

Cage of Ghosts

Jon Rhodes

Finding Cages of Ghosts



For 20 years I used Alice Springs as a service town. As a still photographer or as part of a film crew, I flew in, hired four-wheel drives, shopped at supermarkets and disposal stores and within a day or two was on my way to the western deserts and the *Pintupi*, *Warlpiri* and *Jaru* communities—at Papunya, Yuendumu, Kintore, Kiwirrkura, Balgo and Yaruman.

After some months away, the return to Alice Springs consisted of much the same activities in reverse—returning the vehicles, packing away camping equipment until next time, checking and cleaning cameras, sending off film for processing, and lots of telephoning.

Within a day or two I would be on a plane heading home to the east coast. There was no time for sight-seeing. Alice Springs was a redneck, racist town in the 1970s—a place to get things done and then get away from.

All this changed in 1992, when I was driving some members of a film crew from Yuendumu to the Alice Springs airport. We stopped briefly in town at the home of a local artist, and while I waited in her lounge room, my eye was attracted to the bright, jaunty cover of a small book that was propped up on the mantelpiece. Inside, the pages were beautifully clear skyline maps of the landscape around Alice Springs. They were clear because all the clutter of the town was not drawn in, leaving the ranges and rocks easy to see. Their names were spelt in *Arremte* and the writer told me, as I



Brenda Thornley

Skyline Map from *The Arremte Landscape of Alice Springs*

Courtesy of Institute for Aboriginal Development Inc.

scanned the pages, that ‘caterpillar beings’ formed much of the landscape on the eastern side of town, while it was the activities of wild dogs that did the same on the western side. A ‘totemic topography’ within a town! ¹

I could hardly wait to drop the film crew at the airport, race back to a bookshop in town and buy a copy of *The Arremte Landscape of Alice Springs* by David Brooks. ²

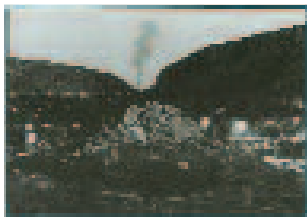
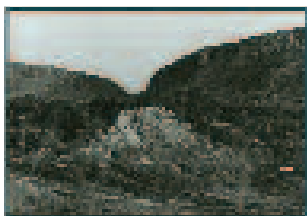
I was leaving for Kiwirrkura the next day, so as the sun was setting I scrambled up the closest hill across the road from the motel where I was staying. The guide book said this was *Akeyulerre*, or Billy Goat Hill, on the corner of the Stuart Highway and Larapinta Drive. It is a low hill, but even from that height the buildings of the town levelled out and the hills and rocky outcrops seemed to jump up and become more visible.

National Library of Australia

27 September – 25 November 2007

I prowled around the top of the hill, using the skyline maps to find more totemic features while I watched the sun start to glint on the crucifix of a distant church. The rocky spaces between the roads and buildings had come alive through the stories I had read of how they were created. I stayed on the hill until dark, watching the shadows, visually playing, hiding and revealing the cross from behind some rocks, seeing Alice Springs with fresh eyes.

All the way to Kiwirrkura and back, I thought about what I had seen from Billy Goat Hill and the juxtaposition of the Aboriginal landscape with the structure of the town. Two weeks later I was back in Alice and met up with the artist Carol Ruff, who had also discovered Brooks' book, visited many of the sites and already completed three or four paintings of them. It didn't take us long to decide to collaborate on making art based on *The Arrernte Landscape*, and over the next two years we roamed the town together, painting and photographing, meeting the Traditional Owners, listening to stories about green beetles and soakages, caterpillar cocoon sites and wild dog creator-beings, until we eventually exhibited *Site Seeing* at the Araluen Centre in Alice Springs in July 1994.³



Jon Rhodes and Carol Ruff
The Battle Ground, 1992–93

Yarrentye Arltere; The intestines of the Wild Dog; Larapinta Drive, Alice Springs

Later that year, Ruff and I used *A Field Guide to Aboriginal Rock Engravings*⁴, by Peter Stanbury and John Clegg, to find some of the many thousands of sites that still exist around Sydney. I photographed three engravings at North Bondi, Mt Ku-ring-gai and West Head before I decided to put the work aside and concentrate on completing *Whichaway?*, an exhibition of photographs of *Pintupi* I had first met at Yayayi in 1974, and then again at Kiwirrkura in 1990.⁵

The opening of *Whichaway?* at the Canberra School of Art Gallery in October 1998, coincided with a residency at Photomedia, in the School of Art at the Australian National University. As I unpacked my car,



38 Sainsbury Street, Wanniassa, ACT, 1998 (detail)



War Memorials, Wanniassa and Anzac Parade, ACT, 1998 (detail)



The Spook Tree, Wanniassa, ACT 1998 (detail)

I noticed a familiar oval shape on one of the eucalypt trees growing by the side of the road at the entrance to the School in Ellery Crescent. It looked like a scarred tree.

Later that afternoon, while browsing in the Co-op Bookshop, I found a copy of *Moth Hunters of the Australian Capital Territory*⁶ and opened it in the middle, at a spread of photographs. In photo 1, a smiling Arnold Williams, from the Ngunnawal Land Council, was standing in front of a scarred tree in Wanniasa, Canberra. The scar in the photograph looked similar to the one on the tree at Ellery Crescent. I turned to the back of the book where the author, Josephine Flood, informed me that ACT Heritage in Tuggeranong could be contacted for further information about scarred trees. Next day they faxed me 14 pages about the scarred trees of Wanniasa, a suburb in the Tuggeranong Valley. I marked the positions of the trees on a street directory and headed south into a violent thunderstorm that broke as soon as I drove into Wanniasa. Through torrents of rain I peered out of my car, determined to find the whereabouts of the trees, until miraculously the sun came out, and I located about 15 scars on trees that were growing on footpaths, in parks, school grounds and front gardens.

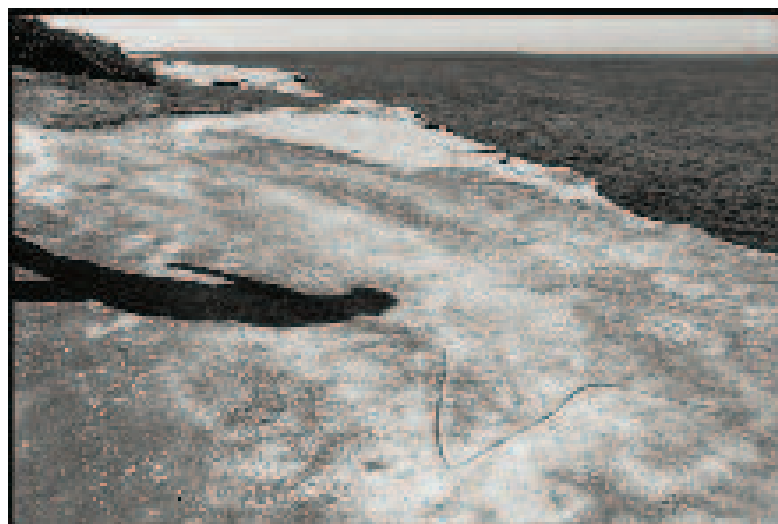


The Caged Carved Trees of Collymogle, Collarenebri, NSW, 1999 (detail)

Over the next month I photographed the scarred trees, met Arnold Williams, heard claims and counter-claims about the authenticity of the scars and talked to Peter Dowling, an anthropologist/archaeologist and a resident of Wanniasa, who was 'quite surprised and a bit startled' when he 'began to see some of the old eucalyptus trees in the valley with scars on their trunks typical of those' he 'knew to be of Aboriginal origin elsewhere'.⁷ Dowling was the first person to notice the scarred trees, as he went about his daily regimen of running, cycling or walking along Wanniasa's extensive network of pathways.

These trees, as well as others found in the neighbouring suburbs of Kambah, Gilmore, Gordon and Richardson are listed as heritage items by the National Trust, the ACT Heritage Council and the Australian Heritage Commission.⁸

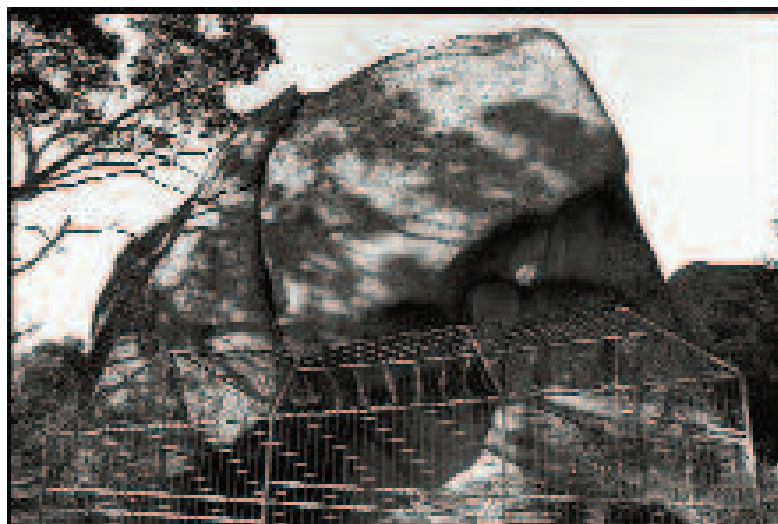
By the time I left Canberra in November 1998, I was enthusiastic about resuming my search for other physical reminders of Aboriginal



Walk by, Mackenzies Point, NSW, 2002 (detail)



The Boorolong Carved Trees, Armidale and Boorolong, NSW, 1999 (detail)



Bunjil's Cage, The Black Range, Victoria, 2001



Bennelong at Grotto Point, Grotto Point, NSW, 2002 (detail)

occupation in south-eastern Australia, where the impact of European settlement has been the longest and most intense. However, rather than photograph a totemic landscape created by ancestral beings, as I had in *Site Seeing*, I wanted this time to find places on a human scale, created by human hands.

The Riches of Ancient Australia, another book written by Josephine Flood⁹, became an indispensable guide in the glove-box of my car for the next eight years, as I followed directions to ceremonial sites such as cave paintings in the Grampian Mountains; bora rings at Burleigh Heads, Tucki Tucki and Lennox Head; rock engravings at Woy Woy, Tamarama, Balls Head and Grotto Point; burial grounds at Condobolin and Molong; carved trees from burial and bora grounds that were placed in schools at Eugowra and Toomelah and in museums at Walcha, Armidale, Collarenebri and Melbourne; and utilitarian sites like grinding grooves at Terramungamine and Hazelbrook, scarred trees in Melbourne and a stone fish trap at Toorbul Point.¹⁰

I became fascinated by the amount and type of protection that surrounded most of the sites that are identified in guide books.



Industrial Grinding, Terramungamine and Dubbo, NSW, 2001 (detail)

Combinations of boardwalks, railings, cages, gates and grilles; large wooden constructions, fences, chains and posts; steel viewing platforms, mesh, perspex, signs, bars and locks are all used to stop or minimise damage to these fragile and vulnerable areas.

Ironically, these places still exist partly because of the barriers that protect and yet isolate them; that are necessary and yet obstruct; that are practical and yet are obstacles. They deny most visitors any insight as to why these places were of such significance to the original people of Australia.

Sometimes, as I peered through the bars and mesh, trying to make sense of what I was seeing, I thought back to what I was told on more than one occasion by Aboriginal men, as they showed me their special places. They said the energy of centuries of the ritual use of ochre, blood, story, dance, song and secrecy was still there, but it was now 'in the ground', under the ceremonial place. It was dangerous to try, but that energy could be reactivated if it was done 'the right way'. Whether this is true or not, it changed my perceptions, and all the caged and contained places I photographed are now not quite as they seem.

Jon Rhodes
August 2007



Cage of Ghosts, Mt Stayplton, Victoria, 2001 (detail)

Jon Rhodes was the recipient of an H.C. Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship at the Australian National University in 2006. For four months he lived in Canberra and researched the history of all the places he had photographed. The book, *Cage of Ghosts*, will be published in late 2008

Footnotes to Finding *Cages of Ghosts*

- ¹ Totemic topography was a term coined by Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen as they recorded many of the Arunta (Arrente) ancestor creator stories at the telegraph station in Alice Springs during the summer of 1896–97. They published the results of this fieldwork in *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London: Macmillan, 1899); and in *The Arunta* (vols I and II) (London: Macmillan, 1927).
- ² Published by the Institute for Aboriginal Development, Alice Springs, in 1991, with illustrations by Shawn Dobson and maps by Brenda Thornley.
- ³ *Site Seeing* comprised 20 paired works of paintings and sequences of photographs. It was shown at the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane in 1995, the Cairns Regional Art Gallery in 1996, and Hogarth Gallery in Sydney in 1997.
- ⁴ Published by Sydney University Press, 1990.
- ⁵ *Whichaway?* toured 20 metropolitan and regional galleries in Australia, between 1998 and 2002.
- ⁶ Published by J.M. Flood, Canberra, 1996.
- ⁷ *Aboriginal Scarred Trees in Tuggeranong (ACT) And How to Identify Them*, Peter Dowling, no date, a small booklet prepared for local schools and libraries in Tuggeranong.
- ⁸ The Australian Capital Territory Heritage Places Register, 1998.
- ⁹ Published by Queensland University Press, 1990.
- ¹⁰ Other books I used to find sites were:
 - *Aboriginal Prehistory in New England, An Archaeological Survey of Northeastern New South Wales*, Isabel McBryde, Sydney University Press, 1974
 - *The Melbourne Dreaming, A Guide to the Aboriginal Places of Melbourne*, Meyer Eidelson, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1997
 - *Blue Mountains Dreaming, The Aboriginal Heritage*, Eugene Stockton (ed.), A Three Sisters Publication, 1993
 - *The Bora Ground*, Lindsay Black, 1944
 - *Records of Times Past*, Isabel McBryde (ed.), Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1978

Jon Rhodes

(b.1947, Wagga Wagga, NSW)

Solo exhibitions

- 1976 *Just another Sunrise?*
 1977 *Australia*
 1982 *India the Enigma*
 1991 *Kundat Jaru Mob*
 1993 *Moving Country*
 1998 *Whichaway?*
 2002 *Traces*

Collections

- Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Art Gallery of South Australia
 National Gallery of Victoria
 National Gallery of Australia
 Queensland Art Gallery
 National Library of Australia
 National Museum of Australia
 Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art
 Collection
 J. Paul Getty Museum,
 Los Angeles

Checklist

The black and white photographs were hand-printed, full frame, from Kodak Tri-X 35mm negatives, on Agfa Multi-contrast, gelatin silver, fibre-based papers, in an edition of 5, by Jon Rhodes, between 1994 and 2007. The colour prints made from the painting *The Grave of a Native of Australia* by George Evans (NLA collection), and the photographs by Edmund Milne, in *The Kings Grave*, were copied and printed by digital technology. The measurements referred to in the Checklist are the sizes of individual prints within a series or sequence of photographs and are in centimetres, height x length.

Jon Rhodes has kindly donated this set of the *Cage of Ghosts* photographs to the National Library of Australia.

- 1. The King's Grave**
Wiradjuri
 Goobothery Hill, NSW
 Grave and carved trees—
 combination of painting
 (George Evans, 1817)
 3 photographs (Edmund Milne, 1913,
 1914), 21 x 29cm, and montage of
 painting and photographs 2006
 9 x 13cm
- 2. Preserved for Posterity**
Wiradjuri
 Eugowra, NSW, 2001
 Carved tree—series of 6 photographs
 28 x 18.6cm
- 3. Regrooved in 1964**
Dhurawul
 North Bondi, NSW, 1994
 Rock engravings—
 series of 8 photographs
 16.6 x 25cm
- 4. Balloderree at Balls Head**
Kuringgai
 Balls Head, NSW, 2002
 Rock engravings—series of
 6 photographs and watercolour
 painting by the Port Jackson Painter
 (reproduced in black and white)
 16.6 x 25cm
- 5. 'A most useful native'**
Wiradjuri
 Molong, NSW, 2001
 Grave and Carved trees—
 series of 9 photographs
 18.6 x 28cm and 28 x 18.6cm

 Restricted Access—MEN ONLY
- 6. The Diamond Tree**
Gumbainggir
 Nambucca, NSW, 1965–2004
 Carved tree—series of 6 photographs
 18.6 x 28cm
 (1st photograph by Ken Ward, 1965)
- 7. Industrial Grinding**
Wiradjuri
 Terramungamine and Dubbo, NSW,
 2001–2003
 Grinding grooves—
 series of 9 photographs
 18.6 x 28cm
- 8. The Cage of the Black Cockatoo**
Djabwurrung

 Mt Langi Ghiran, Victoria, 2001
 Cave paintings—
 series of 8 photographs
 16.6 x 25cm
- 9. War Memorials**
Ngambri
 Wanniasa and Anzac Parade, ACT
 1998
 Scarred and canoe trees—
 8 photographs
 War Memorials—4 photographs
 28 x 18.6cm
- 10. Walk by**
Dhurawul
 Mackenzies Point, NSW, 2002
 Rock engravings— sequence of
 9 photographs
 16.6 x 25cm
- 11. The Boorolong Carved Trees**
Aniwan/Nganyaywana
 Armidale and Boorolong, NSW,
 1962–1999–2002
 Carved trees—
 series of 13 photographs
 16.6 x 25cm
 (left— photograph by William
 Webster, F.R.P.S. 1962)
- 12. Jimmy Crow's Nest**
Waka Waka
 Crows Nest, Queensland, 2004
 Sculpture and replica gunyah—
 series of 5 photographs
 28 x 18.6cm
- 13. Foyer Bora**
Gamilaraay
 Toomelah, NSW, 2004
 Carved trees—
 series of 8 photographs
 16.6 x 25cm
- 14. The Spook Tree**
Ngambri
 Wanniasa, ACT, 1998
 Scarred tree—
 series of 6 photographs
 18.6 x 28cm
- 15. Cage of Ghosts**
Djabwurrung
 Mt Stayplton, Victoria, 2001
 Cave paintings—
 series of 8 photographs
 16.6 x 25cm

16. **Gumbooya**
Kuringgai
Allambie Heights, NSW, 2002
Rock engravings—
series of 9 photographs
16.6 x 25cm
17. **Baiame and his Women**
Kuringgai
Mt Kuring-gai, NSW, 1994
Rock engravings—
series of 12 photographs
18.6 x 28cm and 12 x 18cm
torn photographs of various sizes
18. **Benelong at Grotto Point**
Kuringgai
Grotto Point, NSW, 2002
Rock engravings—
series of 7 photographs and
watercolour painting by the
Port Jackson Painter (reproduced in
black and white)
16.6 x 25cm
19. **How They Were Made**
Kuringgai
West Head, NSW, 1994
Rock engravings—
series of 8 photographs
18.6 x 28cm
20. **The Last Tasmanian Tiger**
Yaitmathang
Mt Pilot, Victoria, 2001
Rock paintings—
series of 11 photographs
28 x 18.6cm
21. **Monkey Bars**
Ngambri
Wanniassa, ACT, 1998
Canoe trees—series of 9 photographs
28 x 18.6cm
22. **The Caged Carved Trees of Collymungle**
Gamilaraay
Collarenebri, NSW, 1986–1999
Carved trees—
series of 11 photographs
16.6 x 25cm
(photograph top right by Marion
Ravenscroft, 1986)
23. **‘Cherished Museum Exhibits’**
Gamilaraay
Melbourne, Victoria, 2005
Carved trees—
series of 10 photographs
16.6 x 25cm and 25.8 x 17.2cm
24. **Bulgandry Backfence**
Darkingung
Woy Woy, NSW, 2002
Rock engravings—
series of 5 photographs
28 x 18.6cm
25. **Cars and Scars**
Ngambri
Wanniassa, ACT, 1998
Scarred tree—
sequence of 12 photographs
18.6 x 28cm
26. **Last of the Upper Bellinger Natives**
Gumbainggir
Bellingen, NSW, 2003
Grave—series of 7 photographs
16.6 x 25cm
27. **Many Eagles Fighting for Their Country**
Yugambah
Burleigh, Queensland, 2004
Bora ground—series of 9 photographs
18.6 x 28cm
28. **Bunjil’s Cage**
Djabwurrung
The Black Range, Victoria, 2001
Cave paintings—
series of 9 photographs
18.6 x 28cm
29. **Red Hand Perspex Cage**
Gundungurra
Glenbrook, NSW, 2003
Cave paintings—
series of 9 photographs
18.6 x 28cm and 28 x 18.6cm
30. **Grinding Highway**
Darug
Hazelbrook, NSW, 2003
Grinding grooves and wells—
series of 5 photographs
17.5 x 26cm
31. **Suburban Bora**
Bundjalung
Lennox Head, NSW, 2004
Bora ground—series of 9 photographs
18.6 x 28cm
32. **38 Sainsbury Street**
Ngambri
Wanniassa, ACT, 1998
Scarred tree—series of 6 photographs
18.6 x 28cm
33. **Pay as You Enter**
Darkingung
Milbrodale, NSW, 2003
Cave paintings—
series of 7 photographs
28 x 18.6
34. **Bora to Burial**
Bundjalung
Tucki Tucki, NSW, 2004
Bora ground—
series of 13 photographs
16.6 x 25cm
35. **Ceaseless Tidal Trap**
Gubbi Gubbi
Toorbul Point, Queensland, 2004
Fish trap—sequence of 8 photographs
18.6 x 28cm
36. **And the Trees Grew up Dancing**
Gamilaraay
Boonal Bridge, NSW, 2004
Sequence of 5 photographs
28 x 18.6cm

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the Aboriginal organisations who gave their permission for these photographs to be exhibited: the local Aboriginal Land Councils at Collarenebri, Condobolin, Cowra, Dubbo, Orange and Armidale; the Kombumerrie Aboriginal Corporation for Culture, Toomelah Goomeroi Council of Elders, Gundungurra Tribal Council, Dhurawal Elders, Brambuk Incorporated, Elders of the Darug Nation, the Wanaruah Descendants of the Taggart Clan; the Darkungung, Jali, Amaroo and Ngambri Land Councils, Bangerang Cultural Centre, Yugambah Museum, the Elders and Traditional Owners, John, Terry and Herbert Marshall, Victor Buchanan, Denis Foley, June Gordon, Eve Fesl, Dec Gorrington, Patricia O’Connor and the late Ysola Best.

Thank you also to the staff of the School of Art at the Australian National University for their valuable support during my artist-in-residency in 1998, and the H.C. Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship in 2006: David Williams, Nigel Lendon, Martyn Jolly, Gordon Bull, Denise Ferris, Jason O’Brien and Suzanne Knight.

My gratitude to all those who generously gave their time to look at and discuss the project over the last 12 years: Peter Dowling, Tom Griffiths, Peter Read, Andrew Sayers, John Clegg, Penny Taylor, Isabel McBryde, Colin Pardoe, Kim Akerman, John Steele, Bob Ellis, Martin Thomas, Djon Mundine, Leigh Purcell, Eugene Stockton, Pam Lofts, Ponch Hawkes, Maz Ravenscroft, Carol Ruff, Julia Webster, Harry Creamer, Robert (ben) Gunn, David Kaus, Shayne Pearce, Diana Richardson and Steve Bush.

Thanks for ongoing assistance from Mary Morris, Rob McWilliams, Melanie Raberts and Philip Batty at Museum Victoria, and Lea Gardam and Philip Jones at the South Australian Museum.

It has been a pleasure to work with the staff of the National Library of Australia and I thank Margy Burn, Nat Williams, Martin Terry, Greta North, Doreen Mellor, Justine van Mourik, Linda Groom and Michael Proud for their assistance and acknowledge the Library’s crucial role in developing and presenting this exhibition.

Finally my thanks to Tim Bonyhady, who has always been willing, no matter what time of the day or night, to comment, listen, argue and discuss the work-in-progress in an insightful and inspiring way.

ISBN 978-0-642-27665-0

Curator: Jon Rhodes

Editor: Paul Cliff

Designer: Kathy Jakupec

© National Library of Australia 2007

Cover: *Preserved for Posterity*, Eugowra, NSW, 2001 (detail)



Jon Rhodes: Cage of Ghosts

Opening remarks by Professor Howard Morphy, Director of the Research School of Humanities, Australian National University at the opening of the exhibition at the National Library of Australia on Wednesday 26 September 2007.

It is difficult to imagine an exhibition in which an Indigenous welcome is more necessary than this, as Jon Rhodes photographs take us into the Aboriginal landscape of New South Wales. Indeed as Matilda House noted, when welcoming us to Ngambri country, we see in several of the panels the heritage of her own people in the forms of some of the surviving Indigenously scarred trees of the ACT.

The opening of an exhibition is an exciting occasion. One that generates enthusiasm, feelings of warmth, an atmosphere of celebration and an appreciation of human creativity. But it is seldom the best time to view the works. One of the great advantages of opening an exhibition is that it gives you the excuse; indeed it almost demands that you view the exhibition before it opens. And I had the great privilege yesterday morning of walking around this exhibition with the artist and photographer Jon Rhodes. Walking around the exhibition and walking into the photographs, because each set provides a means of entering into a place.

This is an exhibition that demands that the visitor spend a long time looking at the sets of images, and moving between them and the text. It is an exhibition of immense richness. But it is also an exhibition that can delight the eye and have an immediate impact through the strengths of the individual images and by the way they work together. And they work in quite different ways.

In some cases the sets of photographs in combination appear to create a single abstract image. In panel 9 *War Memorials* we see the scarred and canoe trees of Wanniasa standing in front of us, alternating with a line of concrete sculptures on ANZAC parade - almost as a set of soldiers ready for inspection. The panel comprises 12 photographs but from a distance we see it as an integrated whole; an aesthetically powerful reminder of the Memorial that isn't there — to the Aboriginal people who died defending their own countries.

In other cases we are taken on a journey into a place, we can follow the sequence of images leading us on, taking us closer, to the carved tree or the engraving — weathered with age and almost lost in the darkness of the rock shelter. You will be able to travel in different directions, adopt different view points, but will also always be able to connect one image to the next by a reference point that recurs or shapes that echo across the frames. You can make those connections intellectually, but, if not, they will be subjectively present.

In panel 11 *The Boorolong Carved Trees* we find the trees in residence in the Armidale Folk Museum. We see in nearly every frame the strong image of a painting of a giant goanna hanging on the wall; an image that dominates as we enter the Folk Museum. But then our attention is drawn to a series of photos that enable us to look into one corner of the room. There a carved tree stands upright beside the door, in one - two - three images and then is suddenly no more. A soldier in full military gear standing to attention by the very same door replaces it. The Armidale Folk Museum's Exhibition has changed — the carved trees once from Boorolong have again been removed from view.

And of course that sequence is a microcosm of two of the main themes that dominate the exhibition, the sacred and scarred remains of Aboriginal Australia, as ghosts of

times past, and their subsequent incarceration as they become part of the national heritage.

And image after image reflects on this theme. We can see the carved trees of Collymongle imprisoned for their own protection — yet not sufficiently protected that some could not be stolen (Panel 22). We see others from the same set removed long ago from their original location to a museum store to become *Cherished Museum Exhibits*, apparently restrained in straight jackets so that they cannot run away (Panel 23). We are taken to the *Cage of Ghosts* of the Djabwurrung at Mount Stapylton in Victoria where ‘the sculpted ‘super-grille’ dominates the mouth of the cave’ (Panel 15), And later we visit a cave at Glenbrook in Gundungurra country in New South Wales where in Jon’s words the painted red hand in its perspex cage ‘has become impenetrable to vandals and viewers alike’ (Panel 29).

And ghosts are present everywhere: in the faded image of thylacine, *The Last Tasmanian Tiger*, recorded by an archaeologist in the recent past, but today a trace of red ochre, hard to decipher, incorporated into the rock surface (Panel 20). In the *Foyer Bora* (Panel 13) at Toomelah School in Gamilaraay country, reversing time, the Indigenous children of today seem almost to disappear as they rush past the solid carved memorial trees made by their ancestors in the past. And at Molong a place of the Wiradjuri people and the gravesite of Thomas Mitchell’s *Most Useful Native*, Yuranigh, we can see today only a hint of the designs carved into the body of the trees (Panel 5). They are still there but masked by the bark that has regrown around them.

And yet the genius of this exhibition is that it moves our thoughts in many different directions, positive as well as negative, and though full of opinions strongly expressed in word and image, it is fundamentally non-judgemental. The sites of Aboriginal presence in the landscape are imprisoned by the need to protect them and

yet they are strong markers of the Indigenous mapping of the land; and Jon's photographs convey their aesthetic power and a sense of the spirituality that underlies the land. And although we can see the ghostly images of cars wiping out the middle portion of the scarred trees of Wanniasa, we can also see the trees remaining firm in the transient presence of the motor cars (Plate 25). At the exhibition's end we can imagine the presence of the designs 'belonging to country' underlying the bark of every tree, part of its core identity, an identity that connects landscape to people. And we are beginning to see the landscape in an Indigenous way, yet, at the same time, in a way that should resonate with the present concerns to all Australians.

This is an exhibition by an artist at the height of his career, taking on new directions, using the full potential of the camera as an instrument of the creative imagination. Yet it is also an exhibition that challenges established genres, that transcends the artificial divisions between abstraction and representation, crosses the boundaries between still and moving images, gives clear messages — but many of them — and leaves open enormous room for interpretation. It is an exemplar as far as I am concerned of how to bridge the artificial gap between research and creative practice. It has been an honour to open this exhibition.