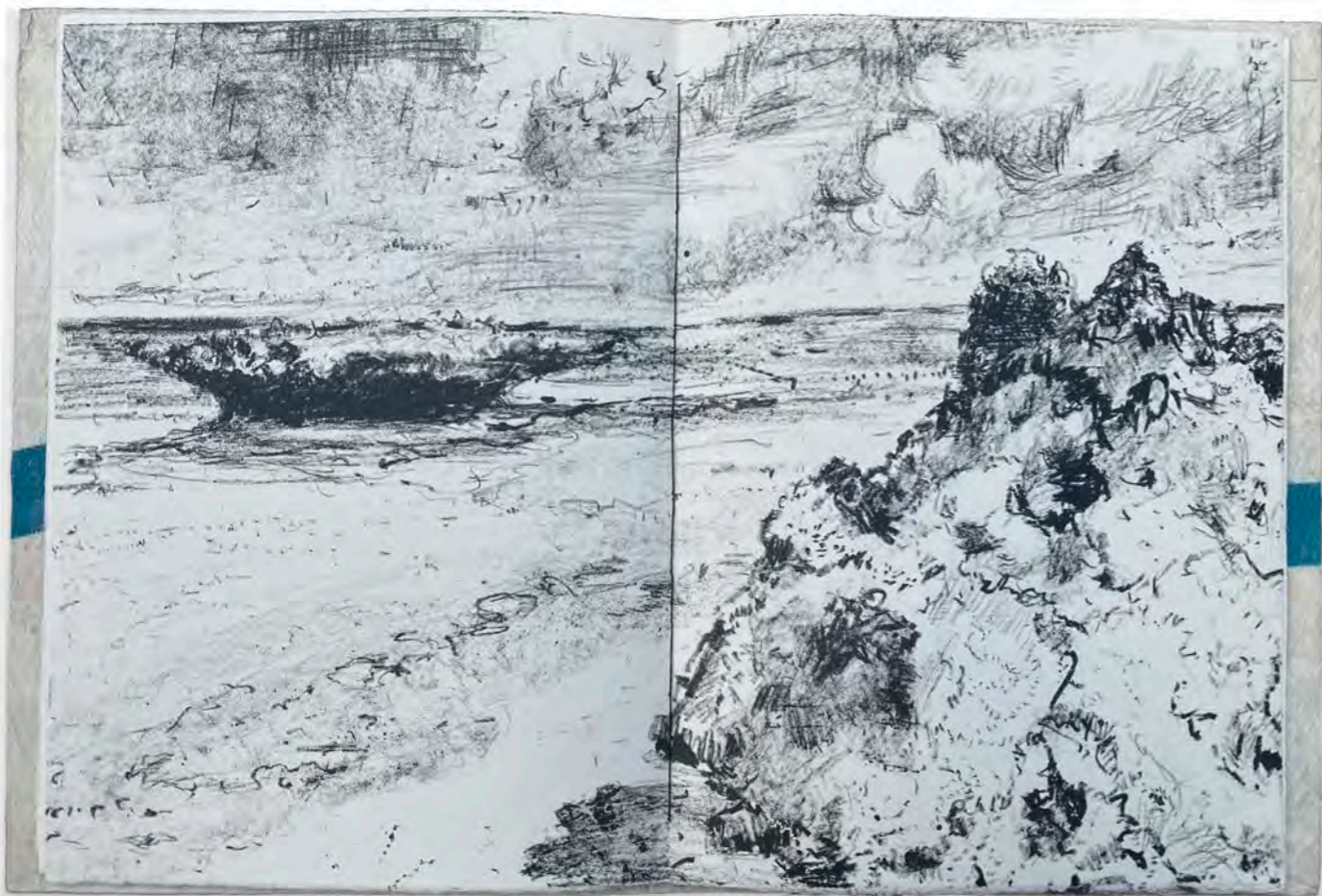
The Print Council of Australia also acknowledges and pays respect to the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation; and to the traditional owners and custodians of all the lands where PCA members live and work, whose sovereignty remains unceded.

present, in place and time

On the surface, *Sea Sings, Lumen, and Wings Realm* is an exhibition of works that unapologetically use printmaking to realise ideas. The centrality of print is underscored by the location of the exhibition at the *Print Council of Australia Gallery*.

Yet, as I sit to write this exhibition essay, I find myself thinking about drawing.

Drawing is interwoven through the warp and weft of the exhibition. It is the means through which each artist has tried to record, to decipher, and to come to terms with their place on the Australian continent, and also their moment in time. In each work drawing moves in and out of relation with other media too. The momentum of activity in the exhibition crosses from one process into another, and back again, with drawing, photography, and printmaking brought into relationship with one another.



Above:
Jo Darvall
Sea Sings & Winged Realm no 7, 2023
Unique state, multi-plate monoprint
on Arches paper
56 x 75cm

Left:
Jo Darvall
Ravuka Point, Yadua Fiji, detail from *Hydrosphere*, 2023
Artist book, lithographs hand-drawn by the artist, printed by Peter Lancaster & Emma Sattler at Lancaster Press Fiji, with Masi paper binding and poetry by Yan Toussaint
35 x 51.7cm (page spread)

I have often thought that to draw is to make contact. A drawing, like a print, indexes a duration of touch. It may register the drag of charcoal across a surface, or the tap of a pencil as it stutters over a page. A line worn into a field of grass remembers the weight of two feet as they pressed, one-after-another, into the ground. And even a fleeting sketch of light made as a hand trails a torch through the air, still brings things into contact as the body travels through invisible and odourless gases. In each instance, the drawn surface is exposed to an inscriptive force (or the air to a disturbance), which registers a trace of presence in time.

Drawings are suffused with indexical traces. Each mark arises in a passage of activity where moments of touch stage a relationship between a body,¹ an action, and a receptive surface. In Jo

Darvall's practice the action at play is not just the physical gesture of drawing, but the act of careful attentiveness that initiates her gesture in the first place. Much of Darvall's work is grounded in her ongoing method of walking, observing, and transcribing: wandering through forests and meandering along coastlines as she notes down forms, and draws passages that enliven her senses.

In *Ravuka Point, Yadua Fiji*, from the book *Hydrosphere* (2023), scratches and dots show the path of Darvall's vision as it brushed across clusters of vegetation, and skimmed stretches of shallow water. Breathlessly light marks reveal her soft gaze as it traversed the shore, whilst deep, pressured lines betray an intensity of attention given to the shadows. Notably though, we see no evidence of revision. Darvall made *Ravuka Point* by drawing directly onto an aluminium lithographic

plate whilst on residency at Lancaster Press Fiji, a process in which erasure is not possible. Once a mark is made, even in error, it cannot not be undone. Plate lithography intensifies the immediacy of the drawn mark, and calls on the artist to be fully present in the moment. Darvall had to draw without looking back.

Where drawing is an evidentiary mark in Darvall's practice, it assumes the task of re-visioning in my recent works in the exhibition. My latest project re-orientates celestial maps of the 17th Century, highlighting the ways early telescopes helped to imagine the skies of *Terra Australis Incognita* (Latin for 'Unknown Southern Land') as upside-down. The European notion of an inverted Australia is reflected clearly in the idea of the *Antipodes* (Latin for 'with feet opposite ours') which positions the Southern Hemisphere in reverse. The map of

the moon by 17th century astronomer Giovanni Riccioli,² for example, describes an upright position only for the Northern eye.

In *Seas of Delirium (South side up)* (2023), I incorporate an image of the rising moon made from my observations on the Western Coast of Australia. Over this intimately abraded surface I have enlarged and re-transcribed Riccioli's map, rotating and flipping his 'data' to articulate a Southern position. In *Perspectus Australis (with feet opposite)* (2023), I undertook a similar inversion, upending segments of a print from Francis Place's³ series *Vivarium Grenovicicum* (1676). I specifically quote *Prospectus Australis* which presents a view from Greenwich Observatory looking South, locating the viewer close to what would later become the prime meridian⁴ looking outward toward a picturesque unknown.

Left:
Clare Humphries
Perspectus Australis (with feet opposite), 2023
 Ink and dry pigment on paper; hand-sanded reduction linocut print with direct-trace drawing
 44.5 x 112cm (paper)

Right:
Clare Humphries
Seas of Delirium (South side up), 2023
 Ink and dry pigment on paper; hand-sanded reduction linocut print with direct-trace drawing
 44.5 x 48.5cm (paper)





Martin King
pages from the diary of lost souls, 2022
 Etching, drypoint, spitbite, photopolymer gravure, chine collé
 100 x 80cm

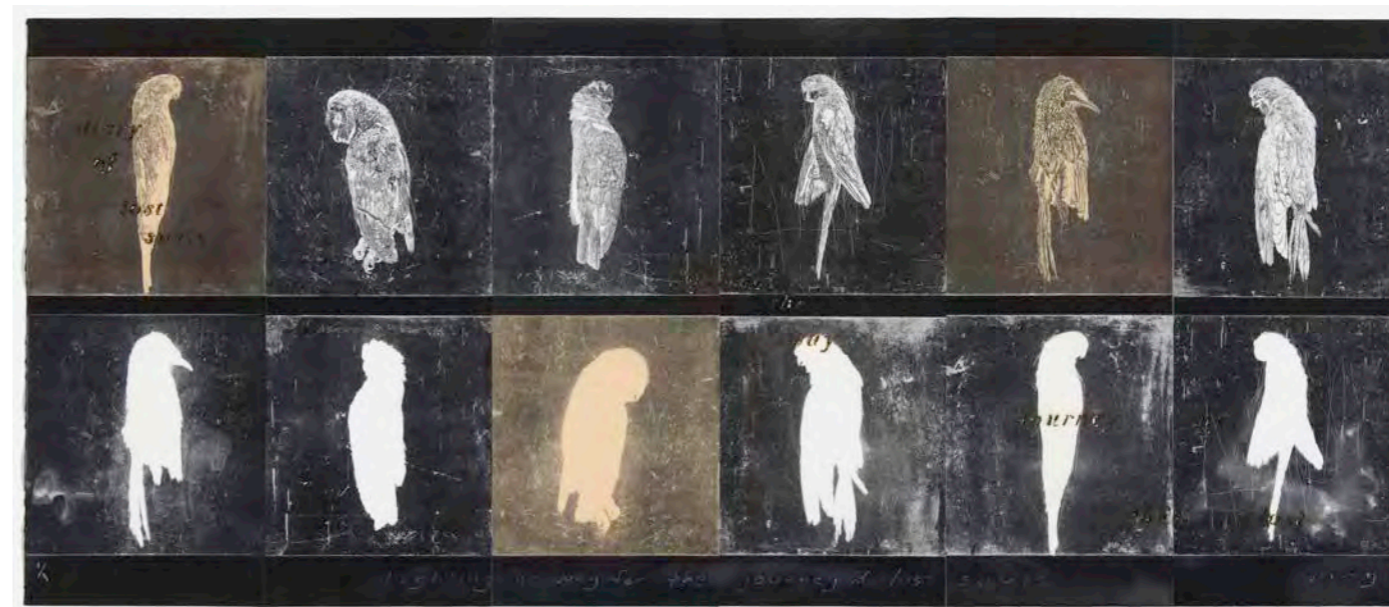
Martin King's work also takes up the possibility of revisiting the past, yet his acts of transcription do not revise history. Instead, they call into question our present moment. In *pages from the diary of lost souls* (2022) King gathers a cacophony of photopolymer gravure etchings, captured photomechanically from sketches in naturalist John Cotton's⁵ sketchbook. The ghostly forms of Cotton's birds are printed on parchment-yellow paper, forming a background of pages upon which the silhouette of a large tree is imprinted.

The tree in King's work is an imagined hybrid of two species, an English Ash and a Peppermint Gum, that live in Melbourne's Fitzroy Gardens, an urban park established in 1848 when Cotton was filling his book. There is a sense of the pressure with which the tree (an etching printed with force) has penetrated the pages beneath, grounding the spectral presence of Cotton's birds that might otherwise float or fly off the page. It is under this strain of compression that the divided form suggests a force of colonisation over Australia's ecologies. Yet, hope also arises. King's tree emerges from the labour of slowly etched and hand-scored lines, so as to imagine the possibility of things growing alongside and materially intertwined with one another.

Michael Newman once asserted that "The mediums of art are concretions of time", with each medium and each artwork serving to "delay, condense and spread-out time in their own way."⁶ In this exhibition, for example, we see the slow time of pulling a crayon across the tooth of an aluminium plate; the instant of photo-sensitive capture; and the brief passage of contact that occurs when printing plate and paper pass through the press together, joined momentarily in what Michael Rothenstein called an embrace.⁷

However, it seems to me that we can go a step further than Newman and say that mediums do not just move time in different ways, they also harness and gather things that occur in time in particular ways too. Indexical traces of touch, for example, cohere differentially through the drawn, the printed, and the captured. Each means of contact leaves residues on the surface that evidence acts of attention, care, and even force. What arises in the intertwining of media are more than concretions of time, but also phenomenological questions of tactility and present-ness.

— Dr Clare Humphries



Martin King
lighting the way for the journey of lost souls, 2022
 Photopolymer gravure, chine collé
 60 x 145cm

JO DARVALL

Jo Darvall studied at the Victorian College of the Arts, receiving a BA in Fine Art in 1998. Her work articulates her sensate encounters with bushland, arising from her frequent walks in nearby forests during which she draws, paints and listens. Jo's work enlivens the sensate connections of being enmeshed in place, from her delicate paintings to her kinetic installations and encaustic monoprints. Over the past three decades Jo Darvall's works have featured in eighteen solo exhibitions and forty-two group exhibitions in Australia, China and Singapore. She established the Artists for Kids Culture Trust with fellow Roar Artists in the 1990s, co-founded the Swan River Print Studio in Heathcote, and has taught at the Fremantle Arts Centre (FAC) and the University of Western Australia.

www.jodarvall.com @jodarvall

MARTIN KING

Martin King is one of the leading printmakers in Australia, and has been the senior printmaker at Australian Print Workshop since 1994. King's wide-ranging art practice is underpinned by an abiding interest in the Australian landscape, most visibly by making connections between land, sea and air. King's recent works express the fragility of our relationship with nature using creatures of the sky as simple motifs that convey a paradoxical vision of the Australian landscape as both tranquil and unsettling. Martin King's works are held in numerous corporate collections, 17 regional gallery and university collections and four state galleries in Australia plus collections in the USA, UK and India.

www.martinking.com @artmartz

CLARE HUMPHRIES

Clare Humphries is an Australian artist who has lived and worked in Melbourne, London and Sydney. In recent works Clare translates observations of the rising moon to produce image sequences that articulate arcs of orbital movement, and the shifting perceptions of cosmic distance that accompany them. Clare is driven by a curiosity for the way encounters with things 'in-between'—or in transition—can prompt us to contemplate time and transience, and can re-animate our felt connections to the world around us. Clare has exhibited widely in Australia and internationally, and her work is represented in many public collections including the National Gallery of Australia and the State Library of Victoria.

www.clarehumphries.com @clare.humphries

FOOTNOTES

1. The 'body' proposed here may be human, or indeed non-human.
2. Riccioli's map, *Almagestum Novum* (published 1651), assigned poetic names for what were thought to be bodies of water on the Moon which remain in use today, including the Sea of Tranquillity.
3. Francis Place's work *Prospectus Australis* (1676) from the series *Vivarium Grenovicicum* is held in the British Museum, London, where I have lived for the past five years.
4. In 1884, 22 countries voted to adopt the Greenwich meridian as the prime meridian, making it the common zero of longitude and the standard of time reckoning throughout the world.
5. John Cotton was a British born naturalist who made studies of birds he encountered in Australia between 1844-1849.
6. Michael Newman, 'The Marks, Traces, and Gestures of Drawing' in Catherine de Zegher (ed.), *The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act*, London and New York 2003: p. 105
7. Michael Rothenstein quoted in Ruth Weisberg, 'The Syntax of the Print: In Search of an Aesthetic Context.' *The Tamarind Papers: A Journal of the Fine Print* 9, no. 2 (1986): p. 58.

DESIGN
Margin Press

COVER
Clare Humphries
Perspectus Australis
(with feet opposite), 2023 (detail)
Ink and dry pigment on paper

END PAGES
Jo Darvall
Sea Sings and
Winged Realm no 5, 2023 (detail)
Unique State, multi-plate monoprint

PHOTOGRAPHY
Matthew Stanton (pages 3-6)
Bo Wong (page 2)
Jo Darvall (page 1)

