

ARCADIAN QUEST



WILLIAM WESTALL'S AUSTRALIAN SKETCHES *Elisabeth Findlay*



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National Library of Australia
Canberra 1998

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(detail) *Port Jackson: An Old Blind Man* 1802

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(detail) *Port Jackson: A Native Boy* 1802

Back cover: *Cape of Good Hope: Orange Kloof on Table Mountain* 1801

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Elisabeth Findlay

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The William Westall images reproduced in this book represent a cross-section of the National Library of Australia's Westall collection of pencil and watercolour sketches and engravings. Also included are three oil paintings from the Ministry of Defence Art Collection, London. Unless stated otherwise, all images are by William Westall (1781–1850) and are from the National Library of Australia.

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Self-portrait of William Westall c.1820

INTRODUCTION

I am sorry to say the voyage to New Holland has not answered my expectations in any one way.

William Westall, 1804¹

It was quite a coup for the young artist William Westall, aged only 19, to be selected as the landscape and figure painter for an expedition to Australia aboard His Majesty's sloop the *Investigator*. The ship, under the command of Captain Matthew Flinders, was embarking on one of the great voyages of exploration. Along with another eighty-seven men, making up the ship's company, Westall sailed from Portsmouth on 18 July 1801 with expectations of making exciting discoveries in exotic lands and hopes of finding an Arcadia, a rustic paradise of picturesque vistas. Little did anyone foresee that the expedition, despite its many significant successes and findings, would be plagued by misfortune and tragedy. Unfortunately, like many others undertaking this momentous journey, Westall returned a disappointed and frustrated man.

Westall completed about 140 watercolours and sketches while he was aboard the *Investigator*. This book analyses these drawings in the context of the artist's life and work and in relation to colonial society and Australian visual culture. The drawings were held by Westall's son before they were bought by the Royal Commonwealth Society in 1889. In 1962 they were shown at a major exhibition in London and in 1969 the National Library of Australia acquired them.² The drawings make up one of Australia's most important pictorial treasures and offer a fascinating insight into early colonial history. The majority of the works are pencil sketches of landscapes, with some watercolour images. There are about twenty topographical views of the coastline, rendered with great care and accuracy, and numerous figure drawings, including some unusual, if not remarkable, and intriguing portraits of Aborigines.

The story of the *Investigator*'s voyage begins back in September 1800. In a bold move, Matthew Flinders, who was then only a junior lieutenant, wrote to Sir Joseph Banks with an ambitious plan for circumnavigating New Holland. Banks, a man of eminence, was President of the Royal Society and since his days of sailing with Cook on the *Endeavour* had become recognised as the authority on New South Wales and the South Seas. He had immense influence and power, with his contacts spreading across scientific and seafaring communities and to royalty itself. Thomas Phillips' portrait of him (see page xiii) reveals the ageing savant's elevated status, as he sits in all his majesty dressed in full military uniform and surrounded by the symbols of office, from quills to a sceptre.

Flinders, while maybe being impertinent, was also judicious in targeting Banks with his initial proposal, for he was the man with the capacity to make the enterprising scheme work. In his letter, Flinders outlined several goals of the expedition. The crucial aim was to ascertain whether New South

Wales was part of New Holland or whether an extensive strait divided the middle of Australia, making the continent actually a set of large islands. A map of 1798 (see page xiv) shows just how much territory remained uncharted and can be compared with Flinders' *General chart of Terra Australis ... showing the parts explored between 1798 and 1803* (see page xv). The existence of a sea channel or a strait would have enormous ramifications for trade and shipping in the area, with its presence often debated and contemplated. The circumnavigation and complete charting of Australia would put an end to all speculation and guessing. Beyond this, the voyage would involve intense geographical and natural history surveys and would confer on Britain the honour of discovering and owning the last significant unmapped area of the world.

With his background as a botanist and his previous interest in New Holland, Banks was inclined to look favourably upon Flinders' proposal and from the beginning he was a leading player in the management and direction of the expedition. He put into motion the necessarily



Portrait of Matthew Flinders (artist unknown) c.1800

complex and extensive plans by first approaching his friend Earl Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, who was also impressed by the proposal. King George III, with whom Banks was well acquainted, gave his assent and, just over three months after Flinders' initial correspondence, preparations began in earnest. The Government funded the expedition, with the Admiralty acting in an administrative and supervisory role.³ Rightly enough, Flinders was given command and a sloop, then called the *Xenophon*, was bought to be outfitted for the voyage. It was renovated and renamed the *Investigator*. A crew was gathered, including a scientific team of six men and their four servants.

William Westall was the youngest member of the scientific team. He was to be paid an annual salary of 300 guineas, a substantial sum for an artist early in his career, and was allowed to take a personal servant with him, a man named Tom Whitt. The other scientists included Robert Brown, a naturalist; John Crosley, an astronomer; Ferdinand Bauer, a natural history painter; and lower down the pecking order—Peter Good, a gardener, and John Allen, a miner. Such scientific teams were an integral part of exploratory missions, which had long been as much about bringing home specimens and images of flora and fauna as charting unknown territory. The *Investigator*'s scientific team was one of the more impressive groups that had been assembled and the professionalism and talent of the older members, in particular Bauer, was exemplary. Bauer, the oldest member of the party at the age of 40, was a good role model for the young Westall. His work was meticulous, displaying an almost reverent respect for detailed scientific observation, and his reputation as an expert and very accomplished natural history draughtsman was already established.⁴

Westall was not Banks' or the Admiralty's first choice as the landscape and figure painter and it was really only through a fortunate series of circumstances that he secured the position; although in

years to come he reflected on these events as rather unfortunate. When Westall was appointed he was only a probationary student at the Royal Academy and lacked the standing of the other members of the scientific team. What he did have, however, were influential connections and the good fortune to be in the right place at the right time. The position was originally offered to Julius Caesar Ibbetson, a minor English landscape, marine and figure painter. Ibbetson had previous experience as an official expedition artist but as he had not been paid for the work he did on a trip to Peking's Imperial Court, over a decade earlier, he was not prepared to join the *Investigator*.⁵

Others were eager to take the position but because of personal reasons had to decline. William Daniell, who had travelled in India, at one stage agreed to accompany Flinders, but in the end he was unable to make the voyage. Daniell was engaged to William Westall's sister Mary and because of his personal commitments and impending marriage decided not to go ahead with the voyage that would take him away from England for several years. Instead, he recommended the young Westall.⁶ Operating through Benjamin West, the President of the Royal Academy, Daniell contrived to have Westall's name put before Banks. With such high recommendations, and despite his lack of experience, Westall was appointed. Before him was the opportunity to establish his artistic career, following in the path of many other renowned and successful expedition artists such as William Hodges and John Webber.

While the bare biographical facts of Westall's life are known, there is little knowledge of his personality, his values, his outlook or his personal traits.⁷ He did not keep any private journals and was not given to public expression, which gives some indication of a rather private character. As Rex and Thea Rienits write, Westall lived up to the family motto of 'Deeds not Words'.⁸ He was born on 12 October 1781 in Hertford to Benjamin Westall, a brewery manager, and his second wife, Martha Harbord. He had two stepbrothers, Richard and Benjamin, and two stepsisters, Mary and Ann. The family left Hertford not long after William was born and soon they were in London, with Westall spending most of his childhood in Sydenham and Hampstead. When William was 12, in 1794, his father died and his brother Richard became the head of the family. Richard, who was sixteen years William's senior, was a



Portrait of Sir Joseph Banks by Thomas Phillips c. 1810



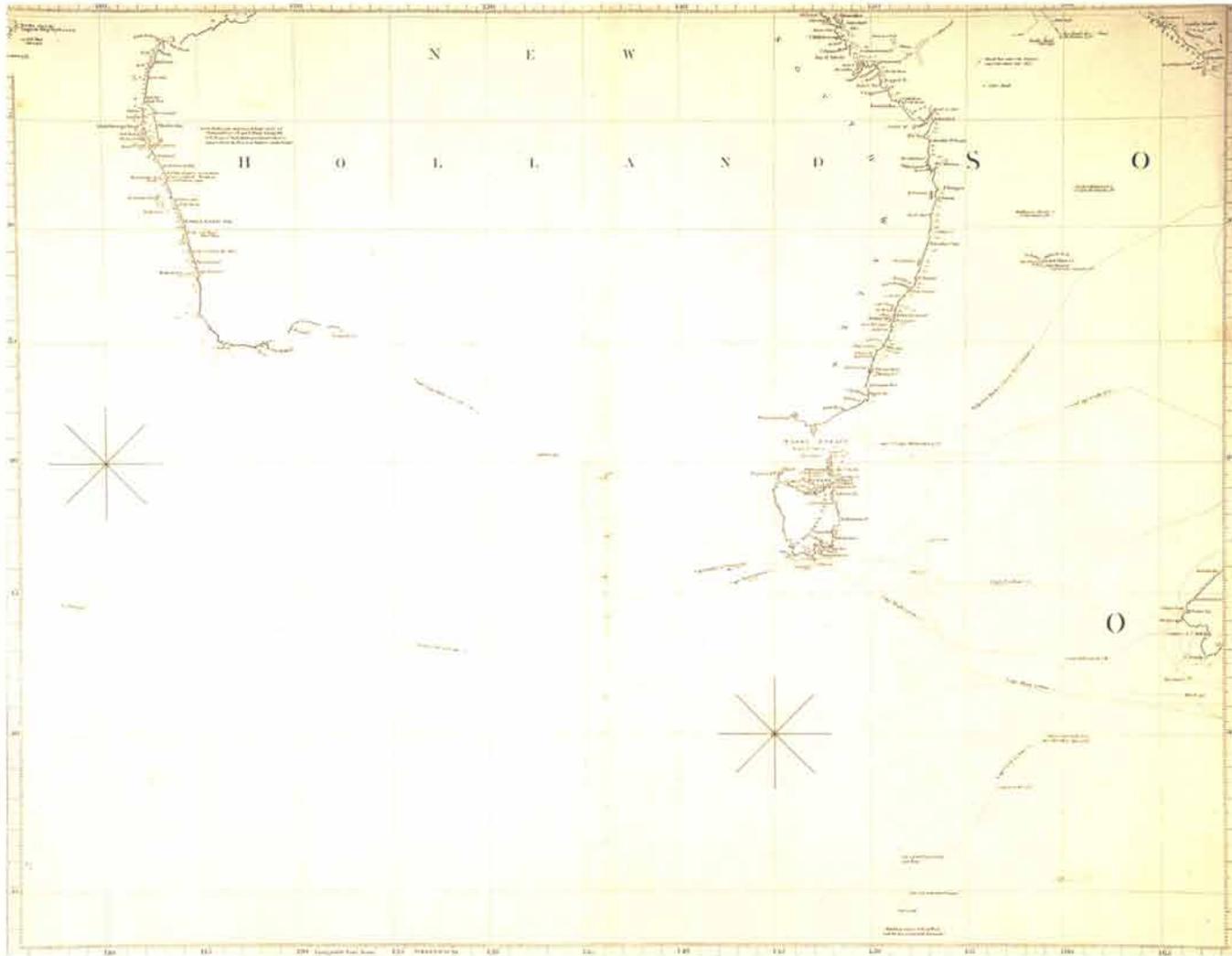


Chart of the Pacific Ocean ... by Aaron Arrowsmith

successful artist and had a strong influence on his little brother. It was soon determined that William would follow in his brother's footsteps and become an artist. He enrolled at the Royal Academy in 1799, along with other fellow students such as John Constable and William Daniell. He married in 1820, had two children, and died in 1850 aged 68.

In order to gain an understanding of Westall's character it is necessary to examine references to him and observations about him made by his contemporaries in letters and diaries. For example, the diaries of Joseph Farington, who was an artist in London and who documented many of the day-to-day activities of his friends, are a significant source of information. Farington refers to Matthew Flinders' comment that Westall 'appeared by disposition inclined to retirement and seclusion'.⁹ Flinders' own journals and reports also provide some insight into the personality of his young charge, writing that Westall's 'foolish days are not yet passed' and 'Mr Westall wants prudence, or rather experience, but is

good natured'.¹⁰ In addition to such cursory comments, Westall's actions and the choices he made, bring us closer to an understanding of his nature and disposition. The very fact that he was anxious to join the *Investigator* demonstrates that he had some sense of adventure and ambition.

Another source of valuable information that cannot be overlooked is, of course, his drawings and paintings. As with most artists, the subjects Westall depicted, and how he chose to portray them, give an insight into his character. Westall was essentially a conservative artist, a predisposition both reflected in, and enforced by, his choice to train at the Royal Academy. The Royal Academy was the most prestigious art school and exhibiting place in England and was the home of official British art.¹¹ Students were trained in classical draughtsmanship and were taught principles of painting and drawing handed down from the Renaissance. Unlike the romantics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries who emphasised the expression of emotion, the conservative Academician focused on restraint and respect for the rules of classicism.

In a very early self-portrait by Westall (see page x), his conservative inclinations are evident. He chose to portray himself as a gentleman, dressed in a fashionable wing-collar shirt and tight coat, with



General chart of Terra Australis ... showing the parts explored between 1798 and 1803 by Matthew Flinders

lengthy side-whiskers. The portrait follows Renaissance conventions of portrait painting, with the calm expression and poised stance all conveying an image of a man of polite society. In this one self-portrait Westall not only declares his ambitions as a conservative artist but also shows his desire to be regarded as an honourable and upright social figure.

Just as Westall's drawings and paintings reveal aspects of his personality, they also divulge much about the era he was working in. Very often the writing of colonial history has relied on written documents and sources, with scant attention being paid to visual records and what can be gleaned from them.¹² In the case of the *Investigator's* voyage, the major references that have been consulted include Flinders' *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, his journal and other miscellaneous correspondence and manuscripts. The drawings, paintings and engravings have usually been relegated to mere illustration and their complexities and meanings overlooked. This book aims to remedy this oversight.

Discussion of Westall's work commences with a basic survey and chronology of the voyage and where Westall went when he was aboard the *Investigator*. The motivation for Britain sending an artist such as Westall to the other side of world is questioned, introducing and addressing issues concerning the Enlightenment and colonial ambition. The focus then shifts to considering how the drawings were used as rough sketches for nine oil paintings commissioned by the Admiralty and the transformations that took place between the drawings and the finished oil paintings. Finally, the engravings that were made from Westall's work are analysed in relation to how popular perceptions of Terra Australis were formed.

Together the drawings, oil paintings and engravings provide a marvellous insight into the issues, values and events of the early nineteenth century, in particular the forces of empire and colonisation. They also tell an important tale of a young artist working during a portentous phase in early colonial Australian history—a period full of uncertainty, discovery and excitement.

RULE BRITANNIA: COLONIAL POSSESSIONS

The interests of geography and natural history in general, and of the British nation in particular, seem to require, that this only remaining considerable part of the globe should be thoroughly explored.

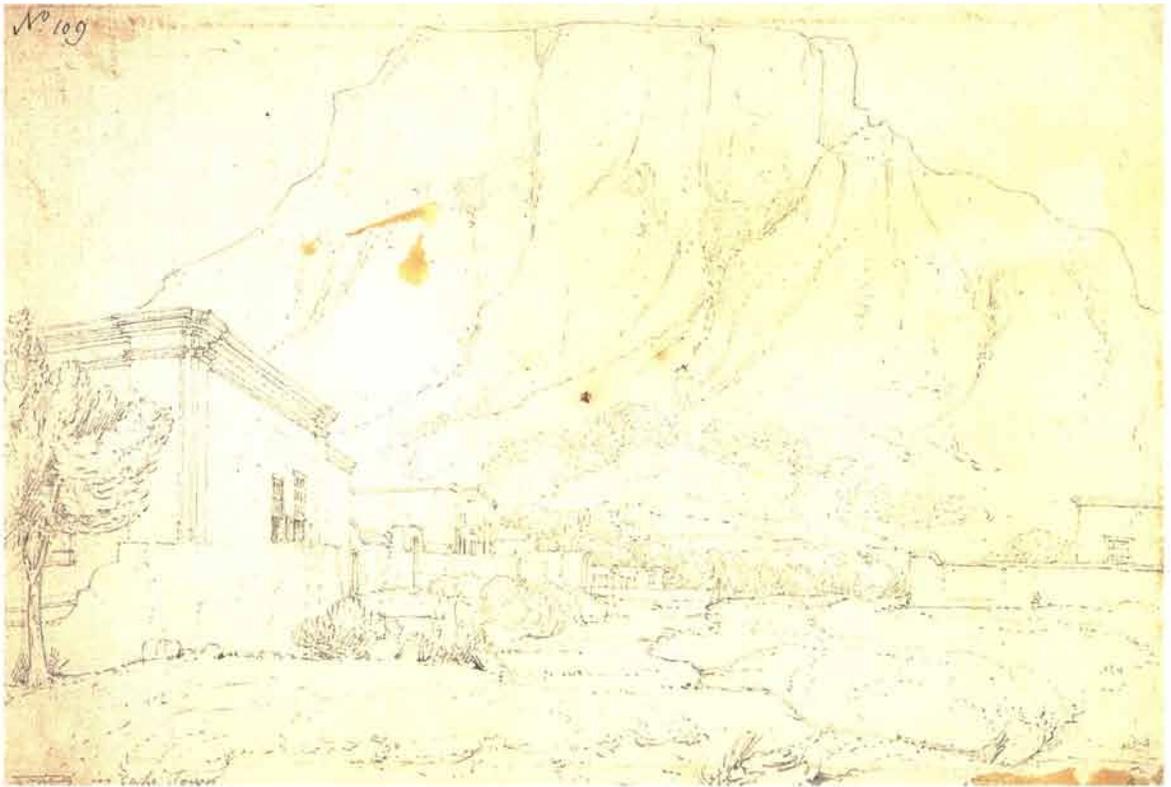
Matthew Flinders, 1800¹

The *Investigator* set sail in the wake of the era of the Enlightenment, an age which had great faith in the value of reason and science and believed in the perfectibility of the human race through learning. The Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, which flourished and developed in the eighteenth century and had an impact well into the nineteenth century, had exponents in all fields of intellectual and creative endeavour.² Enlightenment philosophers, artists and thinkers were united in the conviction that knowledge was the key element in reaching understanding and an ideal state of being. Science and empiricism, with the emphasis on observation and the application of reason, formed a cornerstone of the movement.

Given this background, the renaming of the *Investigator*, with all its associations of inquiry and examination, was significant. The mission to not only chart the coastline but bring back information and data was a product of the Enlightenment. Similar tenets and theories had driven Cook's voyages. But the pursuit of knowledge for the purely altruistic purpose of the improvement of mankind was not Britain's only motivation for mounting expensive exploratory voyages, often during eras beset by war and uncertainty. The attainment of power and the possession of land were equally important. Inextricably, but subtly, bound to the concepts of the Enlightenment was the understanding that knowledge and information also brought authority and hegemony. While outwardly discussions concerning the *Investigator* were centred on learning, charting and natural history discoveries, there was also an awareness that the trip was important to Britain's colonial ambitions.

At the turn of the century Britain's main rival and combatant was France. For decades the two countries had been bitter and ardent enemies, vying for power. The Napoleonic Wars had dragged on throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with both countries pouring vast amounts of manpower, equipment and money into fighting, until Napoleon was finally defeated at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Both powers invested much in empire building, each financing voyages to New Holland during wartime when resources were severely drained. In fact, the French had a head start on Britain, for their exploratory ships sailed nine months before the *Investigator*.

In 1800 the British Government had granted passports to two French ships, the *Géographe* and *Naturaliste*, under the command of Nicolas Baudin. These passports assured their safety in British waters, with the stated purpose of Baudin's voyages being scientific, rather than military, and under the auspices of the Institute of France. A similar passport needed to be issued by France for the



Cape of Good Hope: View at the Foot of Table Mountain 1801

Investigator, although there was considerable delay in this being sent. Ostensibly, both expeditions were not related to colonial ambitions. Nevertheless, once underway a significant element of competition was introduced. The French plans actually were one of the reasons why Flinders' initial letter had been received so favourably and why Banks and the Admiralty had responded so speedily. The unsettled areas of Australia were not seen as any great prize but the British considered it unthinkable that France should annex any part of the continent. The only way to ensure this did not happen was to beat the French in the race of discovery.

So when Flinders commenced the voyage, the fact that the French were already underway and could possibly be in the antipodes added a sense of urgency. After leaving England, the *Investigator's* first stop was on 3 August 1801 at Funchal, the main port island off Madeira. Here Flinders was able to replenish supplies and inspect the ship. As the captain, he had always had misgivings about the *Investigator's* sea worthiness and suitability for the long and arduous voyage. Even by this early stage of the journey, his fears seemed justified because problems had already begun to surface. It was found that the ship was leaking and the carpenters had to spend several days caulking the holes in what became a common ritual whenever the ship was in port.

For Westall, having completed the initial leg of his first sea voyage, the delay gave him an opportunity to explore the island of Madeira and make his first drawings. Along with Brown and Bauer,

and their servants, he took a small boat and went to Madeira, undertaking several exploratory trips. Westall was enchanted by the picturesque qualities of the landscape and enthusiastically started his work as the landscape and figure artist. Unfortunately these drawings have not survived because on the way back to join the *Investigator*, which was still anchored off Funchal, the scientific team's small boat was swamped and Westall's sketches were lost. This incident offered the young artist an early introduction to the perils of the sea because he only narrowly escaped being drowned.

Consequently, the first extant drawings by Westall come from his time in the Cape of Good Hope. The *Investigator* reached the Cape on 16 October and once again had to undergo repairs, with a team of expert caulkers employed to repair the new leaks. For eighteen days the *Investigator* remained in port, once more giving the scientific team the chance to explore. They made several expeditions to Table Mountain, with Westall capturing its distinctive form in both distant views and detailed, close-up studies. With a zest still bolstered by the excitement and novelty of the first months of travel, these initial sketches exhibit more care and application than seen in his later Australian drawings. In *Cape of Good Hope: View at the Foot of Table Mountain* he conscientiously employs the rules of perspective, with his depiction of the buildings cradled at the bottom of the mountain providing one of the best of his architectural sketches. *Cape of Good Hope: Orange Kloof on Table Mountain* (see page 4) is also quite a beautiful and accomplished picture, showing intricate cross-hatching and pencil strokes painstakingly layered upon each other to build up subtle variations in light and shade. Two figures appear at the bottom left of the gorge, giving a sense of scale, as water cascades in the background. The foliage and rocks have been precisely rendered. Westall obviously spent considerable time and care capturing the scene.

In the top left-hand corner of both these drawings are catalogue numbers (109 and 115 respectively), which were added after Westall returned to England. Almost all of the drawings have a number that corresponds to a list of numbers and titles of sketches which is now part of the Banks Papers in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.³ The naming, identifying and dating of each of Westall's drawings has been based on this list.

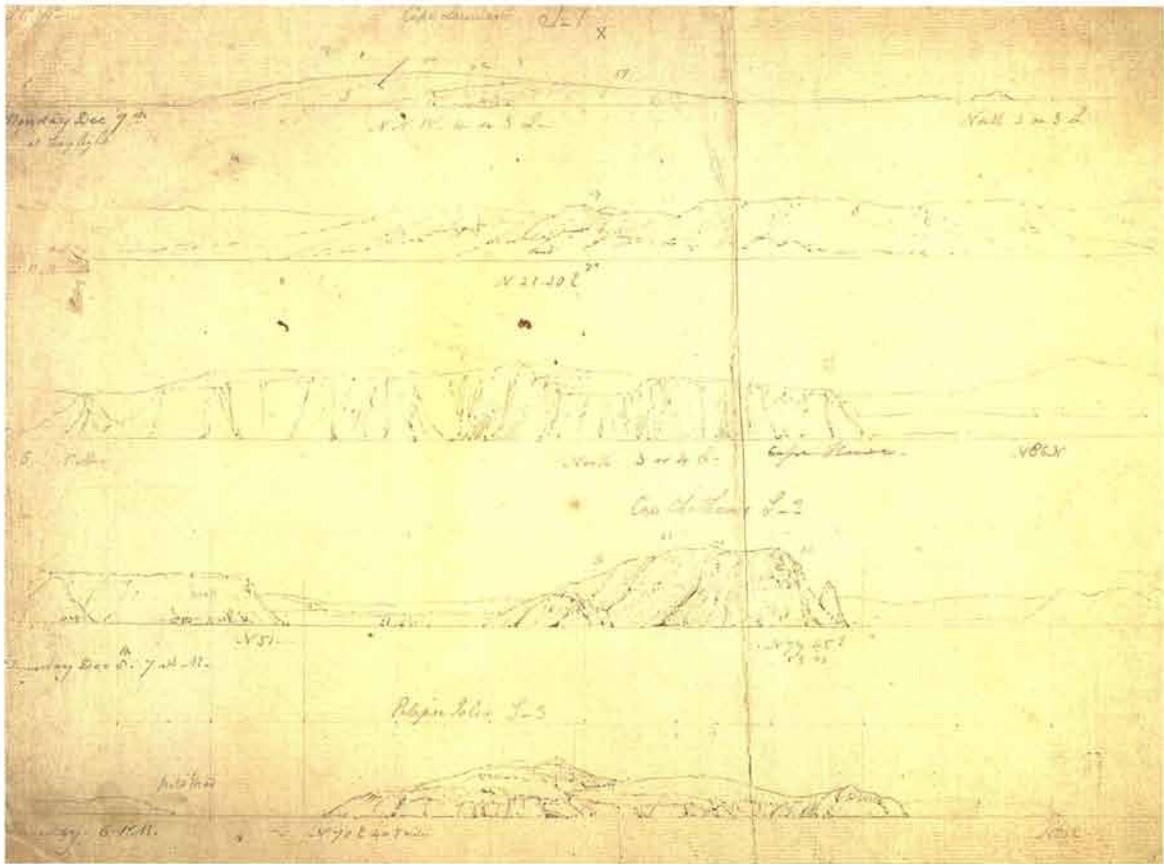
After the stopover in the Cape, the *Investigator* was back at sea by 4 November 1801, with the next destination being New Holland. The ship and crew made good time and on 6 December they came in sight of Cape Leeuwin, on the south-west coastal tip of Australia. The next morning, 7 December, Westall made his first sketch of the Australian coastline, *South Coast: Cape Leeuwin, Cape Chatham and Eclipse Isles* (see page 5), which was later worked into a more detailed watercolour, *Views on the South Coast of Australia*, and an engraving, *Views on the South Coast of Terra Australis* (see page 6-7).⁴ This was the first of his coastal panoramas. Westall produced fourteen views of the south coast and a further thirteen of the eastern and northern coastlines. They are very exact drawings and are works for which Westall has been rightly praised.⁵

To fully comprehend the significance of Westall's topographical drawings it is necessary to ask why they were made. Chiefly, they were created for utilitarian rather than aesthetic reasons. They were meant to be exact images which could be used by future sailors as navigational aids for negotiating the coastline and for plotting courses. Interestingly, they were important to the colonial endeavour in many other ways.

Topographical drawings, at first, seem to be simple, uncomplicated images that delineate the coastline, but they are neither straightforward nor objective documents. Recently, coastal profiles and maps have been re-examined and it has been convincingly argued that they are, in fact, highly encoded and constructed.⁶ It is not self-evident that these are images of a coast and it is only through a familiarity with other such images and through reading the surrounding words that they make sense.



Cape of Good Hope: Orange Kloof on Table Mountain 1801



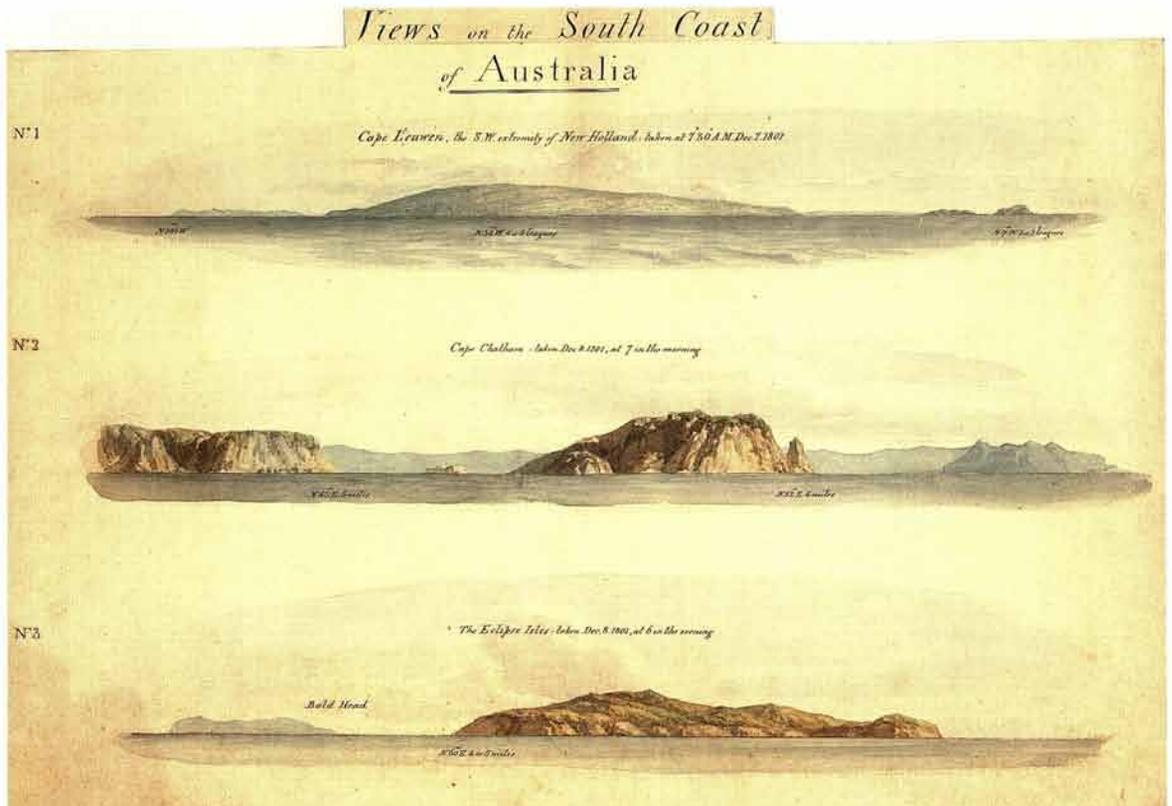
South Coast: Cape Leeuwin, Cape Chatham and Eclipse Isles 1801

Just as understanding an Aboriginal painting of a particular area of land often requires a familiarity with the stories of the Dreamtime, topographical drawings require specialist, privileged knowledge. The numbers and coordinates, with their compass bearings, only make sense in terms of a highly constructed system of European naval navigation. They are not universally understood documents but rather, in Westall's case anyway, political and legal weapons peculiar to a society with colonial ambitions.

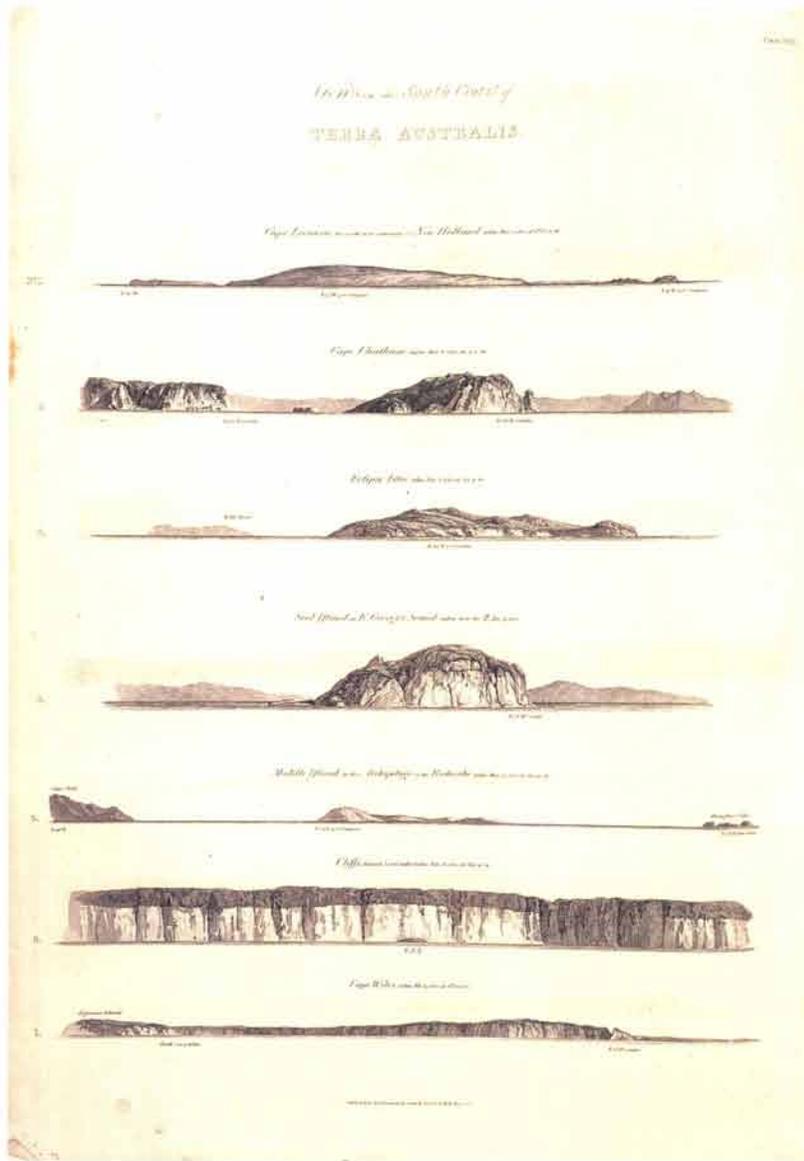
It is important to keep in mind the complexity of the coastal profiles when looking at Westall's work. Simon Ryan in *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia* refutes the notion that maps are 'innocent'. He argues that it is 'through this belief in the innocence of maps ... that they gain their authority'.⁷ Westall's topographical images certainly were not innocent but were designed to carry authority and be above question or dispute. They were proof to all cultures, from a very Euro-centric and arrogant perspective, that Britain had 'discovered' the land. It was important that this issue of discovery was proven because, in keeping with nineteenth-century thinking, discovery conveyed the rights of ownership and territorial jurisdiction. For Europeans, maps transformed territory from being undiscovered to discovered and were a vital part of taking possession.

The role of the topographical views as indisputable documents of discovery, proving that Britain was there first, is highlighted by the precise recording of the times and dates which appear on Westall's drawings. In his *Views on the South Coast of Terra Australis*, for example, Westall has written that the view of Cape Leeuwin was taken at 6.30 a.m. on 7 December, implying that the image was captured instantaneously. The pencil working sketch, however, reveals that these images were developed over some time and do not relate to an exact moment. The exactness gives the images authority and aims to leave no ambiguity as to when the records were taken.

At the same time the drawings were proving discovery, they were also refuting Aboriginal rights. While many people in nineteenth-century Britain would have been confident that the *Investigator's* voyage was a legitimate claiming of Australia for the empire, in recent years there has been considerable controversy over the rules which England exercised when taking what is now often deemed to have been Aboriginal land.⁸ Whether the British actually discovered Australia has been challenged on the basis that the Aborigines took possession of the continent long before Cook's or Flinders' voyages. Indeed, as if aware of the conflicting claims to the land, Britain in the early nineteenth century adopted complex colonial manoeuvres to refute Aboriginal rights—manoeuvres in which visual documentation played a key role.



Views on the South Coast of Australia 1801



Views on the South Coast of Terra Australis 1814

Britain turned to the international law of *terra nullius* and used it to vindicate its annexing of the continent of New Holland. *Terra nullius* stated that the land was open to occupation if either no one lived there or if the land was not being used. It was obvious that people were there, so the onus was on Britain to prove that Terra Australis was unused. By arguing that the Aborigines were not cultivating the land (not using agriculture) and it was lying fallow, the British claimed Terra Australis was not owned. Since the Aborigines were not seen to be ‘using’ the land it was argued they did not have ownership rights. The fact that they had no naval charts or maps weakened their claims to the land. In short, if a country was unmapped it was considered by the Europeans to be undiscovered.

Flinders not only mapped the land but also bestowed names upon land and coastal features, with no thought that the indigenous population may already have done this. Flinders named islands, mountains and sea inlets, frequently paying homage to officials back in England, such as Earl Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, in the naming of Spencer's Gulf. He also named places after the men on the *Investigator*, including Westall who had a mountain in Queensland named in honour of him. This naming came about when the *Investigator* anchored in Port Bowen and Flinders and the scientific party went ashore. Flinders issued the challenge that the first to make it to the top of the highest mountain would have it named after him. Westall won, hence the name Mount Westall. On other occasions Flinders used the names of towns and counties in England, such as his home town on Lincoln, or events that took place when they visited certain spots. This whole process of naming, along with converting the continent into a readily recognisable two-dimensional image, was another way that Britain appropriated the land and created British associations.⁹

After reaching the coast of Australia, the *Investigator* entered King George's Sound and anchored off Seal Island. The Sound had been discovered and named ten years earlier by Captain George Vancouver but it still warranted detailed exploration. The scientific team was sent ashore under a guard of marines, with the *Investigator* lying off Princess Royal Harbour. Flinders was intrigued by two distant sheets of water and on 23 December set off to investigate them with twelve others. The ship stayed in the area for another week, spending Christmas there, until Flinders had completed his survey and the *Investigator* was ready to continue. There are only five surviving sketches from the time Westall spent in King George's Sound but these are the first of his New Holland landscapes. One watercolour, *King George's Sound: View on the Peninsula to the North of Peak Head*, shows the typical directness with which Westall depicted Australian scenery. He did not attempt to tidy up the landscape or embellish it, leaving a fallen branch in a quite stark landscape.

Once adverse winds had died down Flinders left King George's Sound on 4 January 1802. The *Investigator*'s itinerary was to follow the south coast of Australia, charting what is now the south of Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria, with the first leg of the journey finishing at Port Jackson. During the first days of sailing, Flinders had to tackle a maze of islands and so headed towards the mainland and was fortunate to find a sheltered bay, which he called Lucky Bay. Once again the scientific team went ashore, staying five days and not leaving until 14 January. Westall did one drawing of Lucky Bay, which he developed into an oil painting, in addition to a panoramic sketch of Middle Island, which included Goose Island and the mainland shore between Cape Pasley and Cape Arid. Even by this stage, when the *Investigator* had only been at sea for six months of its two-year voyage, Westall's output was beginning to decrease—a sign that he was already starting to find the coastline tedious and uninspiring. As Westall later made clear, he found the uneventful days of sailing frustrating and monotonous.

Some excitement did arise at the end of February, however, when the coastline abruptly turned north-east. The *Investigator* was actually sailing into the Great Australian Bight but Flinders and the crew, not knowing this, thought they may have found the fabled strait dividing New Holland. As each day passed, though, it became apparent that they were only sailing into an extensive gulf and that one of the main aims of the voyage had been achieved: they had established that no strait separated New South Wales from the rest of the continent. There was disappointment, however, that this was a negative rather than positive discovery. To have found a sea channel, to chart it and announce its existence would have been much more exciting than to confirm that one did not exist. The despondency that Flinders and the crew felt must have affected Westall and added to his sense that he was undertaking a somewhat mundane journey.



King George's Sound: View on the Peninsula to the North of Peak Head 1801

While the *Investigator* experienced a few problems in its first months at sea, including leaks (which were still minor at this stage) and the near drowning of the scientific team at Madeira, the voyage had been reasonably trouble free. The crew was healthy and there had been no casualties from either shipboard diseases or from accidents. Tragically, this all changed on Sunday, 21 February 1802. With water supplies seriously depleted, Flinders sent his first mate, John Thistle, and midshipman, William Taylor, and six other seamen in the cutter to seek an anchorage where fresh water could be obtained. They were at the western side of Spencer's Gulf. As darkness fell, the cutter was seen returning in the distance but it never made it back to the *Investigator*. A search party was sent out but it was hampered by strong tides. The next morning the wreck of the cutter was found, obviously having capsized, but no bodies were recovered. Deeply upset by the accident, Flinders called the area Cape Catastrophe. Six islands in the vicinity were named after the seamen and Thistle Island after the first mate.



Thistle Island 1302

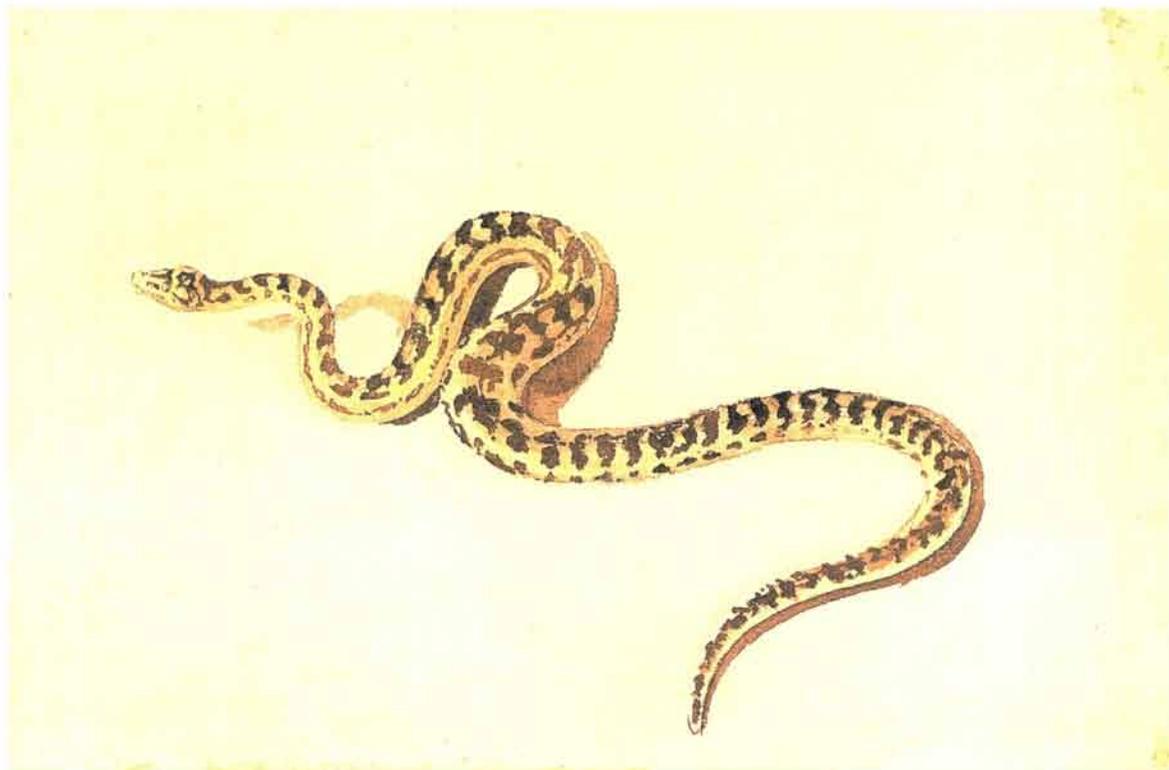
There are only two surviving drawings by Westall from this time but neither makes direct reference to the calamity. One is a drawing of Thistle Island, which was dated 22 February, the day the wreck of the cutter was discovered. In itself it is a fairly unremarkable drawing but given the fact that the man the island had been named after had just been killed, the sparse landscape becomes more intriguing. It stands as a kind of memorial to Thistle and his death in a remote land. Similarly, a watercolour of a snake gains poignancy with the knowledge that this was the snake that had been collected the day before by Thistle. Up until this stage Westall had not depicted the fauna of the area as this was really the task of Bauer. The snake, however, is not so much a scientific recording but rather refers to one of the last occasions Flinders and Thistle spent together. In *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, Flinders recalls that on the morning Thistle died, he had named Thistle Island after him and they had both gone ashore to survey it.

In our way up the hills, to take a commanding station for the survey, a speckled, yellow snake lay asleep before us. By pressing the butt end of a musket upon his neck, I kept him down while Mr. Thistle, with a sail needle and twine, sewed up his mouth; and he was taken on board alive for the naturalist to examine ...¹⁰

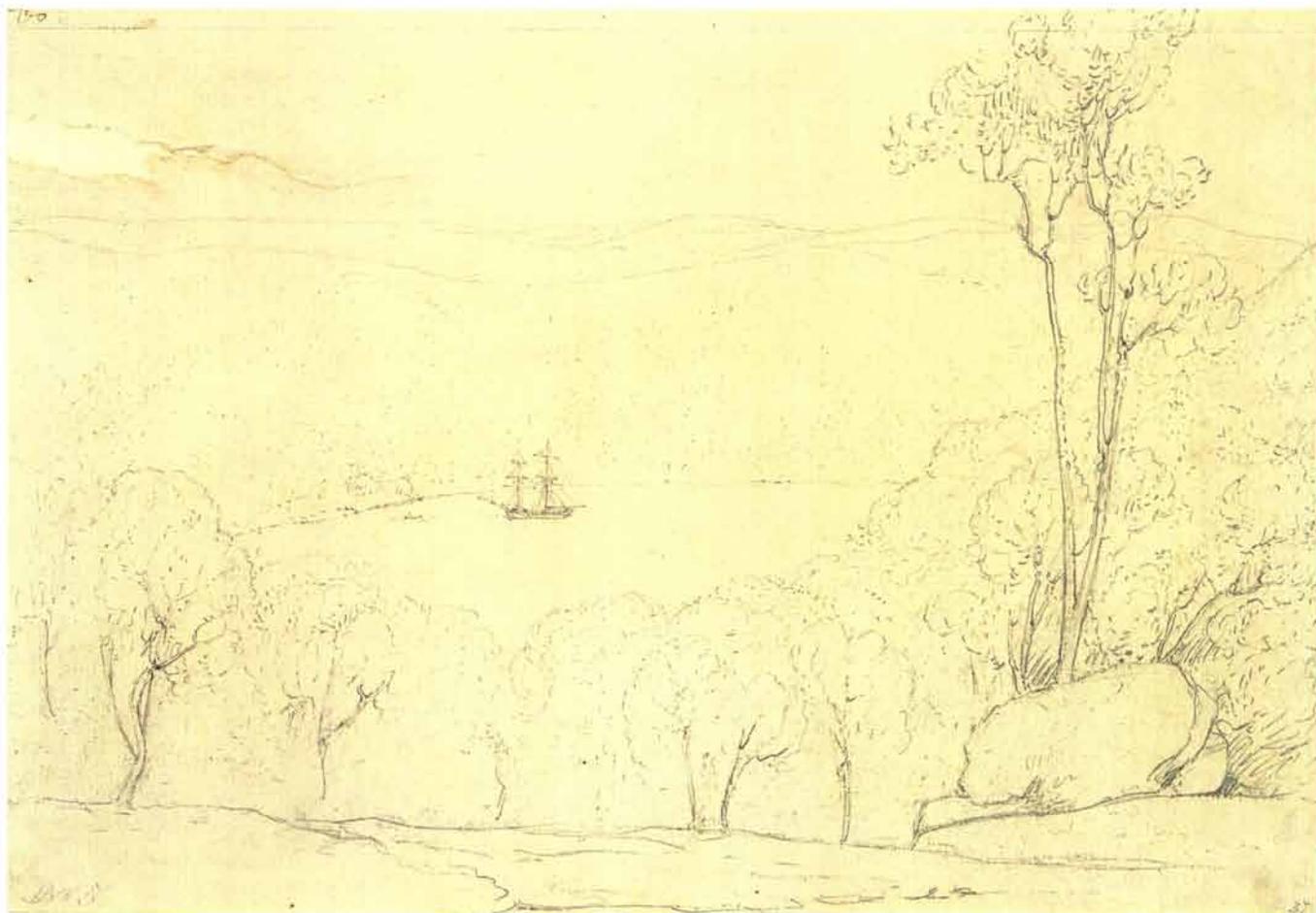
With the snake aboard the *Investigator*, Westall was able to complete a detailed painting of it.¹¹

With no hope of finding anyone from the cutter alive, Flinders sailed on, still in need of fresh water. On 25 February 1802 he moved into a harbour which he called Port Lincoln, after his native shire. Westall sailed to Sleaford Mere and made a sketch of it. In the nine days the *Investigator* spent in Port Lincoln Westall made five sketches and one watercolour; he was gaining a sureness but numerically his output was still unimpressive. On 6 March with water supplies replenished the *Investigator* left Port Lincoln. The feeling aboard ship was sombre in the wake of the deaths of Thistle and the others and the realisation that there was no strait.

At this melancholic time, the last thing Flinders needed to see was a French ship on the horizon. He must have been full of trepidation and dread when he sighted Baudin's *Géographe* as he entered Bass Strait on 8 April 1802. The moment of reckoning had come. Where had the French been? What parts of the coast had they charted? Had the coast that the *Investigator* been sailing along already been thoroughly surveyed by the French? For Flinders it must have been a tense moment as he went aboard the *Géographe* and met with Baudin. Fortunately, it was not long before he was put out of his misery and informed that the French had achieved very little. The *Géographe* and *Naturaliste* had stayed a



Thistle Island: A Snake 1802



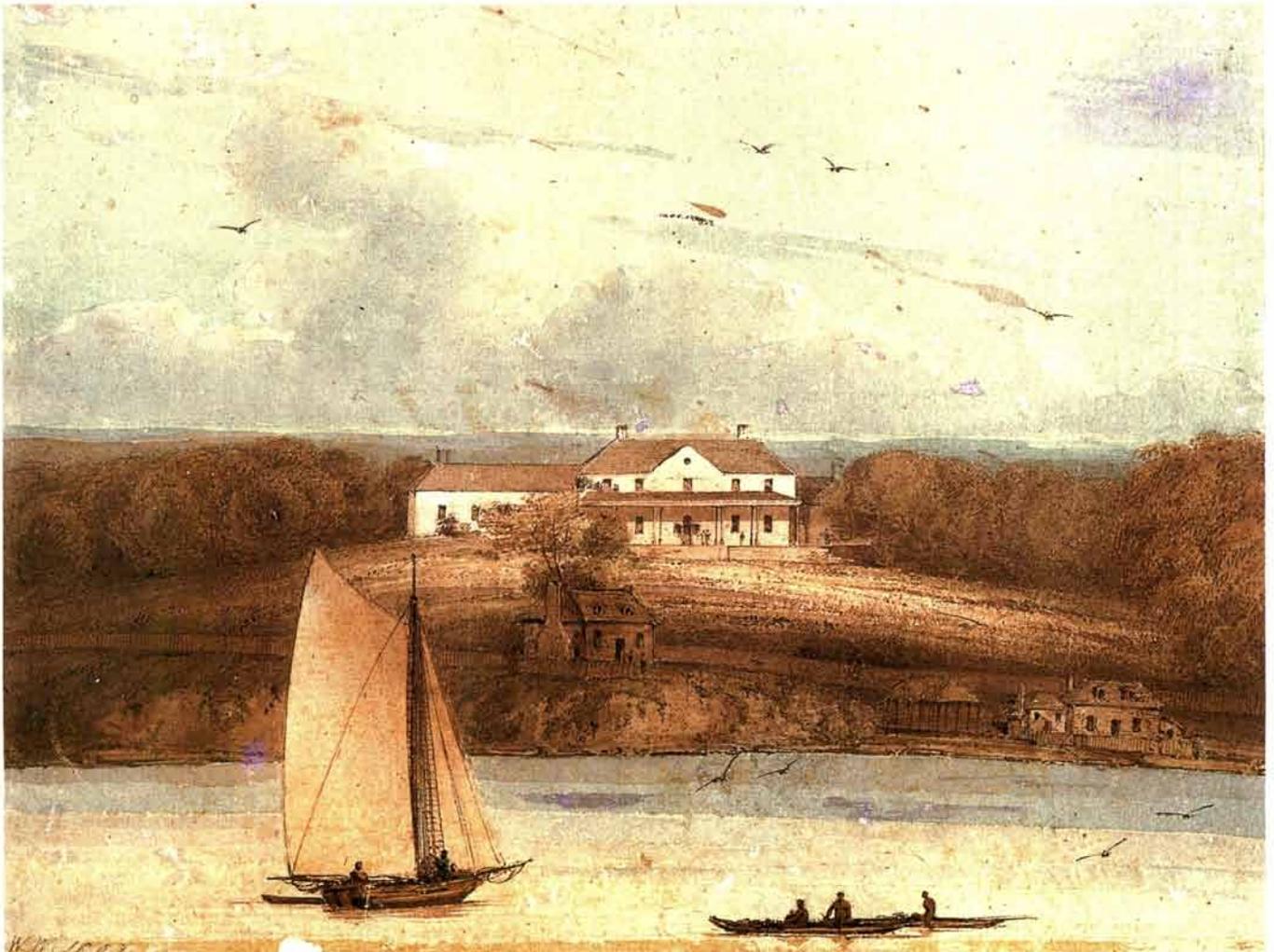
Hawkesbury River: View No. 5 1802

long time in Ile-de-France before they had sailed to Cape Leeuwin. The onset of winter had forced them back up to Timor where they spent three months, losing valuable time. The ships then had moved on to Van Diemen's Land via eastern Australia in March but were forced to delay their work yet again because of the persistence of scurvy. The French scientific team had also wanted to work in Tasmania, with one French officer apparently saying to Flinders 'if we had not been kept so long picking up shells and catching butterflies at Van Diemen's Land, you would not have discovered the south coast before us'.¹² The much relieved Flinders named the place opposite where he met the French Encounter Bay.

After stopping briefly at Port Phillip, the *Investigator* came in sight of Port Jackson on 8 May 1802. Although only a developing settlement, this fledgling town must have been a welcome sight for Westall. As if revitalised, his production in Port Jackson and the surrounding countryside increased greatly. He sketched Aborigines and made expeditions into the interior with Brown and Bauer. Westall became particularly enamoured of the Hawkesbury River, making thirteen drawings of it, an extraordinary

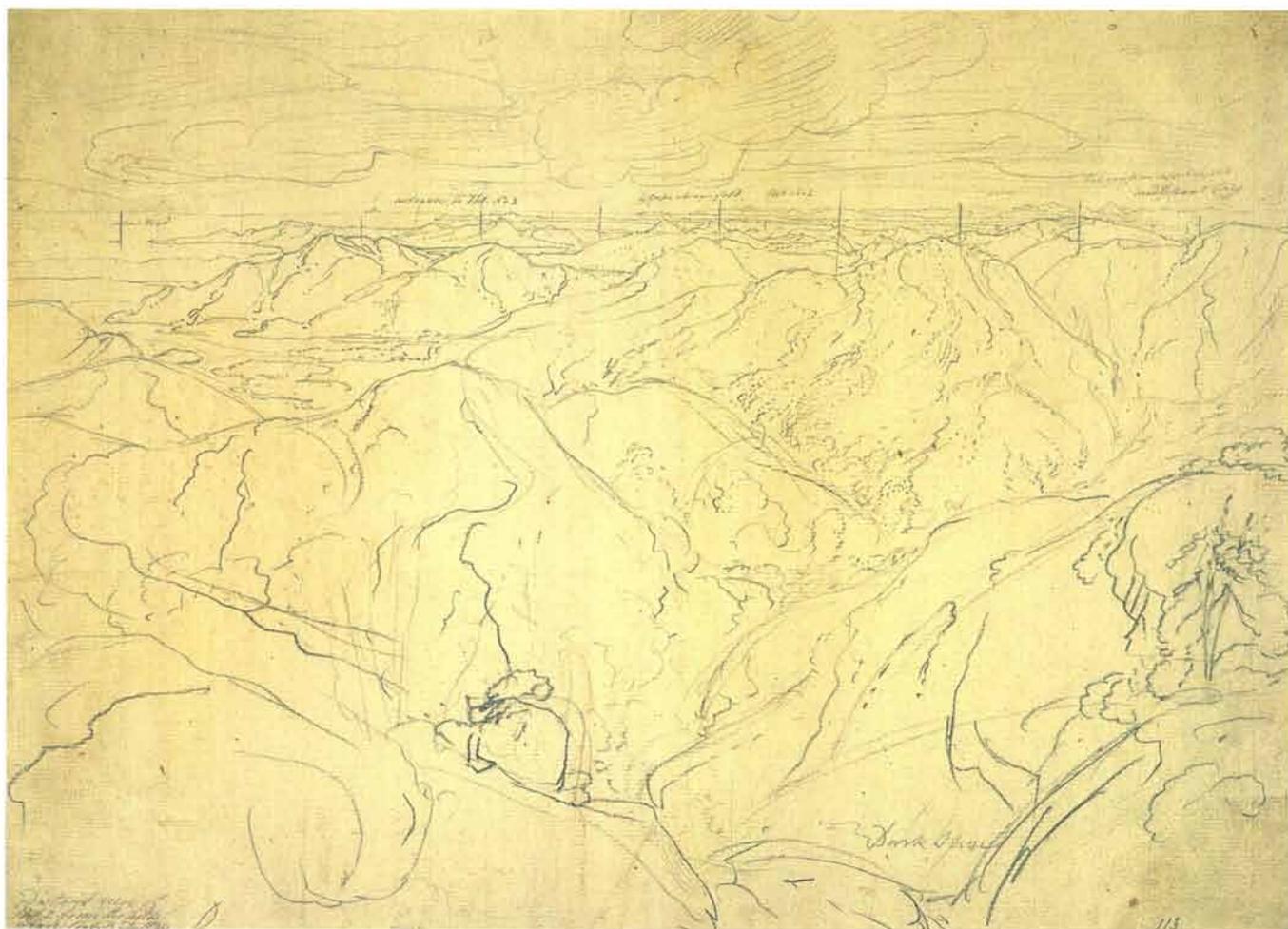
number considering that he had fallen into a pattern of making just one or two drawings of the places where the *Investigator* stopped. Not only did the number of images increase but also the attention he paid to the landscape. In *Hawkesbury River: View No. 5* he not only captured the flow of the meandering river and the outlines of the mountain, but also attentively depicted the foreground foliage, displaying a diligence not seen since he was in the Cape.

With the *Investigator* once again undergoing repairs, the scientific team and the crew spent nearly ten weeks in Port Jackson. In this time Westall received a local commission in addition to his Admiralty work. Governor King, who had gone out of his way to help restock and repair the *Investigator*, requested Westall paint a watercolour of Government House. *Sydney: Government House* was held in the King family until it was donated to the National Library of Australia. This is one of the few paintings Westall worked into a finished state while on the voyage.



Sydney: Government House 1802

Towards the end of the *Investigator*'s time in port, the French ship the *Géographe* arrived with a very ill crew and it was clear that they were now effectively out of the 'race'. Having achieved all he wanted on the south coast, it was now time for Flinders to head north along the east coast, following the routes that Cook had already surveyed. Flinders' task was to fill in the gaps on existing charts and make any corrections. Accompanying him was the *Lady Nelson*, a shallow-bottomed ship more suited to negotiating the river bars and shoal waters. During the journey up the east coast the *Investigator* stopped at Port Curtis, Keppel Bay and Port Bowen. Westall made various coastal profiles, as well as some botanical drawings. Once again, boredom with the landscape seems to have well and truly set in and Westall became more lax in his drawing than ever before. For example, in *Mount Westall: View South-east*, while he has carefully drawn the features in the distance, and these survived into oil painting, the foliage has only been cursorily filled in, with little enthusiasm for capturing the specifics.



Mount Westall: View South-east 1802



Murray Isles 1802

The *Investigator* spent just over two months along the east coast, with Flinders finding a passage through the Barrier Reef and reaching the Torres Strait on 28 October 1802. He dropped anchor off the largest of the Murray Islands group and three canoes of fifty natives came out to trade, a scene captured in the watercolour *Murray Isles*. From this point onwards Westall's paintings reflect more of an interest in people and events than landscape. Unlike the time when Thistle and the other crew members died and he drew images only superficially related to the accident, during this period he actually showed scenes, incidents and portraits of people he met. For example, on 17 February the *Investigator* approached a cluster of islands where there was an encounter with Malayan proas from Macassar, who had come to fish for bêche-de-mer, which they sold in Timor and to the Chinese. Their chief, Probasso, came aboard and he and Flinders struck up a warm relationship, with Westall completing a portrait of him, *The English Company's Islands: Probasso, a Malay Chief* (see page 17).

By the end of October 1802 the monsoon rains had begun, but Flinders decided to continue the charting of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Despite the rain and high humidity, the survey of the Gulf of Carpentaria was completed by 11 February and Flinders was ready to take on the rest of the north

coast. The ship, however, was rotting and the verdict of the carpenters was that it could not be kept at sea any longer than six months. Therefore Flinders decided to head for Port Jackson by way of the west and south coasts, speedily skirting the coast rather than carefully charting it and effectively circumnavigating Australia. The health of the crew was deteriorating and many were seriously ill by the time they arrived in Port Jackson in June 1803 for the second time. Here the *Investigator* was condemned and declared not seaworthy. This was a bitter blow for Flinders who was denied the opportunity of finishing his survey and returning triumphantly to England with completed charts of New Holland.

Flinders was left with no choice but to go back to England and then come out again with another ship to thoroughly complete the survey of the north. Consequently, the *Porpoise* was recruited at Port Jackson to take members of the crew and the scientific team back to Britain. The captains of two other vessels, the *Cato* and *Bridgewater*, also wanted to accompany Flinders on his journey home. So it was decided the three ships would travel up the east coast and back to England by way of the Torres Strait. On the morning of 10 August 1803 they set sail from Port Jackson, with Flinders and his men in the *Porpoise*, leaving the *Investigator* behind. A week later disaster struck.

On the night of 17 August 1803, Flinders, who was under the misapprehension that they were well clear of the Great Barrier Reef, sighted breakers, indicating that there was a reef ahead. The *Porpoise* struck coral first and before a warning could be fired, the *Cato* was also dashed on the reef. The *Bridgewater* was able to avoid the reef and sailed off. The two ships were still afloat but any kind of evacuation was impossible until daylight; so everyone had to wait on the precariously balanced ships until the morning. At dawn, Flinders spotted a dry sandbank and men and supplies were transferred to it. Three men died but that was the total of the fatalities.

Westall's collection of drawings survived with little damage and few losses but Brown lost a collection of living plants and dried specimens. There are water stains on several of Westall's drawings but the bulk of the collection remains intact. Assuming that only a handful of images were destroyed, Westall produced relatively few images on the voyage, particularly when compared to the assiduous and prolific Bauer. In 1805 Bauer returned with a massive 2000 sketches, most of which were remarkably elaborate. By contrast Westall's collection of 140 sketches completed in just over two years looks meagre. William Daniell, Westall's brother-in-law and one of those artists who had turned down the offer to go on the expedition himself, noted:

... considering the time He [sic] was absent from England, and the countries He [sic] visited, [Westall] made but few drawings, and he did not think of what might be interesting to the Topographer ...¹³

This does not undermine the importance of the collection and its significance but rather reveals aspects of Westall's character. As a young and fairly restless artist, Westall lacked the industriousness of his older colleagues. In his later career, Westall did not have the temperament for the painstaking and relentless work involved in scientific drawing but rather had a more creative spirit and imagination than his tour around Australia allowed. Joseph Farington, after speaking with Westall on his return, noted that Westall 'did not appear to be very desirous of returning to the Navy from thinking it held out very little prospect of adventure'.¹⁴ 

Ninety-four men were forced to live on the sandbank at Wreck Reef while rescue plans were made. The bank was only 300 yards (approximately 270 metres) long and 100 yards (approximately 90 metres) wide but a little camp of tents was erected and a blue ensign was hoisted with the Union Jack



The English Company's Islands: Probasso, a Malay Chief 1803



View of Wreck Reef Bank Taken at Low Water: Terra Australis 1803

placed upside down to show that they were in need of help. Westall captured the scene in *View of Wreck Reef Bank Taken at Low Water: Terra Australis*, which was later made into an oil painting and an engraving. Flinders decided that a small crew should take the larger of the *Porpoise*'s two six-oared cutters and row to Sydney, a distance of 750 miles (approximately 1200 kilometres), and then return with other rescue ships. He set out on 26 August, taking thirteen days to reach Sydney. In Port Jackson, the *Rolla*, a merchant ship, was enlisted to pick up some of the castaways and take them to Canton; the *Francis* was ordered to return others to Sydney; and the *Cumberland* was instructed to return Flinders directly to England as he did not want to waste any time.

The rescue ships left Port Jackson on 21 September and arrived to great cheers and relief at Wreck Reef on 5 October 1803. Westall opted to board the *Rolla*, which was heading for Canton in China. People and belongings were all loaded by 11 October and the three ships sailed off to their respective destinations. The voyage of the *Investigator* and its circumnavigation of New Holland were effectively over.

IN PURSUIT OF THE PICTURESQUE

We must ever recollect that nature is most defective in composition; and must be a little assisted.

William Gilpin, 1794¹

When Westall arrived in the port city of Canton at the end of 1803 he was befriended by a D. Lance, an official of the East India Company. Lance's name is frequently mentioned in Westall's accounts of his time in China and it is evident that Lance became a guardian and adviser to the impressionable young artist, freely offering his suggestions and counsel.² Unfortunately Lance's judgement was often flawed. He advised Westall not to return to England immediately but to explore the Canton region, where he undertook such sketching expeditions as one with a group of scientists up the Pei Kiang River. Lance also encouraged Westall to visit other countries and, taking Lance's advice, in early 1804 Westall boarded the *Carron* bound for India.

While he was on these sojourns, Westall was still a paid government employee. He was not a free agent and had no right to travel where his whim took him. He had an obligation to explain his movements and seek approval for his actions from Joseph Banks and the Admiralty. Realising this, Westall wrote to Banks on 31 January 1804 outlining his travel plans and giving the reasons for his delay in returning home.³

This significant letter is the longest extant piece of correspondence by Westall. It offers an interesting insight into his character but not an altogether flattering one. The letter reveals a rather temperamental and querulous side to Westall's personality; although it cannot be forgotten that he was still very young and inexperienced in the finer points of tact and diplomacy. Westall painfully, and almost remorsefully, justifies his proposed trip to Ceylon at government expense, maintaining that he would rather not go but felt he must bring back more exciting images than those he did in New Holland. He drones on about his disappointment in the monotonous Australian landscape and remonstrates with Banks on his frustrations. He continues in a churlish manner, stating that he was not aware that the *Investigator* was only taking him to New Holland:

I was not aware that the voyage was confined to New Holland only had I known this I most certainly would not have engaged in a hazardous voyage where I could have little opportunity of employing my pencil with any advantage to myself or my employers.⁴

He adds that he would have been 'fully recompensed, for being so long on that barren coast, by the richness of the South Sea Islands', which he believed the *Investigator* was going to visit.⁵ As it did not, he implies that he had the right to compensation in going to India. Some writers have expressed

sympathy for Westall's misconceptions and an understanding of why he may have felt a sense of disillusionment at the reality of the *Investigator's* route. Rex and Thea Rienits propose that confusion over the places to be visited may have arisen from the time when William Daniell was originally offered the appointment. Daniell believed that the expedition would visit some islands in the South Pacific situated farther out from Otaheite and he probably passed this information on to Westall.⁶

If originally there were plans to take the sloop beyond New Holland when Daniell was still part of the team, this was certainly not the case when Westall was appointed and he had little excuse for not realising that. On 29 April 1801 Westall signed an agreement that clearly stated his and the other scientists' terms of employment. The contract was explicit in establishing that the purpose of the voyage was to explore the country of New Holland; there was absolutely no mention of visiting anywhere else. Banks had devised this document, the first of its kind for exploratory trips, to 'prevent all misunderstandings' and to avoid the sort of confusion that was now being created by Westall.⁷

Banks and the Lords of the Admiralty were not impressed by Westall's acerbic correspondence, which implied that he had somehow been deceived. From their point of view, they had given the young and inexperienced Westall an exceptional opportunity to make his mark as an artist and to be part of a great adventure. All they were getting in return were complaints. Rather than following their instructions, Westall was following Lance's. And while he acknowledged his debt of obedience to the Admiralty, writing that he would return home if that is what they wished, he was already on board the *Carron* when he wrote the letter and was clearly determined on a path of action. As a display of disapproval at his impertinence, Westall's appointment as a government employee was ceased and as far as the Admiralty was concerned his trips to Ceylon and India were on private rather than official business. Further, for his transgression Westall was curtly informed that he would have to find his own passage home.⁸

While Westall had been dismissed from service, the Admiralty was still anxious that his sketches be returned to England as quickly as possible. Under the agreement which Westall had signed, his drawings were 'the property of the public' and the Admiralty had the right to use them for a publication about the voyage. As with past expeditions, the Admiralty wanted to capitalise on its expenditure and effort by producing an extensive illustrated account of the journey and its major discoveries.⁹ Westall's jaunts were delaying the process, adding to the irritation already caused by his letter.

The absence of Westall and his drawings was not the only obstacle hampering the Admiralty's plans, and by no means the most serious one. On his way back to England, Matthew Flinders had stopped for supplies at Mauritius, which was then under French control. England was once again at war with France and through a series of misfortunes and misunderstandings Flinders was imprisoned on the island. In the end it was a very lengthy, and tragic, detention lasting just under seven years, until 1810.

Westall finally arrived back in England at the end of 1804, after being away for over three years.¹⁰ With his Australian sketches returned to the Admiralty and with Flinders being held captive, Westall realised he would not be called upon to contribute to the publication on the *Investigator's* voyage for some time so, still hungry for foreign adventure, he sailed to Madeira and Jamaica in 1805, not returning home again until 1806. In 1808 he joined the Associated Artists in Water Colour, and staged an exhibition of his foreign views. The exhibition included scenes from China, India, Madeira and the West Indies, but none of his Australian scenes. This was in part because Westall did not consider them worthy of display and also because the Admiralty owned them and had the first right to decide what should be done with them.

Five years had passed since the demise of the voyage of the *Investigator* and the sketches had not been seen by the British public. Despite any ill feeling that may have lingered over Westall's letter from Canton, both he and the Admiralty had much to be gained in bringing the images to the public attention. They had invested too much in the 'landscape and figure' paintings to let them just deteriorate in storage. With Cook's voyages the Admiralty had commissioned William Hodges and John Webber to produce oil paintings based on their rough watercolours and pencil drawings. Eventually, having to proceed without Flinders, they did the same with Westall. Banks instigated and urged the commission and in 1809 Westall's sketches were returned to him with instructions to produce nine oil paintings of scenes of New Holland.¹¹

It was a commission that would occupy Westall for three years, with the last painting being completed in 1812. Selections of the paintings were exhibited in both 1810 and 1812 at the Royal Academy, leading to Westall's election as an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1812.¹² Becoming an Associate of the Academy was the first positive consequence to come from his Australian work and it was the first major step towards becoming an Academician, of which there were only forty, the ultimate aim for a conservative artist such as Westall.¹³

While he was in Australia Westall's duty was to produce landscapes and figures that accurately depicted the coastline and people of Australia; back in England his agenda changed. The six-year break from working with exacting scientists such as Robert Brown and Ferdinand Bauer had altered Westall's outlook. Now that he was in his mid twenties, he was much more concerned with establishing himself as a leading creative artist than a topographic and scientific draughtsman. He wanted to meet artistic expectations rather than scientific ones. Certain standards were required in oil paintings and Westall realised that if he just copied his rough, and what he perceived as rather dull, sketches he would be severely criticised. The Australian landscape had to be reworked.

In his Canton letter, Westall was scathing in his remarks on Australia, writing that his New Holland subjects could neither 'afford pleasure from exhibiting the face of a beautiful country, nor curiosity from their singularity'.¹⁴ On the other hand, he hoped that the 'the rich and picturesque' Ceylon, with its 'infinite variety', would provide him with more varied and valuable subjects. The key element, the critical quality, that was missing from the Australian countryside was the 'picturesque'.

Over the years the word picturesque has come to be an amorphous term referring simply to a scene that is attractive and is suitable for a picture. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the picturesque, which reached its height of popularity in the 1790s, while still carrying the meaning of a scene worthy of a picture was more closely defined. It referred to a particular aesthetic, although there was debate and lengthy discussion on exactly what it constituted, with various artists and theorists entering into involved deliberations.

One of the picturesque's leading advocates, the Reverend William Gilpin, defined the picturesque as that which stimulates the imagination to reverie or admiration.¹⁵ He elaborated on how a picture could achieve this, writing that it must have a variety of elements, including interesting trees, shrubs, hills, rivers, figures or buildings, and these must be portrayed with 'roughness'. This roughness, whether it be jagged rocks or gnarled branches, was intended to make the scene appear more natural, rather than smooth and ordered. Another major theorist, Uvedale Price, also argued that the picturesque should bring landscape painting back to a celebration of nature.¹⁶ He drew attention to the need for 'abrupt variation', where diverse and interesting elements of the landscape were mixed together. These writers had some conflicting opinions but when looking at the actual picturesque landscapes painted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a distinct, if not monotonous, formula and style emerges.



Entrance to Port Lincoln from behind Memory Cove, February 1802 1809–12
 (Ministry of Defence Art Collection, London; transparency courtesy of National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London)

Westall was determined to impose this formula on the Australian landscape and he did not let the fact that he had not found picturesque scenes, full of variety and interest, interfere with introducing the aesthetic into his oil paintings and the subsequent engravings. He simply manipulated and modified his sketches until the elusive picturesque miraculously appeared.¹⁷ For example, in *Entrance to Port Lincoln from behind Memory Cove, February 1802* the major features of the picturesque can be identified. Firstly, the scene consists of a dark foreground receding to a light background, with light also falling upon the humpy to add variety and interest. This strong contrast between light and dark areas is one of the basic elements of picturesque painting. The foreground is crowded with an extraordinary range of foliage, rocky protrusions and hills, providing the obligatory roughness and natural interest. The towering tree on the left unites the foreground and the background, as well as acting as a frame at the top of the picture. A tree placed in such a position was a common picturesque device that appeared in many landscapes produced in England at the time. Such trees broke up the horizon line and, once again, added interest through variety.

The finished oil painting of Port Lincoln bears little resemblance to Westall's original sketches. He actually spliced two drawings, maintaining the background of one distant view of Port Lincoln (see below) and the foreground of another (see page 24). In composing all of his oil paintings Westall had no hesitation with this kind of 'creativity'. He argued that by combining various elements he was creating a typical landscape rather than one specific to a locality.¹⁸ But his images were so contrived and full of artifice that they almost became complete fancy. Before judging Westall as complicit in some kind of artistic deception and fraud, although on one level he certainly was, it cannot be forgotten that in the early nineteenth century such liberties were accepted and even expected. Gilpin himself wrote that a 'picturesque composition consists in uniting in one whole a variety of parts' and this was what Westall did.¹⁹ The painter's duty was to go in search of landscapes that were picturesque and to capture the naturalness and beauty of these scenes.²⁰ If, however, the picturesque could not be found the artist was given licence, and indeed it was his or her obligation, to assist nature. This was the great paradox



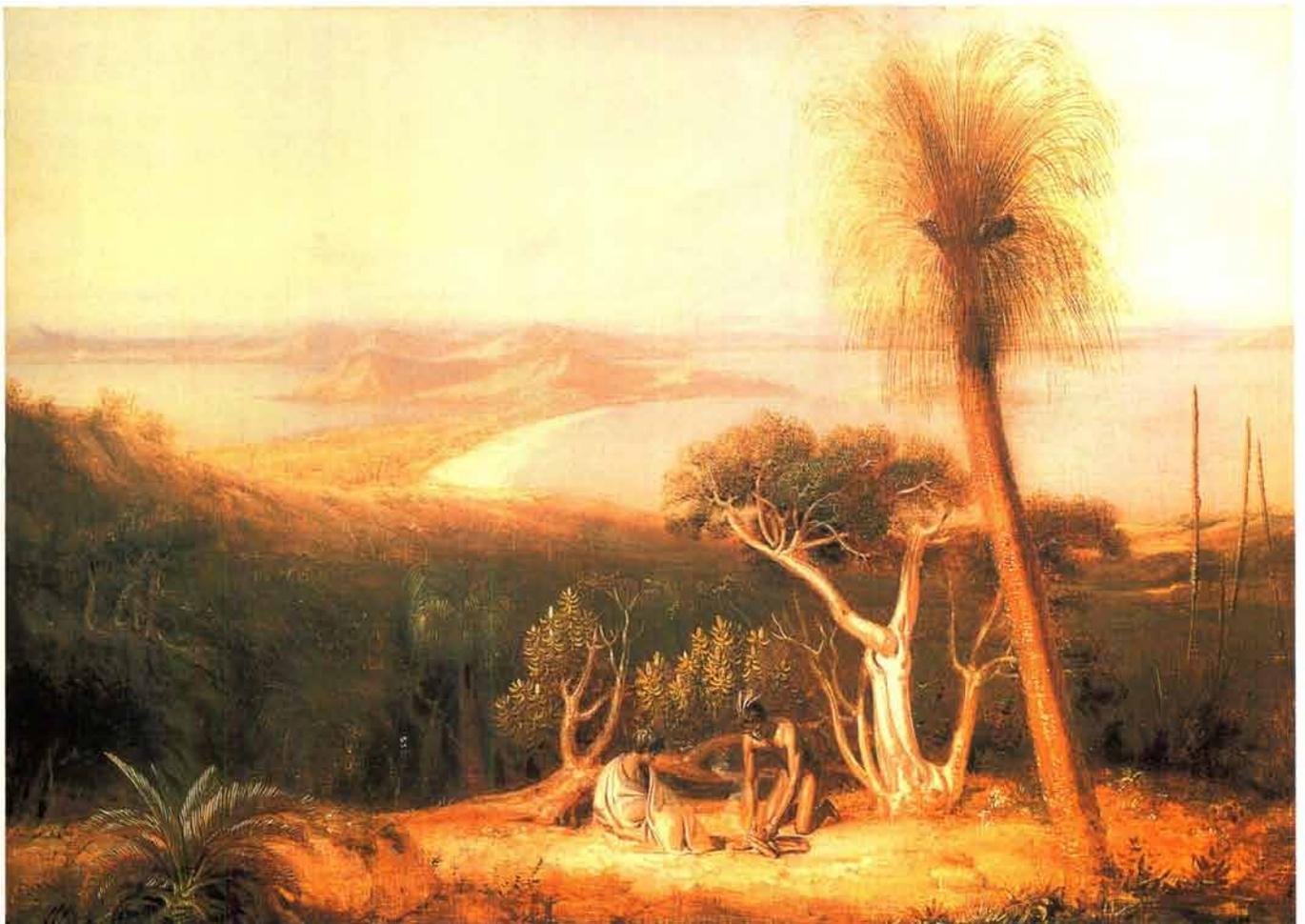
Port Lincoln: A Distant View [no.1] 1802



Port Lincoln: A Distant View [no.2] 1802

of the picturesque: even though nature was supreme and the natural was to be pursued, the artist was also entrusted to improve upon nature, even if this meant falsifying a scene and making it quite unnatural.

Westall's manipulation of the view of Port Lincoln was quite gentle compared to what he did in other paintings. The image *Part of King George III Sound, on the South Coast of New Holland, December 1801* is a more obvious example of how Westall worked his sketches to make them more pleasing to European eyes and how he transformed his 'barren' landscapes into more interesting scenes. In the original pencil sketch, *King George's Sound: View from Peak Head* (see page 26), Westall carefully drew the coastline, with an unimpressive scrub tree and a fallen branch in the foreground. In the oil painting he maintained the accuracy of the coastline and was very diligent in transferring the features of the coast, in order that the scene could be recognised as King George's Sound. On his original sketch there are faint pencil lines forming a grid. These would have been drawn when he was in England, in preparation for the oil painting. Such grids were used to assist in copying a sketch to a canvas, with the squares dividing the images into small workable portions that were easy to duplicate.

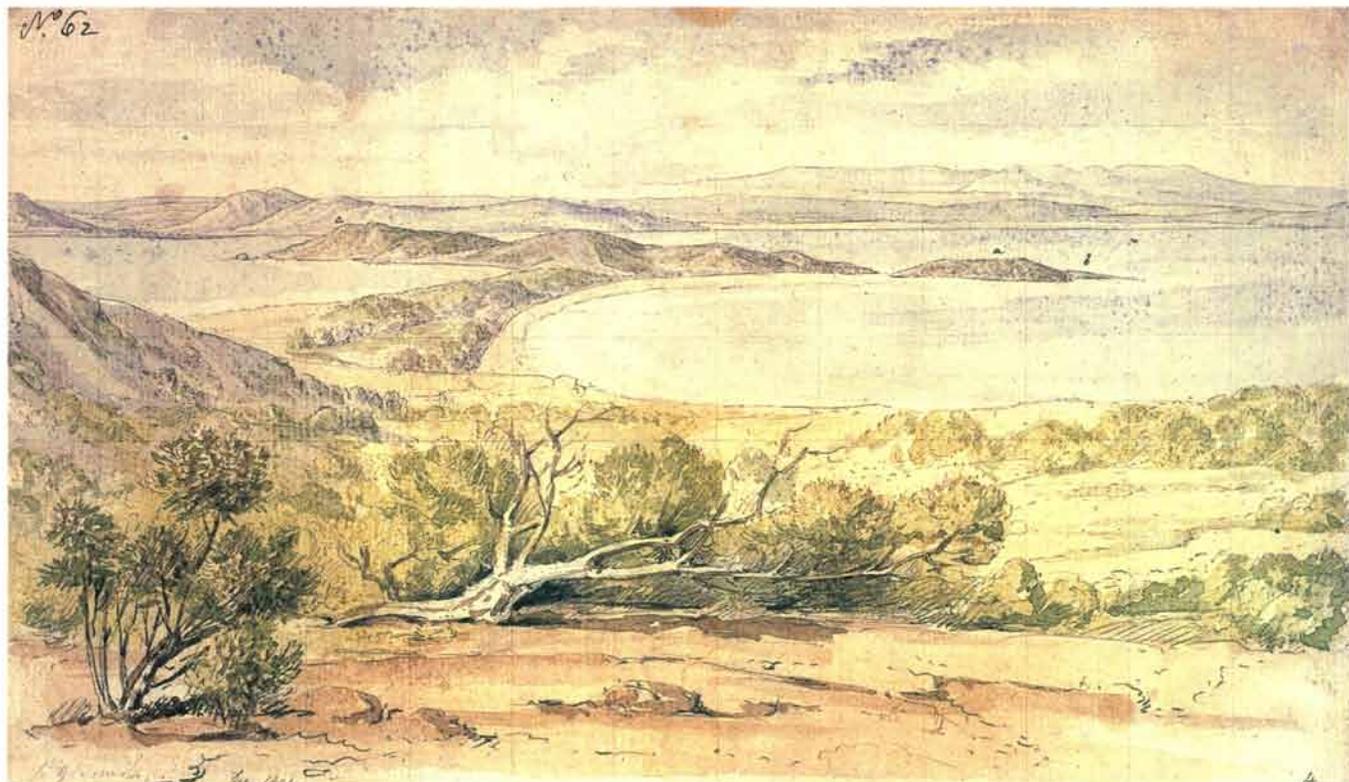


Part of King George III Sound, on the South Coast of New Holland, December 1801 1809–12
(Ministry of Defence Art Collection, London; transparency courtesy of National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London)

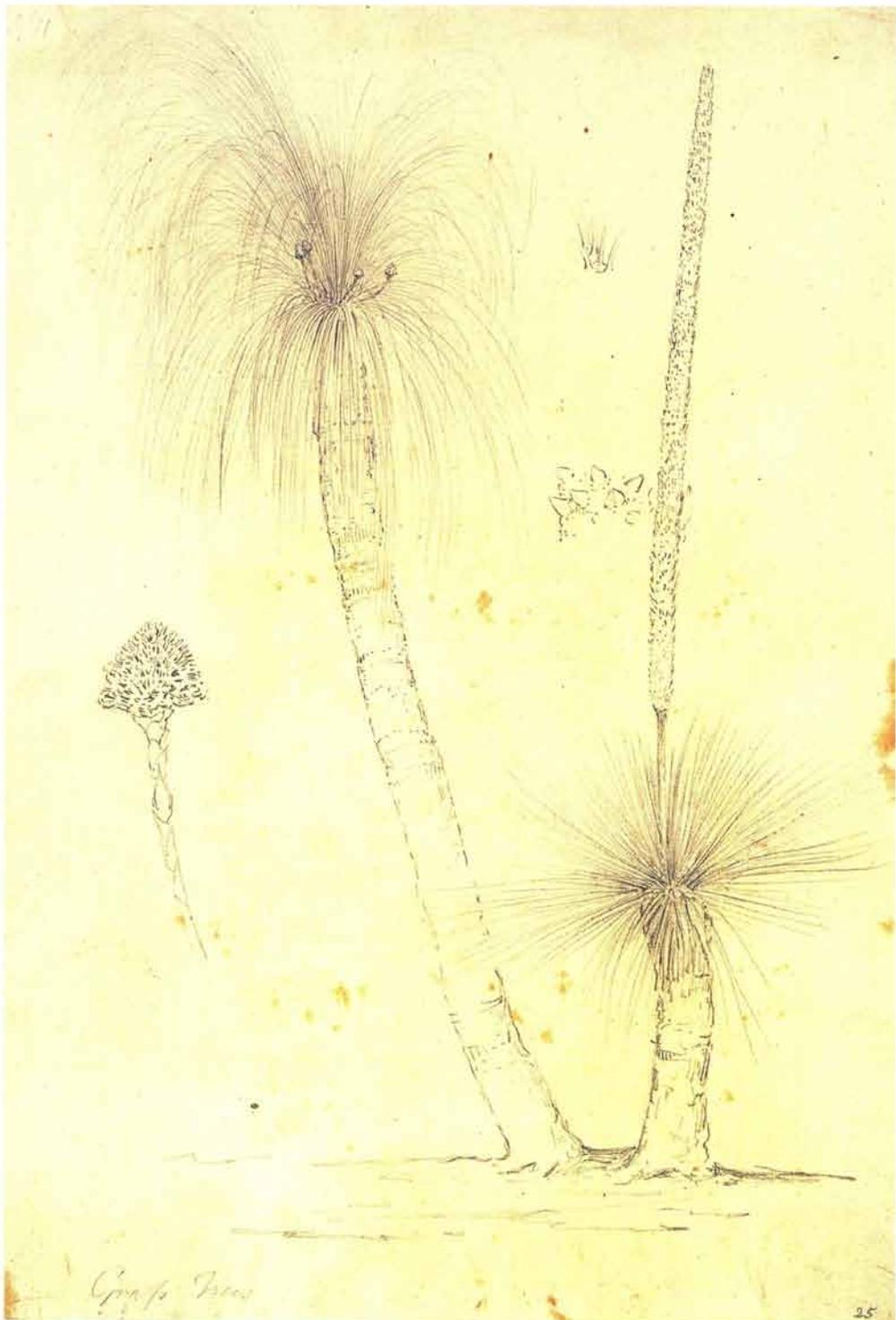
Such concern for accuracy disappeared when Westall painted the foreground, which he dramatically altered. The scrub tree on the left metamorphosed into a palm and the fallen branch sprouted banksia flowers. A whole array of features was added to make the image more interesting and to meet the conventions of picturesque variety. Quite fancifully he imported grass trees from Port Jackson and placed them on the right to frame the picture and break up the horizon. The grass trees were clearly taken from *Port Jackson: Grass Trees* (see page 27), a sketch Westall completed in the following year, and the gnarled tree next to it was probably based on the eucalyptus in *Spencer's Gulf: Eucalyptus* (see page 28). To complete the picturesque scene two Aborigines were added to the foreground and are shown preparing a fire. Such unabashed, and to modern eyes almost amusing, tampering occurs in all the oil paintings, bringing us back to the point that Westall's paintings are not faithful to what he saw. Like most written documents, these paintings are complex texts that need to be analysed in context and carefully decoded.

Part of the decoding involves investigating why Westall chose the picturesque as the mode to represent the Australian landscape and why he decided not to work in other traditions such as the sublime. Some thirty years earlier, William Hodges in his paintings for the Admiralty had worked in the conventions of the sublime, which involved much grander scenes and showed an awesome and overpowering nature.²¹ Hodges depicted man battling to survive in the natural world and adopted a style of painting that showed excitement and the danger of exploration. By the time Westall was painting his Australian scenes the sublime was not as popular and this was one of the reasons why he chose the picturesque. He was simply working with conventions which were more widely appreciated and which were favoured by artistic circles.

Such a simple explanation for why Westall used one particular aesthetic in preference to another, while valid, is limited and leaves many questions unanswered: Why were certain conventions in vogue in the first place and why did they lose their popularity? What happened to change popular artistic tastes between the years when Hodges went in quest for exciting, turbulent scenes and when Westall pursued a much calmer nature? To understand landscape aesthetics many art historians have



King George's Sound: View from Peak Head 1801



Port Jackson: Grass Trees 1802



Spencer's Gulf: Eucalyptus 1802

convincingly argued that an awareness of the underlying ideology of a painting is crucial to comprehending how it was painted. Particular styles have an implicit ideology and as that ideology becomes unpalatable or irrelevant so does the particular mode of landscape painting.

In the 1980s a considerable amount of effort was directed by art historians towards scrutinising forms of landscape painting of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and their relationship to the political and social pressures and values of the day. Just as maps and coastal profiles have been judged to have underlying meanings and implications, so have styles of painting. In relation to a discussion of Westall's work, the most influential and relevant publications on the subject are John Barrell's *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting* and Ann Bermingham's *Landscape and Ideology*.²² The arguments put forward in these books help to explain the significance of Westall's use of the picturesque. Both Barrell and Bermingham contend that landscape painting is laden with ideological significance and the popularity and development of particular styles is, to a large extent, determined by the political issues of the time and the tensions surrounding the real landscape. They argue that the picturesque developed in reaction to what was happening to the English countryside with the acceleration of land enclosure.

Enclosure was a land policy involving subdivision and the fencing of common lands and large open fields, hence the name enclosure. Increased sections of the countryside were put under cultivation in order to develop a more productive agrarian society that would meet the demands of the expanding towns and colonies. The real landscape changed from appearing natural and unkempt to being divided and ordered. As this process continued, there was a growing nostalgia for when the English landscape appeared more 'natural' and a desire for the rough and unconstrained nature to be seen in picturesque painting. But the picturesque was not simply about nostalgia. It was also a political weapon that highlighted concerns about the process of urbanisation. Enclosure was associated with the rise of industrialism and with the disintegration of the old estate system. The changing landscape was a product and symbol of the upheavals which Britain was experiencing and it was a point of tension between the old established country families and the new industrial classes. The picturesque, by celebrating the natural and pre-industrial landscape, became a highly charged protest against the economic and social changes that were sweeping the country.

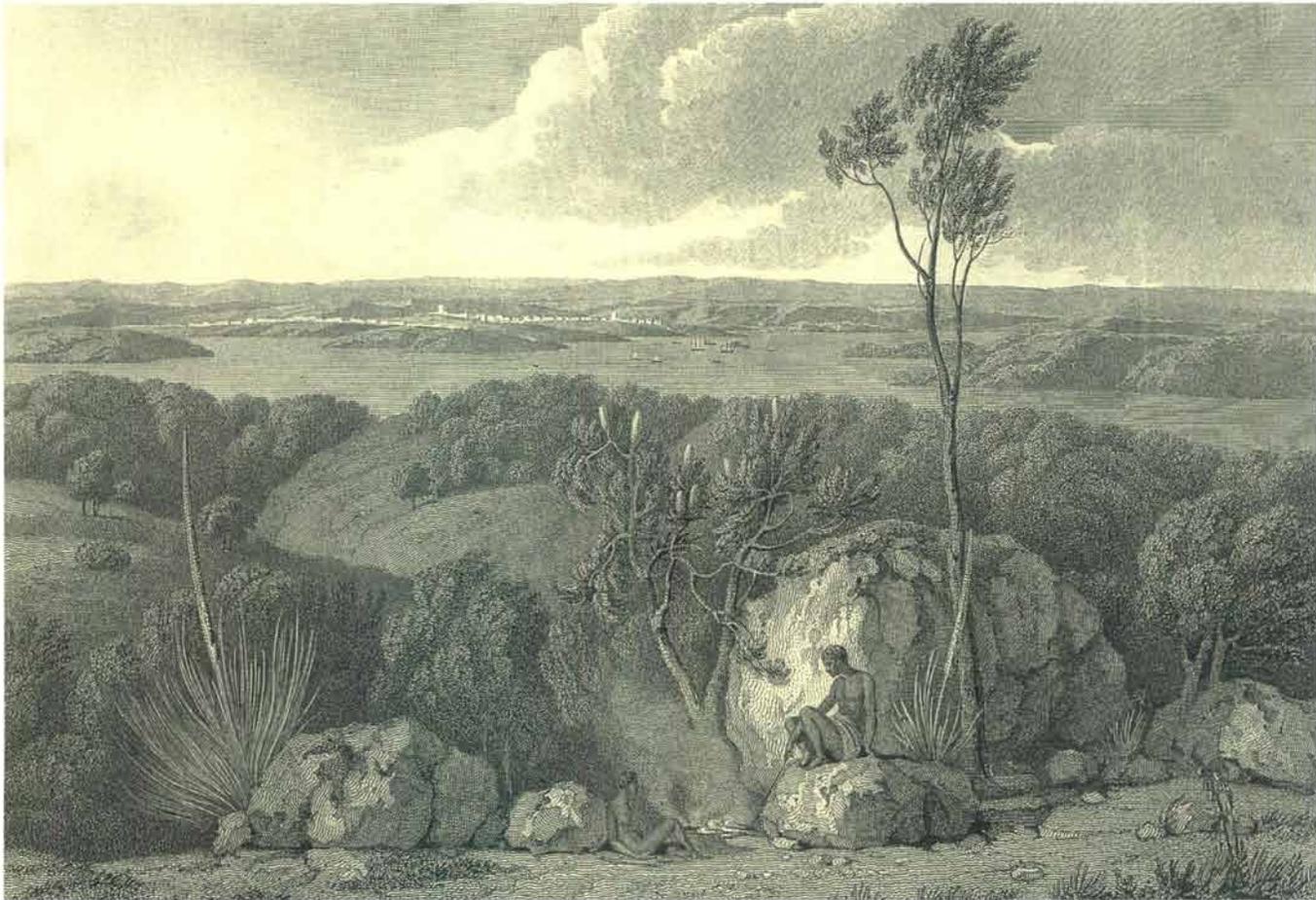
While Barrell and Bermingham explore in depth the relationship between the picturesque and the political, economic and social events taking place in England, little work has been done on the significance of artists, such as Westall, using the picturesque to depict foreign lands. The political and social dimension of Westall's work was just as strong and complex as in English landscape painting. Just as the picturesque was the ideal way to make a statement about urbanisation and industrialism, it was also the perfect vehicle for presenting colonial ambitions and justifying colonial actions.

While Westall's topographical drawings played their part in claiming discovery, and therefore refuting Aboriginal ownership of the land, the picturesque was used to make the country attractive and desirable. Hodges' wild, sublime images of the previous century had celebrated Britain's bravery and ability to penetrate harsh territory, but Westall's picturesque images presented a land that looked appealing rather than threatening—a pristine landscape, an Arcadia, unspoiled by the problems that plagued Europe, such as over-population, poverty, war or even enclosure. These images made possession of the land all the more attractive. The land's 'natural' appearance made it more inviting to prospective colonists and justified the immense efforts that were going into colonisation.

Most of the areas Westall visited had not been settled by Europeans and, consequently, were easily depicted as untouched. Other places such as Port Jackson were more of a challenge. In the engraving

View of Port Jackson Taken from the South Head Westall pushed the town far into the background so that only a very thin line of white buildings and some tiny ships in the harbour can be seen. There is no indication of the destruction or, for that matter, the hard work that made this settlement possible. The picturesque acted to obscure any damage that was being done through colonisation. The harsh realities of convict life, the destruction of the landscape and the destitution of the indigenous population were all concealed so that Australia could be promoted as being about ease and natural abundance.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, landscape paintings almost invariably included people.²³ The rules and theories of the picturesque extended to how people should be portrayed and how figures should be arranged in the landscape. Like so many elements of the picturesque, the figures were designed to add interest and to break up the composition, although the inclusion of too many figures was not encouraged. Gilpin wrote:



View of Port Jackson Taken from the South Head (engraving by John Pye) 1814

In adorning your sketch, a figure, or two, may be introduced with propriety ... But they should be introduced sparingly. In profusion they are affected. Their chief use is, to mark a road—to break a piece of foreground.²⁴

Figures and dwellings had a formal, compositional function and beyond this who was included and how they were painted were politically significant. In English landscape scenes it was the poor who were represented, with their raggedness adding to the roughness and aesthetic appeal of the painting. They offered aristocratic and middle-class audiences a sense of superiority. The poor were represented as small, remote, unreal figures in need of guidance and governing. In Westall's paintings the Aborigines fitted very neatly into the position which the poor occupied in English landscape scenes. In his oil paintings Westall always placed the Aborigines at a great distance, making them minuscule, impersonal figures open to the same exploitation.²⁵



Port Jackson: A Group of Natives 1802

Westall was not only drawing on the traditions of the picturesque in his figure painting but was also using the noble savage model. The concept of the noble savage came to prominence in the mid to late eighteenth century through Jean-Jacques Rousseau and as a result of Cook's voyages and accounts of the indigenous populations of the South Seas. The noble savage was an heroic figure who proudly lived in unspoiled lands. It was a term more readily applied to Tahitians than native Australians, but several of the earliest images of Aborigines by Europeans show that they were cast in the noble savage role. Portraying an individual as a noble savage meant showing them in a classical pose and in flowing drapery. By association with the classical past, the noble savage was put on a par with the great figures of antiquity. Parkinson's *Two Natives of New Holland Advancing to Combat* of 1773 is the first known portrayal of an Aborigine by a European and is exemplary of the noble savage genre. It shows two Aborigines who challenged the landing at Botany Bay and advanced with spears, as gallant warriors. The stance and attitude of the men is based on the *Borghese Gladiator*, a comparison not lost on the audience of the day, inviting parallels between their courage and majesty. From this point onwards, until the late 1810s and early 1820s, such classical-style images dominated portrayals of Aborigines by British artists.

While in Australia, Westall produced many images of Aborigines, particularly at Spencer's Gulf, Port Jackson, Keppel Bay and Shoalwater Bay. In several of these sketches he has used classical prototypes. For example, even in the rough line drawing of *Port Jackson: A Group of Natives* (see page 31) Westall's training in classical figure draughtsmanship comes to the fore. The figure on the rock is drawn according to all the rules of classical casts and with the idea of perfect proportion. It must be noted, though, that Westall, while aspiring to the classical, was not always able to conform to antique standards and often his figure drawings were awkward. The figures in *Port Jackson: A Group of Natives* were used in the engraving *View of Port Jackson Taken from the South Head* (see page 30). Some minor, but nevertheless significant, changes were made: the man's dangerous spear has been replaced with a fire-stoking stick, thereby removing any threatening connotations and showing the Aborigines lived harmoniously with their environment.

Part of the earlier imagery of the noble savage, as mentioned in the example of *Two Natives of New Holland Advancing to Combat*, was to portray Aborigines as warriors: they were noble because they were brave. In the mid to late eighteenth century the wild and sublime landscapes together with the challenging foe added to the excitement of exploring foreign lands. But by the time Westall was in Australia the rebelling Aborigines were proving to be more of a nuisance and an embarrassment than objects of admiration. They interfered in settlement and made Australia an altogether more unattractive place, hence the desire in official images to suppress even the hint of tension. With Banks and the Admiralty looking over Westall's shoulder to ensure the images were acceptable, the complexities and real anxieties of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised were avoided and the images sanitised. Westall did not portray warriors, instead he painted peaceful 'civilised' Aborigines dressed in classical garb. The noble savage was a safe stereotype.

Among Westall's original drawings are several that reveal the reality of the often violent and strained relationship between the crew of the *Investigator* and the Aborigines. For instance, in the right corner of *King George's Sound: View from the North-west* there are guns, which were routinely taken on treks, but these never reappear in the finished works. When the *Investigator* landed in King George's Sound there had been some tension between the crew and the Aborigines, with one man brandishing a spear, and it took several days for friendly relations to be established between the two groups. At Port Curtis the crew was bombarded with stones, with the Aborigines only stopping when muskets were



King George's Sound: View from the North-west 1801

fired over their heads, and at Caledon Bay they ran into trouble when their weapons were stolen by a group of Aborigines.

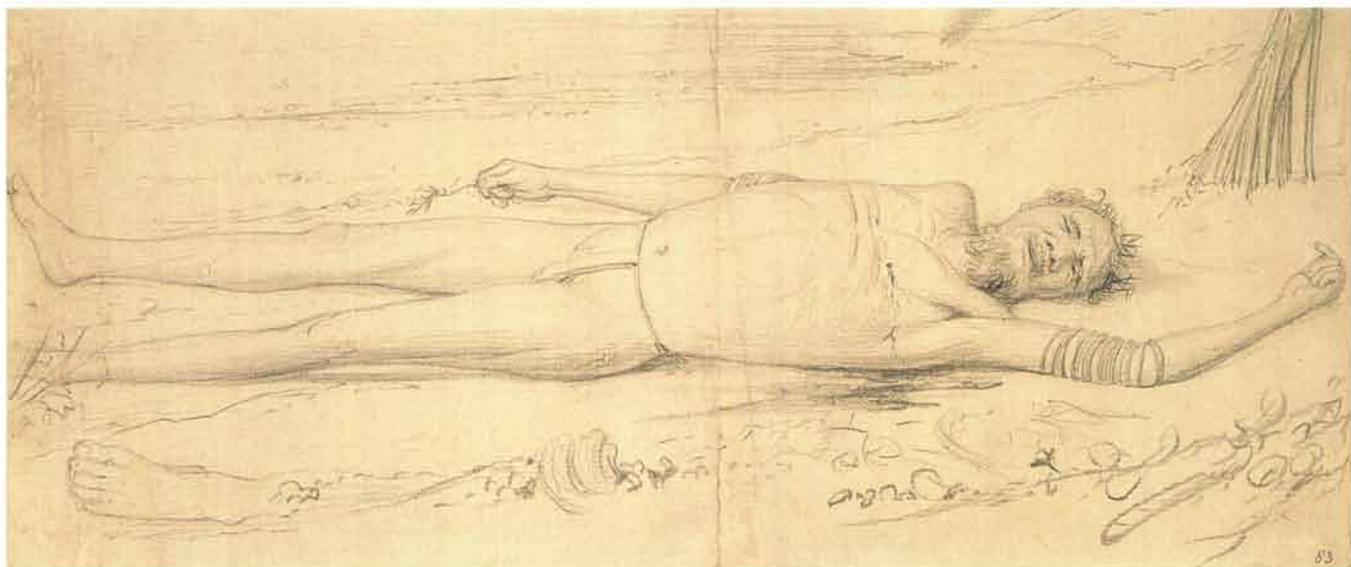
On one occasion during the *Investigator*'s expedition the guns were used. *Blue Mud Bay: Body of a Native Shot on Morgan's Island* (see page 34) depicts an Aborigine shot after the spearing of Mr Whitewood, master's mate, on 21 January 1803, while the *Investigator* was sailing along the northern shore. Whitewood was killed by a group of Aborigines who had pursued Westall while he was sketching. The Aborigines tried to escape in canoes but one was killed. As Flinders explains, Westall was anxious to draw the dead figure.

A boat was sent in the morning to search for the dead body, the painter being desirous of it to make a drawing, and the naturalist and surgeon for anatomical purposes. The corpse was found lying at the water's edge ... A musket ball had passed through the shoulder blade, from behind; and penetrating upwards, had lodged in the neck.²⁶

Westall's image is a death portrait. Portraying and studying the dead in the name of science and for the discoveries that could be made about human anatomy and physiognomy was common in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The figure of the Aborigine is fully stretched out and exposed for scrutiny. Unable to fit in the left foot Westall has drawn it in the bottom corner, giving the impression

of a ghoulish amputation. *Blue Mud Bay: Body of a Native Shot on Morgan's Island*, however, was not drawn with the scientific detachment or, for that matter, accuracy normally associated with death portraits. According to Flinders' account, the musket ball passed through the back shoulder blade and had lodged in the neck. Interestingly, Westall has the wound on the left side of the chest, not the neck, with blood dripping to the ground from where the bullet penetrated the heart region. Depicting the man as shot through the heart created an altogether more poignant image than showing him as shot through the neck.

Was the young artist trying to produce a visual metaphor? Was Westall showing an extraordinary depth of sympathy for a man and a race that were facing a debilitating onslaught that was striking right at the heart of their existence? Or was Westall just hiding the fact that the man had been shot in the back? Why did he etch the pained expression on the face with such compassion? The anguish of the death, as the man half stares at us, is inescapable. Westall was also careful to cover the genital area, thereby, in his eyes, preserving the Aborigine's dignity and Westall's own sense of modesty; although Flinders in his journal was only too willing to declare with some surprise that the man had been circumcised.²⁷ The genital covering that the man wears, probably made of opossum fur-string, usually hung loosely and did not pass between the legs as Westall has shown.²⁸ In his right hand the Aborigine holds a twig. It may be that he actually was still grasping the twig after he had been dragged from the beach but it does seem a rather contrived pose. Is it possible that Westall was alluding to an olive branch, the emblem of peace? If so, this is a far more complex image than just a portrait of a dead man. It is a curious and bewildering drawing that comments on the Aboriginal predicament and reveals hidden layers of Westall's personality.



Blue Mud Bay: Body of a Native Shot on Morgan's Island 1803



Port Jackson: A Native [no. 1] 1802

In the places where the *Investigator* stopped for more than a day or two, Westall took the opportunity of getting to know the indigenous population and through building up a relationship with many individuals produced some very touching and powerful likenesses. His Port Jackson portraits are among the best of these. Traces of the noble savage can still be seen in works such as *Port Jackson: A Native* [no.1] and *Port Jackson: A Native Boy* (see page 36). In both these images the figures have proud and defiant expressions. The man bears the imprints of his position in society, with the band around his head and the marks on his chest, known as cicatrices, almost taking on the role of royal insignia.²⁹ The eyes, full of concern while staring into the distance, and the laid back, but still proud, pose endows the sitter with a regal quality. The boy by contrast is still in his youth and while showing no adornments that



Port Jackson: A Native Boy 1802

indicate he has gone through the rites of passage, he is depicted with a strength befitting future leadership. His face is drawn in three-quarter profile, reminiscent of classical profile portraits, and he too gazes into the distance with his thoughts engaged in matters beyond the viewer.

Other portraits do not have this sense of strength and defiance but instead are filled with melancholy. Westall's sketches reveal not only sympathy and respect for the Aborigines, but also knowledge and understanding beyond the stereotyped noble savage images he was producing for the Admiralty. With a three-month stay in Port Jackson, from May to July 1802, he no doubt had plenty of time to become acquainted with the plight of the indigenous population and the hardships of colonisation. The portraits *Port Jackson: An Old Blind Man* and *Port Jackson: A Native* [no. 2] (see page 38) are

quite remarkable images in the history of European art and reveal Westall's strong sense of pathos. Unlike the two portraits discussed earlier, these sitters stare directly at the viewer and confront us with their troubled expressions. Even the blind man's gaze is penetrating, as the creased lines on his brow and his frowning countenance communicate his distress. His arm and hand are raised to the side of his head in an anxious or nervous gesture, adding to the unsettling nature of the likeness. The expression on the man in *Port Jackson: A Native* [no. 2] has an overwhelming sense of sadness. The down-turned mouth, the squinting, suspecting eyes, and the hint of a frown also allude to repression and torment.



Port Jackson: An Old Blind Man 1802



July 13-1802

Port Jackson: A Native [no. 2] 1802



Chasm Island: Native Cave Painting. 1803

It is apparent from the portraits that Westall had a strong interest in Aboriginal culture. He was one of the keenest of the early nineteenth-century European observers of Aboriginal life and customs.³⁰ He not only drew Aboriginal people but also their dwellings, artefacts and art. Westall's watercolour copies of cave paintings in the Gulf of Carpentaria are quite remarkable for this era. *Chasm Island: Native Cave Painting* is one of the only known early nineteenth-century examples of the European documentation of Aboriginal artwork and it anticipates the ethnographic work which was done later in the century. In many of his paintings, Westall also paid a great deal of attention to Aboriginal humpies, rangga and bark shields.

None of Westall's sensitivity or knowledge of Aboriginal culture appears in his later work. It was simply not palatable for official images to show Aborigines in complex and considerate detail; the indigenous population had to appear as unreal and untroubled and as not having an established culture, otherwise a dangerous sense of guilt and misgiving might be created. The depersonalising of the Aborigines took place after Westall returned to England and his oil paintings stand in marked contrast to the many very perceptive individual portraits that he completed while actually on the expedition.

Westall's oil paintings, executed more than six years after he left Australia, only bear a passing resemblance to his original sketches. His observations were sieved and censored. Creating a picturesque Arcadia and producing images that justified the process of colonisation overrode Westall's obligations to scientific observation or to presenting the harsher realities of his experience of the barren coast. Both the landscape and the people had to be expurgated and then embellished and adorned to make them acceptable to a British audience. It is tempting to say that the oil paintings are not as revealing as the original sketches and that the purified images do not have the same intensity and depth. But this would be to deny what the oil paintings do divulge and to dismiss the point that what they suppress is just as enlightening as what they show. While the paintings have lost freshness and immediacy, they offer a piquant view of the politics of colonisation. They reveal how the picturesque was employed to make Australia an attractive place to possess and colonise.

A Voyage to Terra Australis: PUBLISHED AT LAST!

... no attention or respect is paid to engraving in this country:
The public consider engravers only as a set of ingenious mechanics ...

John Burnet, 1836¹

The last years of Matthew Flinders' life were devoted to compiling the monumental *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, the semi-official account of the *Investigator's* voyage, which included two volumes written by Flinders and a third containing charts and atlases. When he returned to England, it was clear that Flinders would never have the energy or good health to captain another ship or return to finish his survey of New Holland. His imprisonment in Mauritius had taken its toll so his focus turned to publishing his journal about what he had achieved in the years 1801 to 1803. Flinders toiled on the manuscript for three years, and thirteen years to the day after the *Investigator* had set sail from Portsmouth, on 18 July 1814, a copy of *A Voyage to Terra Australis* was delivered to him. Unfortunately, he had just lapsed into a state of unconsciousness, only to die the next day, on 19 July, without ever actually laying eyes upon the published copy. Flinders' untimely death and life story is one of the more tragic tales in the annals of Australian history: his marriage to his long-time sweetheart, setting sail for New Holland with high hopes and returning to his bride over a decade later a sick and broken man.

A Voyage to Terra Australis followed in a tradition established by James Cook's numerous publications on his voyages of the late eighteenth century. Cook had set the precedent and standard for such accounts, producing extensive volumes following all his expeditions. These were generously illustrated with images by travel artists, such as William Hodges and John Webber, and included portraits and reproductions of large oil paintings.² Westall was well versed in the work of these artists. Not only had the *Investigator* been equipped with a large library before it left England which included Cook's publications, Westall was personally acquainted with Hodges, who was a friend of Westall's elder brother Richard.³ While Westall and Hodges were a generation apart and there was nearly thirty years between their voyages, there are many similarities between their work and their selection of grand images for publication.

The production of *A Voyage to Terra Australis* was financed by the Admiralty, supervised by Banks, and was meant to recount accurately and thoroughly the voyage. As a semi-official chronicle it aimed to deal with facts rather than indulge in fiction or fancy. The publication was supposed to be authoritative and as a mass-distributed document one of its goals was to impress upon the British public and other countries, particularly France, Britain's exploratory achievements. It was actually a means to refute and counter an earlier French publication which had taken credit for many of the 'discoveries'.⁴

Given the ostensibly scientific and objective nature of the book, it would be expected that Westall's original sketches, rather than his oil paintings with all their falsifications, would have been published. However, just as Hodges had published his more aesthetic, pleasing and dramatic images, so did Westall. Apart from the coastal profiles considered in Chapter 1 of this book, the illustrations that Westall supplied for the publication were based on the oil paintings he had completed for the Admiralty.⁵ As discussed in Chapter 2, these were quite removed from the original drawings and certainly could not have any pretensions to scientific accuracy, which some saw as a flaw. In the past, Westall had attracted criticism for producing fanciful scenes when he was illustrating a book on Madeira.

The drawings were made in respect to correctness of representation, subject to Willm. Westall's notion of what is *picturesque*, & accordingly He placed convents where there are none and made other alterations so unsatisfactory in respect to fidelity ...⁶

With his Australian work he aroused similar comments for not being more stringent and providing more information in his engravings.

... except in two or three of the plates, the artist has left us to wish that he had directed his choice of subjects to such as would have conveyed more new information.⁷

While many readers wanted information, others desired exotic views that excited their imaginations and this was one of the reasons why Westall's more idealised images were selected. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century the market for travel accounts was steadily increasing and becoming more lucrative. As well, the 1830s saw an unprecedented growth in the engraving industry in Britain, which did not really decline until the 1880s with the ascendancy of photomechanical processes of reproduction. Local landscape scenes, as well as views of foreign lands, were the staples of the industry. These images were either published in travel accounts with accompanying text or issued in serial form. Subscribers registered for runs of prints on particular subjects and these were issued over weeks or months.

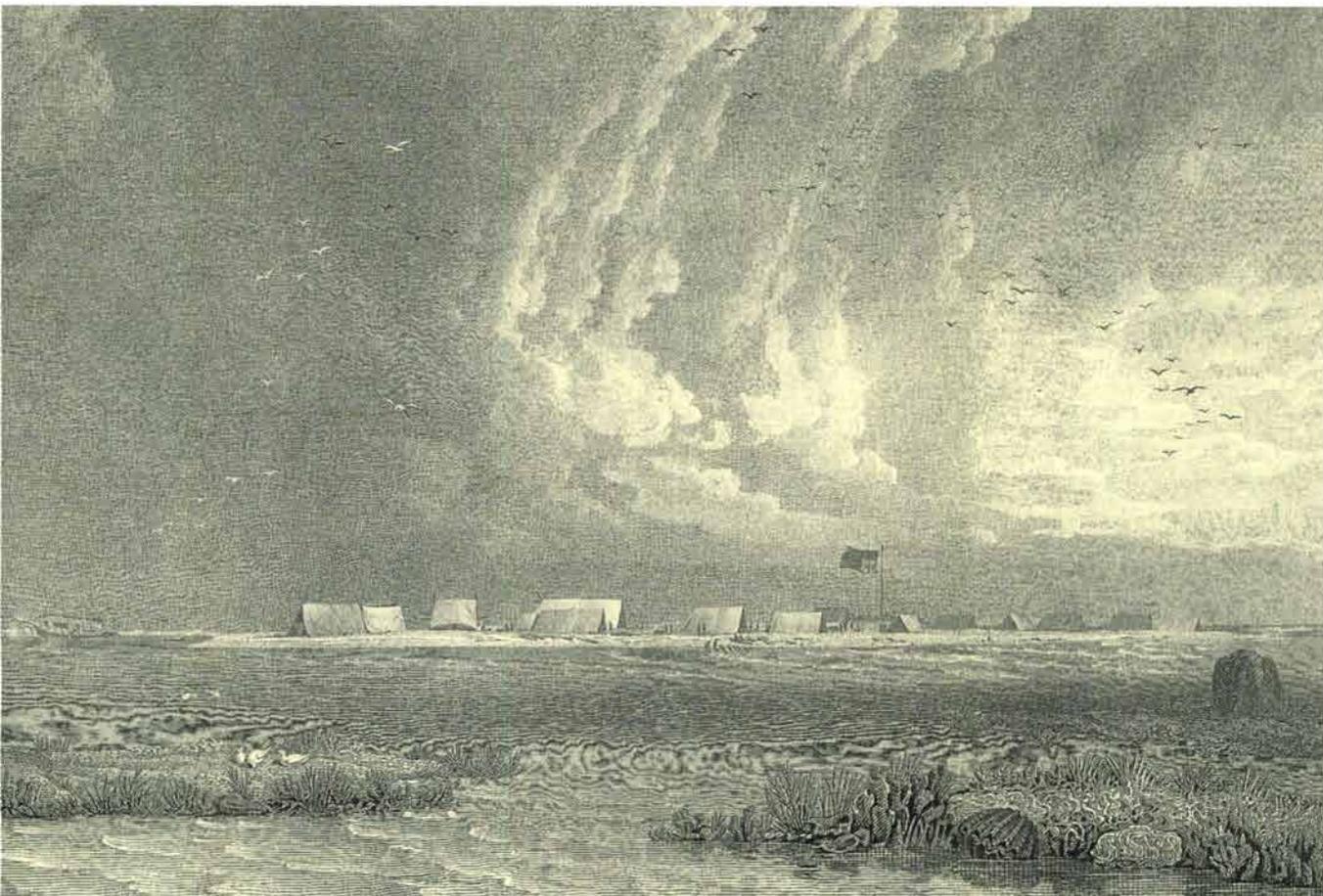
Australian scenery and subjects were not as popular and did not excite the same level of curiosity as other places in the South Pacific. Tahiti and its surrounding islands were seen as much more romantic and exotic, with the lifestyle of the Polynesians having a greater appeal. Australia was viewed as a relatively barren land, lacking the abundance, variety and beauty of the neighbouring areas. In this sense Westall reflected contemporary thinking and opinions on New Holland. It was not surprising that he had hoped the *Investigator* would go further afield. The Admiralty, which had the ultimate say in what was published, chose the more idyllic images to lift the public's opinion of Australia. These pictures not only had the potential to increase sales of *A Voyage to Terra Australis* but they also helped justify the voyage, with the heightened attractiveness of New Holland adding to the pride of possessing it.

While the images may have erred on the side of fantasy, Flinders' text is factual and legitimate, if not dull. Though it contains its own elaborations and refinements, Flinders did aim for accuracy in his writing of the day-to-day activities, which means there is often a disparity between the written word and the accompanying pictures.⁸ His exact and accurate style clashes with the illustrations. Flinders appears to have been aware of this and hinted at his displeasure of Westall's lack of fidelity. For

example, he expressed a note of disapproval in the artistic licence which Westall took in his *View of Wreck-Reef Bank Taken at Low Water*, writing that Westall:

... represented the corals above water, to give a better notion of their forms and the way in which they are seen on the reefs; but in reality, the tide never leaves any considerable part of them uncovered.⁹

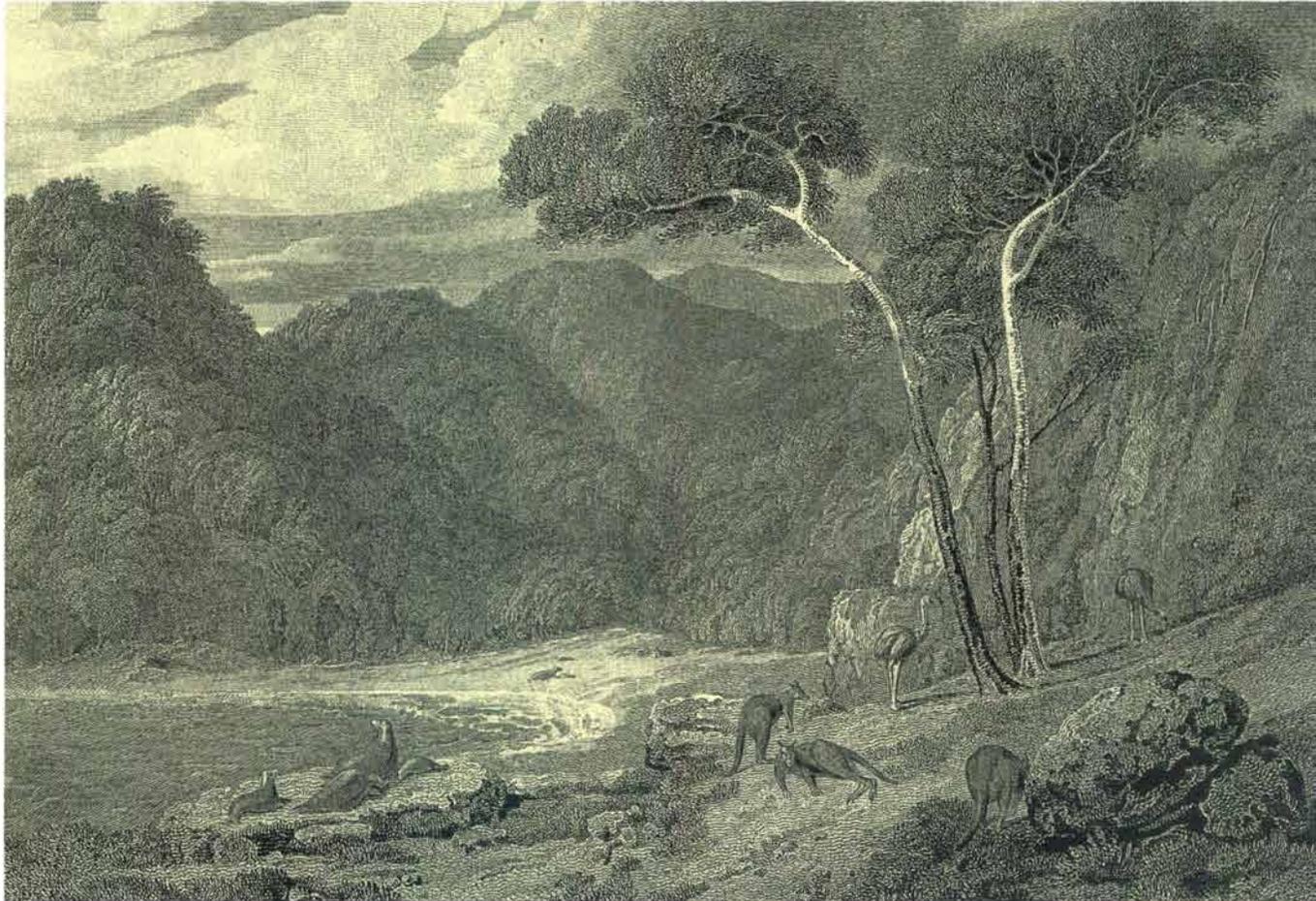
Flinders was no doubt anxious to point out the inaccuracy of this particular image as it had the potential to make him look incompetent in not being able to avoid the coral which so obviously jutted out of the water and caused the shipwreck of the *Porpoise* and *Cato*.



View of Wreck-Reef Bank Taken at Low Water (engraving by John Pye) 1814

The lack of coherence between text and image is particularly evident in Westall's *View on the North Side of Kangaroo [Kangaroo] Island*, which is based on a pencil sketch, *Kangaroo Island: A Bay on the North-east Coast*. There is the usual falsification to be expected from Westall's picturesque works, with the scene enhanced by throwing together trees, kangaroos, seals and emus with little relation to reality. Westall has taken his *Kangaroo Island: Seals* (see page 46) sketch and spliced it with the original pencil sketch of the island. The scene is idyllic, with the exotic animals shown peacefully lazing in the sun. There is no reference to what Flinders himself describes as the butchering that took place.

It would be difficult to guess how many kangaroos [sic] were seen; but I killed ten, and the rest of the party made up the number to thirty-one ... After this butchery, for the poor animals suffered themselves to be shot in the eyes with small shot, and in some cases to be knocked on the head with sticks, I scrambled with difficulty through the brush wood ... The whole ship's company was employed this afternoon, skinning and cleaning the kangaroos [sic] ...¹⁰



View on the North Side of Kangaroo [Kangaroo] Island (engraving by William Woolnoth) 1814



Kangaroo Island: A Bay on the North-east Coast 1802

The *Investigator*'s crew had gone nearly four months without any fresh provisions and took great delight in finding fresh meat. The view which Westall depicts, however, of the peaceful, recumbent kangaroos turns the account of 'butchery' into a disturbing and brutal act. Destroying such a peaceful scene appears to have no justification.¹¹ Perhaps realising this, the image was placed about ten pages after the description of the killing, with Flinders writing that the drawing was done when they were leaving and not when they arrived and killed the kangaroos. Nevertheless, reading this passage and then turning to see this tranquil scene is unsettling. Overall, the picturesque images do not compliment the scientific, austere text.

To a modern eye accustomed to seeing an abundance of reproduced images, and taking reproductions for granted, it can be difficult to appreciate the effort that went into publishing the images in *A Voyage to Terra Australis*. Photomechanical processes have now made it relatively easy to mass produce pictures, but in the early nineteenth century a considerable amount of skill and labour, from a wide range of people, was necessary to complete the hand-engraved prints.¹² While the plates



Kangaroo Island: Seals 1802

in *A Voyage to Terra Australis* bear the name of a single engraver at the bottom right corner, denoted as 'eng' (engraver) or 'sculpt' (sculptor); a considerable number of specialists were involved in their creation. Westall's oil paintings were actually only the beginning of a long process in illustrating *A Voyage to Terra Australis*. Awareness of this process is not only important for appreciating the prints but also for understanding the future direction of Westall's career, as it lay largely in the world of engraving.

The work on his illustrations began in mid-1811, with the engravers receiving the respectable sum of £47.5 for each plate. The prints in *A Voyage to Terra Australia* are copperplate engravings. The first task in producing them was to reduce the original paintings to the desired size for printing, that is converting the large oils to the actual size required for publication. Usually this was done by the engraver or an assistant but in this case Westall did it himself.¹³ A grid system, similar to that used to transfer his original sketches to canvas, was used for the 'squaring down'. In watercolour, he would have painted a grid directly onto the oil painting, simply wiping this away later on. This grid eased the task of scaling down the image as Westall could concentrate on each small square to make the scaled-down drawing for the print.

Westall then handed the drawing on to the engraver. Several engravers were used to do the plates for *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, including John Pyc, S.W. Smith, John Scott, John Byrne and William Woolnoth. The engraver would have dampened the drawing and placed it down on a copperplate and then passed it through a rolling press. This left a reversed version of the drawing on the plate, ready for the first stage of engraving. The engravings in *A Voyage to Terra Australis* fall into the category of intaglio printing, which involves cutting lines in a surface so they can later be filled with ink. The engraver had to follow carefully the outlines of the drawing as he cut into the copper. This was a skilled task and one in which artists such as Westall had to relinquish control and put their trust in the expertise of the engraver.

In the early nineteenth century, the lines on the copperplates were usually cut using a combination of the methods of etching with acid and direct engraving with a burin (an engraving tool that had a sharply pointed V-shaped section). The etching process began by rubbing a thin layer of wax over the copperplate and then, using an etching needle, tracing the drawing which could still be seen through the wax. The advantage of etching was that the wax was much softer to cut into than the copperplate itself. The plate would then be immersed in a bath of acid, which would 'bite' through the areas where the lines had been made leaving an impression on the plate. Etching was used for the basic outlines of the image and was the standard procedure for producing the background. For finer details and areas that needed greater emphasis, such as foreground figures and foliage, the engraver would use the burin. Engraving directly onto the plate, and into the harder copper, was more difficult than through the softer wax, but resulted in sharper lines than the comparatively blurred edges of etching.

Once the plates were complete the printers took charge and ran them through their presses with yet another set of specialists employed to manufacture the finished print. The plates were inked, that is the engraved lines were filled with ink and the plate was passed through a press. The printing paper would pick up the lines of the ink, with the deeper cut lines making a darker impression, and the image would finally be complete.¹⁴

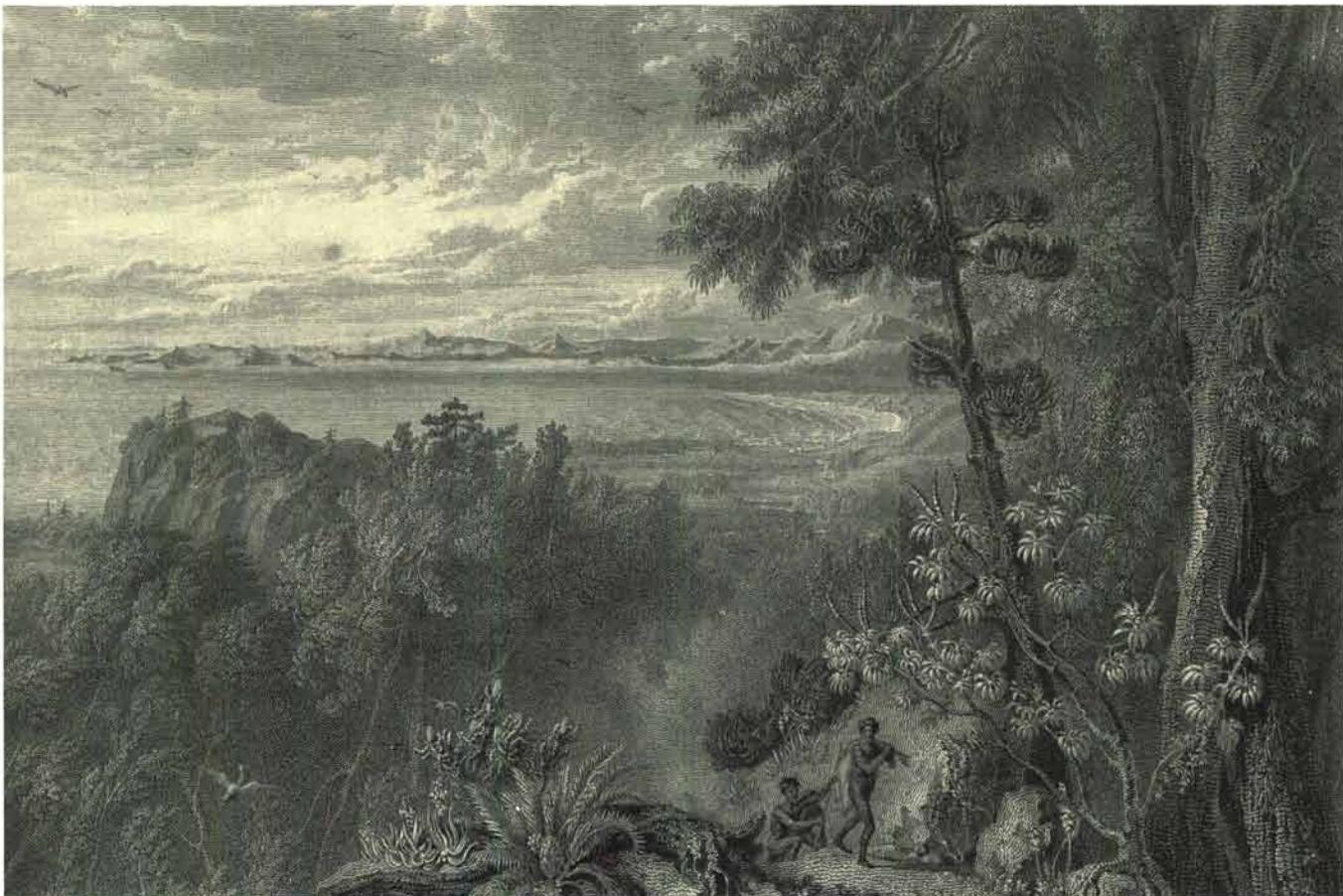
Having gone through so many processes, and having been in the hands of so many people, it is not surprising that there are differences between the oil paintings and the published image. Most obviously, the prints are in black and white and the oil paintings are in colour. The mediums are very different and the engraver had to rely on fine lines rather than the smooth coloured brushstrokes of oil paint to capture the tones and variations of a scene.



View of Port Bowen, Queensland, August 1802 c.1812

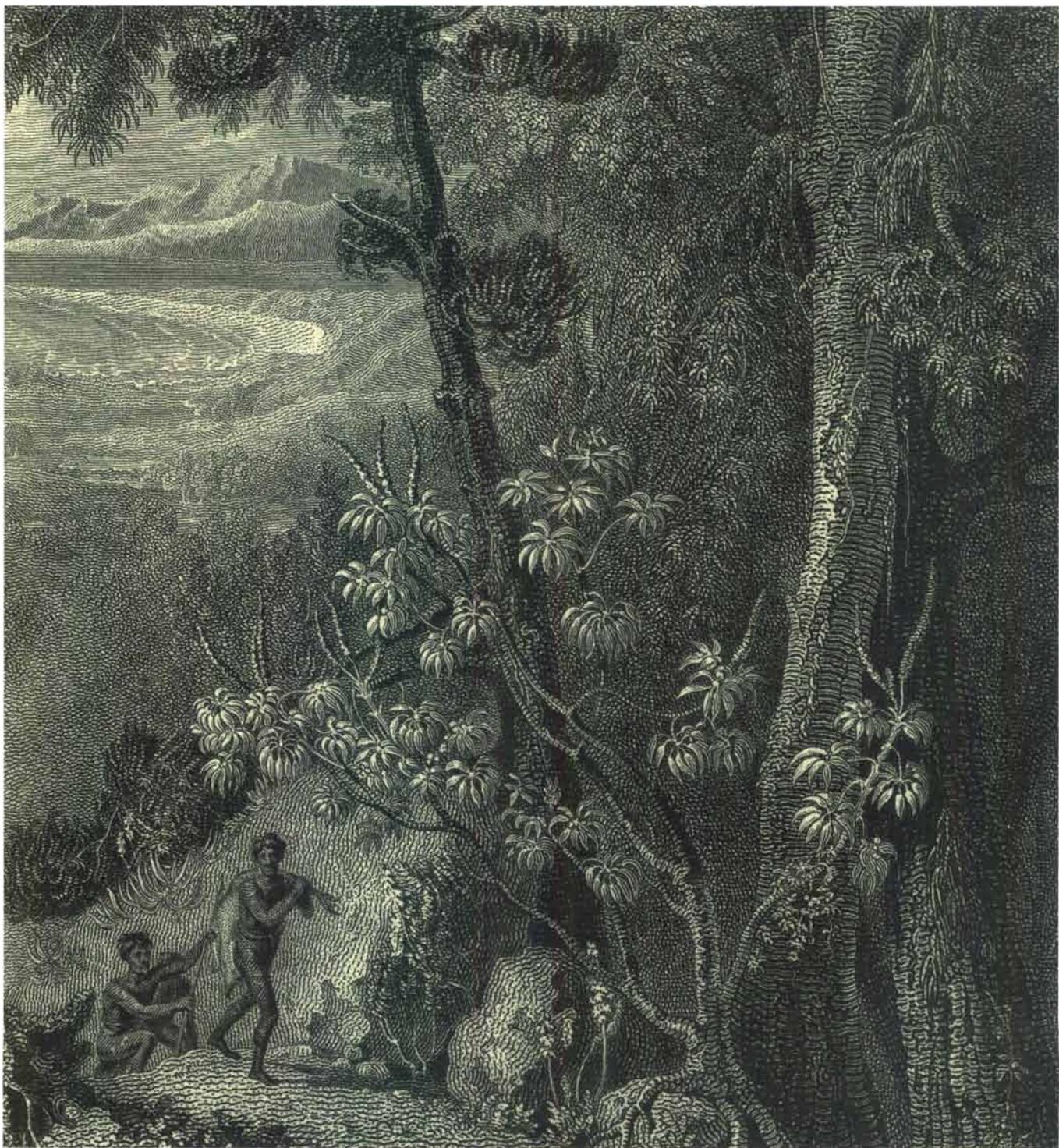
(Ministry of Defence Art Collection, London; transparency courtesy of National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London)

Often it simply was not possible to translate the subtleties of the painting into the engraving. For example, in Scott's engraving of *View of Port Bowen from the Hills behind the Watering Gully* he has taken considerable care to accurately reproduce the oil painting, *View of Port Bowen, Queensland, August 1802*, but he has also encountered some difficulties. In the area just to the left of centre, where the rocky outcrop merges into the trees and then falls into the valley, Scott has not been able to reproduce the softness and gradual variations in tone. Recognising that the background has lost some definition, Scott has more strongly delineated the foliage in the foreground. From the fern in the middle of the composition through to the trees on the right, the plants have been rendered in sharper focus, lifting the engraving and giving it contrast. The leaves on the trees in the bottom right-hand corner, in particular, are more strongly accentuated than in the original, where they tend to blend in with the other trees. An enlarged detail of this area reveals that the background has been etched, with the soft, broken lines confirming that they have been worked in wax. The outline of the leaves, however, has the force, continuity and strength of being engraved with the burin.

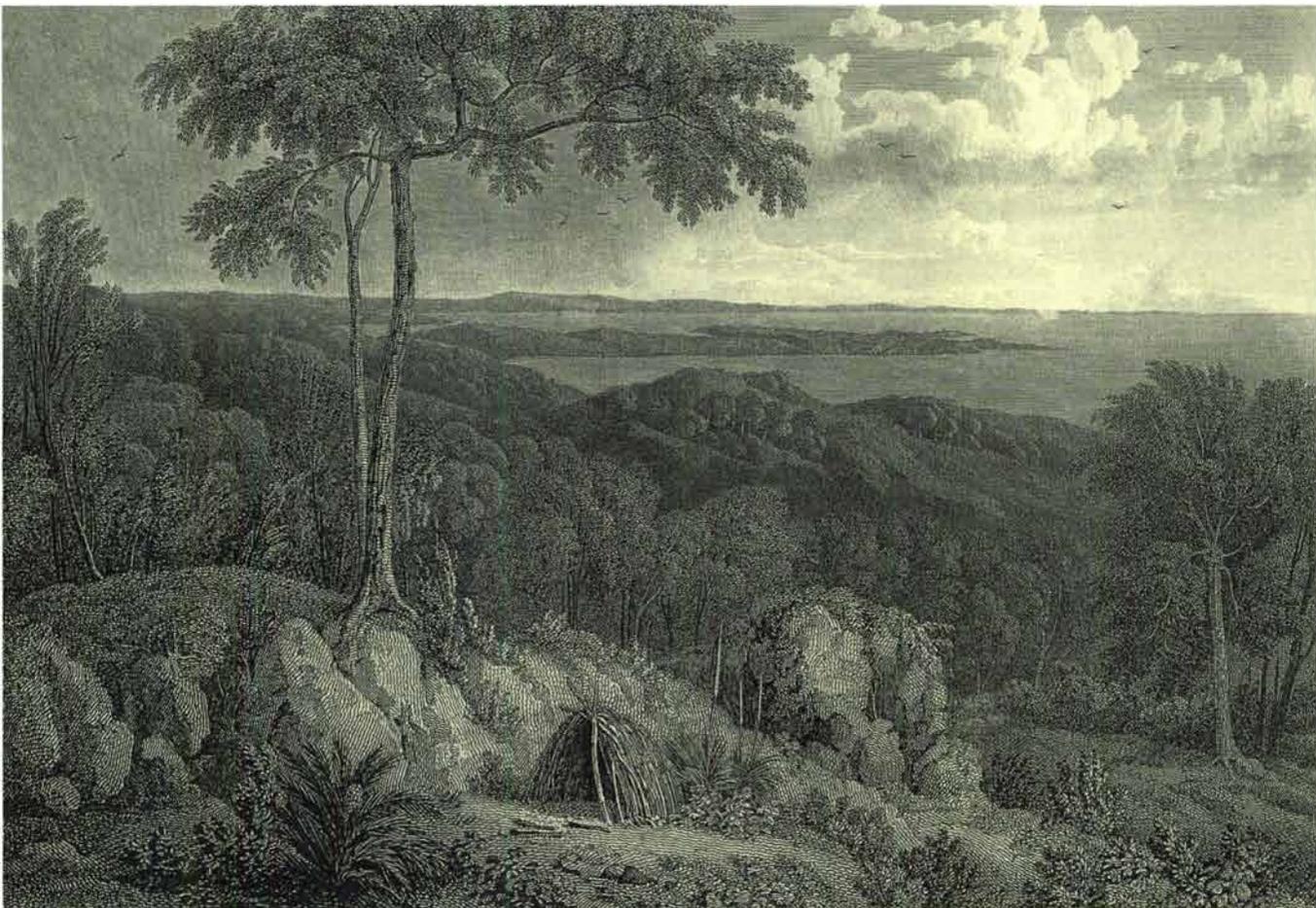


View of Port Bowen from the Hills behind the Watering Gully (engraving by John Scott) 1814

A Voyage to Terra Australis was not the first, and nor would it be the last, engraving and publishing project that Westall was involved in. Prior to *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, in 1811 he had published a series of views of Madeira, the Cape of Good Hope, China and India. Westall's initial dalliance with the print industry proved successful and was significant in shaping his future. Rudolf Ackermann, a leading publisher in England who was responsible for introducing the fashion for illustrated annuals, approached him about making contributions to various books. Westall did a considerable amount of work for Ackermann and for another publisher, John Murray. In 1814 the plates from *A Voyage to Terra Australis* were issued as a separate series and due to the growing interest in the settlement of South Australia, the plate of Port Lincoln was sold as a single print. For the rest of his life, Westall continued to work in the area of illustration, toiling on routine work and commercially successful publications such as *Great Britain Illustrated* (1830) and contributing to more elaborate productions such as *A Picturesque Tour of the Thames* (1828).



(detail) *View of Port Bowen from the Hills behind the Watering Gully* (engraving by John Scott) 1814



Entrance of Port Lincoln Taken from behind Memory Cove (engraving by John Pye) 1814

By comparison with Flinders, Westall's post-*Investigator* life seems rather prosaic and untroubled but it had its own measure of melancholy and thwarted ambition. Westall gained a good reputation as a topographical and architectural illustrator but his ambition of becoming a 'fine' artist, highly acclaimed by the Royal Academy, was never realised. While he was elected as an Associate of the Academy for his exhibition of Australian oil paintings, he never gained the coveted position of Royal Academician. This was partly because the Academy did not accord illustration and engraving the same status as painting or sculpture, despite the high level of skill and dedication involved.

The main engraver for *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, John Pye, battled against this dismissive attitude, becoming an outspoken advocate for the art and striving for professional acknowledgement. Indeed, a close inspection of his prints such as his *Entrance of Port Lincoln Taken from behind Memory Cove* demonstrates just how skilled he was and a comparison with the original painting (see page 22) accounts for why he had a reputation as one of the best engravers in England. He has effectively translated the tone and shades of the oil painting, with none of the ambiguity or obscure passages seen in Scott's work. The fine lines in the sky, for example, highlight his precision.

In 1836, Pye, along with John Burnet, unsuccessfully pleaded the engravers' cause before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Arts. They were specifically fighting the decision of 1768 by the Royal Academy not to accept engravers on equal terms with other members.¹⁵ Although Westall was not actually an engraver, his work as an illustrator in close collaboration with engravers bound him up in their struggle for recognition. The engravers were seen as mere copyists and their involvement with the print industry, while an acceptable means to have paintings published, tainted them with commercialism. This association with business and trade prohibited illustration and publication from occupying the same elevated status as painting and exhibiting. While Westall continued to pour his efforts into illustration, he was never destined for high acclaim.

Thea and Rex Rienits write that the critical turning point in Westall's career—changing him from a painter to an illustrator—came with the failure of his exhibition of 1808, where he exhibited the views from his foreign travels apart from his Australian scenes.¹⁶ The exhibition was not a success in terms of sales and the reviews ranged from negative to faint praise. In the years that followed he did receive some important commissions and while these attracted a good income they were sporadic assignments.¹⁷

Financial considerations became increasingly important when Westall married and had a family. In 1815 during a visit to the Lake District, an area he loved and where he became good friends with the poet William Wordsworth, Westall made the acquaintance of the Reverend Richard Sedgwick and his youngest daughter, Ann. Five years later he married Ann on 22 September 1820 and they had three sons William, Thomas and Robert. Supporting them became a major focus of Westall's life and the burgeoning print industry was a means for him to earn a good income. His son, Robert, reveals that Westall felt he sacrificed his career for his family and was forced into illustration because of the need to support them.

... his efforts were not appreciated by the public, and [he] sacrificed his name and fame to the duty of providing for the welfare of this family ... [he] had been heard to say that he was reduced to the necessity of giving up his early hope of fame for a trade as he termed his engraving and publication.¹⁸

Despite Westall's complaints about the engraving industry, it did allow him to continue working as an artist. Just as he complained about the landscapes of Australia, which formed the basis of what reputation he had as a painter and for his election as an Associate of the Academy, so was he disparaging of engraving and publishing. The prints in *A Voyage to Terra Australis* embodied the two factors which he saw, rightly or wrongly, as thwarting his ambition: the trade of engraving and the uninspiring Australian scenery. The prints also represented the completion of his duties as the figure and landscape painter some fourteen years after his appointment to the *Investigator*.

CONCLUSION

... his contribution to the early art of the country was very considerable indeed.

Rex and Thea Rienits, 1963¹

In the late 1840s Westall's health started to decline and after breaking his arm in 1847 he struggled to keep working. In 1848 he exhibited for the last time, suffering a series of heavy colds in the winter of that year. In January 1850 he died at the age of 68 and was buried in the graveyard of St John's, Hampstead. Significantly, at the time of his death he was working on an oil painting of Wreck Reef and the shipwreck, a subject he had first dealt with more than four decades earlier (see page 18). It was ironic that at the end of his life he was still depicting the barren coast that he had found so unimpressive.

Two portraits of Westall now held by the National Library of Australia hint at the frustration and disappointment Westall experienced in later life. A drawing by his son, *Portrait of William Westall ARA*, completed in 1845, reveals a very different elderly man to that seen in the confident self-portrait of the young artist in his twenties (see page x). In his son's sketch Westall looks dishevelled and his expression is guarded, as well as somewhat accusatory. The open countenance found in the earlier portrait has been replaced by a circumspect gaze. Westall is still dressed as a gentleman and is wearing clothes fashionable in the 1840s, but much of the gentleness found in the earlier portrait has gone. Instead, we see a slightly furrowed brow and a mouth turned down at the corners, indicating frustration and sternness.

Similarly, in the sculpture of Westall by Physick (see page 56), his face appears burdened. Busts from this era often show the subject staring out proudly and arrogantly into the distance, but Westall is pensive and his gaze falls to the ground. This could, of course, be interpreted as a man in deep thought, but knowing what we do of Westall's life and work, it becomes an expression of defeat.

Westall is not an easy personality to decipher, a problem exacerbated by the limited written sources on his life. The greatest insight into his character undoubtedly comes from his own art, with his Australian images revealing a complex and often puzzling identity. Westall was an intriguing character with what can be judged to be his share of both flaws and virtues.

He was ambitious, although his ambitions were never realised and he was never bestowed the honours he sought. The picturesque oil paintings he completed after returning from Australia were designed to be an artistic success, rather than accurately portraying the landscape, and did result in a reasonable degree of recognition. While Westall was not a genius, he was undoubtedly a competent and talented artist who had the potential to progress. The exhibition of his Australian scenes earned him

election as an Associate to the Academy in 1812 but he was never fully embraced by the conservative art world to become an Academician. This was partly because he did not build on his experience and associations. His letter from Canton, which needlessly offended the likes of Banks and the Admiralty, revealed his immaturity and lack of political wile in dealing with influential people.

Westall had a tendency to become malcontent, being too ready to resign himself to difficulties. His voyage on the *Investigator* highlighted this trait. He had been offered a significant opportunity to impress many people both inside and outside artistic circles but he let his boredom and disappointment tarnish his success. He did not produce the quantity nor quality of images he could have and rather childishly blamed this on everything and everyone else except his own inability to make the best of a situation. Indeed, over the years his whining and lack of enthusiasm attracted considerable criticism. G.B. Barton, writing in 1889, was scathing: 'Was it possible that in the whole extent of his voyage ... Westall did not see anything worth describing? "That barren coast! So few sketches of New Holland!"'²

While Westall had his detractors they were outnumbered by others—both his contemporaries and later commentators—who championed him and presented him in a much more favourable light. For example, the famed Victorian painter, Sir Edwin Landseer, wrote that Westall was deserving of more recognition. He believed he was more accomplished than Cook's artists, Hodges and Webber, but that 'being a mild and unobtrusive man, whilst the others were pushing and solicitous, he remained an A.R.A. while they became Academicians'.³

Apart from Westall's lack of tenacity and his defeatist streak, Landseer alludes to another important aspect of Westall's personality which denied him success—his reticence and softness. Westall's sensitive and gentle character meant that he did not have the ruthlessness necessary for success in a competitive, conservative art world, lacking the guile to realise his goals. The images in the Pictorial Collection of the National Library are testimony to Westall's complex and sympathetic nature. Unlike the oil paintings, the original drawings of Aborigines, in particular, show he had insight beyond the stereotypical vision of the noble savage of the nineteenth century. Even at a young age, he demonstrated understanding, compassion and thoughtfulness.

Apart from revealing much about Westall's character, the National Library's collection of his drawings offers a fascinating insight into broader issues of the nineteenth century, especially the processes of colonisation. Examined alongside the Admiralty's oil paintings and the engravings published in *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, the sketches divulge much about the role of visual records in exploration and empire building. While ostensibly Westall's mission was to bring back images which objectively captured the people and landscape of Australia, the images are laden with ideological significance. The elaborations, falsifications and omissions in his work reveal a purpose beyond mere documentation or the pursuit of knowledge.

The images operated to dismiss the Aborigines as having rights to the land. The coastal panoramas, maps and the names given to the sea and land features declare that the land had been 'discovered' and, by implication, that before this it was uninhabited and not owned. The visual documents reinforced Britain's act of colonising the rest of Australia under the law of *terra nullius*. Aborigines were not shown working the land but rather were depicted as living off its natural gifts, which in accordance with the orthodoxy of the day meant that they did not have rights of ownership because they were not cultivating. In the oil paintings and engravings, unlike in Westall's original drawings, members of the indigenous population were also presented as stereotyped noble savages, not real people who could be affected by the injustices of colonisation.



Portrait of William Westall ARA by Robert Westall c. 1845



Bust of William Westall by Edward James Physick c.1850

The images were also a means of converting the land into scenes which the British felt comfortable with and could relate to. After a lapse of several years, Westall found it easy to disregard the realities of what he had deemed a barren land and to use picturesque conventions of European landscape painting to appropriate the country and make it more appealing. He replaced his stark original scenes with vistas that were more European and thus promoted a sense of familiarity. The element of the exotic was retained to add to the appeal of the scene with all threatening and unpleasant aspects removed. Australia was presented as idyllic and therefore as an attractive place for settlement. With Westall's conjuring, Australia became desirable, and a prize in the competition between colonial powers, particularly with France.

Reflecting on Westall and his career, it is sad that he found so little joy or pride in the work he undertook aboard the *Investigator* and the images he produced of Australia. He did not find an Arcadia and as Perry and Simpson observe: 'He could find nothing of pastoral beauty in Australia's bare rocks or misshapen trees: here was a world too harsh, too grotesque.'⁴ Nevertheless, as one of the few professional artists sent to New Holland, his drawings and watercolours held in the National Library of Australia are among the more accomplished in Australia's pictorial history. Westall's Australian sketches, paintings and engravings are a rich and complex set of images which shaped nineteenth-century perceptions of Terra Australis and offer a fascinating insight into the history of Britain's colonisation of it.

ENDNOTES

Introduction

- 1 Letter, Westall to Banks, 31 January 1804. Banks Papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, CY3008/171–6.
- 2 For the exhibition catalogue see T.M. Perry and Donald H. Simpson (eds), *Drawings by William Westall*. London: Royal Commonwealth Society, 1962.
- 3 The Admiralty was the government department in charge of the Royal Navy. It was directed by a board of five lords commissioners known as the Lords of the Admiralty. See N.A.M. Rodger, *The Admiralty*. Lavenham, England: T. Dalton, 1979.
- 4 Marlene F. Norst, *Ferdinand Bauer: The Australian Natural History Drawings*. Sydney: Lothian, 1989; Peter Watts, Jo Anne Pomfrett and David Maberley, *An Exquisite Eye: The Australian Flora and Fauna Drawings 1801–1820 of Ferdinand Bauer*. Glebe, NSW: Historic Houses Trust of NSW, 1997.
- 5 Tim Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition: Australian Landscape Painting 1801–1890*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985, p.5.
- 6 Rex Rienits and Thea Rienits, *Early Artists of Australia*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1963, pp.84–5.
- 7 The most comprehensive account of Westall's life is in Rienits and Rienits, pp.80–123. I am indebted to this publication for much of the basic biographical information and the many leads it provides for primary sources. Another valuable reference is the highly detailed catalogue of the 1962 exhibition edited by Perry and Simpson. It contains reproductions of most of the drawings held by the National Library of Australia. Other important publications include an article by Westall's son Robert in *Art Journal*, April 1850, and a brief article by Richard Westall, 'William Westall in Australia', *Art and Australia*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1982, pp.252–6.
- 8 Rienits and Rienits, p.86.
- 9 Joseph Farington, *The Farington Diary* (edited by James Grieg). London: Hutchinson & Co., 1923–8, vol. 2, p.273.
- 10 K.A. Austin, *The Voyage of the Investigator 1801–1803: Commander Matthew Flinders R.N.* Adelaide: Rigby, 1964, p.52.
- 11 The Academy was founded in 1786 with the desire to promote a national school of British art. See Sidney C. Hutchison, *The History of the Royal Academy 1768–1986*. 2nd edn. London: Royce, 1986.
- 12 Bernard Smith's pioneering work is exceptional in devoting the necessary analysis to images of early Australia. Much of the approach adopted in this book is based on Smith's writing, although there are significant points where I depart from his opinion about Westall's work, especially in regard to the use of the picturesque. See Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*. 2nd edn. Sydney: Harper & Row, 1985. For an account of Smith's influence see Peter Beilharz, *Imagining the Antipodes: Culture, Theory and the Visual in the Work of Bernard Smith*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Rule Britannia: Colonial Possessions

- 1 Letter, Flinders to Banks, 6 September 1800. Banks Papers CY3009/180–3.

- 2 For a study of the Enlightenment which is particularly relevant to this book see Peter James Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Maps of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of the Enlightenment*. London: Dent, 1982.
 - 3 List of works, Banks Papers CY3009/389–98.
 - 4 The watercolour was entitled *Views on the South Coast of Australia* but the title of the engraving changed to *Views on the South Coast of Terra Australis* because Banks did not approve of the name Australia, although it was the name favoured by Flinders.
 - 5 Smith, p.191.
 - 6 'Maps and Their Cultural Constructedness', in Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*. Melbourne: University of Cambridge, 1996, ch. 4, pp.101–27; J.B. Harley, 'Maps, Knowledge and Power' in Denis E. Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (eds), *The Iconography of Landscape, Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp.277–312.
 - 7 Ryan, p.102.
 - 8 For an introduction and discussion of this complex topic see Henry Reynolds, *Dispossession: Black Australians and White Invaders*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989.
 - 9 For a discussion of the names Flinders bestowed upon Australia and their personal and historical significance see Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History*. New York: Knopf, 1988, pp.182–7.
 - 10 Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*. London: G. & W. Nicol, 1814, vol. 1, p.133.
 - 11 The snake appears again in the oil painting *A Bay on the South Coast of New Holland, January 1802* held in the Admiralty House Collection, UK Ministry of Defence, London.
 - 12 Flinders, vol. 1, p.185. For a discussion of the art from the French voyage see Jacqueline Bonnemains, Elliot Forsyth and Bernard Smith (eds), *Baudin in Australian Waters: The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800–1804*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press in association with the Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1988.
 - 13 Farington, vol. 5, p.139.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p.273.
- In Pursuit of the Picturesque**
- 1 William Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty, on Picturesque Travel and Sketching Landscape to Which Is Added a Poem on Landscape Painting*. 2nd edn. London: R. Blamire, 1794, p.67.
 - 2 Letter, Westall to Banks, 31 January 1804, Banks Papers CY3008/171–6. For a brief discussion of Lance's influence see Farington, vol. 2, p.273.
 - 3 Letter, Westall to Banks, 31 January 1804, Banks Papers CY3008/171–6.
 - 4 *Ibid.* It is apparent that someone else thought this was an important section of the letter as it has been underlined, although there is no indication of who has done this.
 - 5 Flinders, vol. 1, p.10, states that in the instructions from the Admiralty he was told that

- the *Investigator* could 'touch at' some island in the South Seas in order to give 'variety to the painters', but this was not a guaranteed or crucial part of the *Investigator*'s itinerary.
- 6 Rienits and Rienits, p.113.
 - 7 Document reprinted in James D. Mack, *Matthew Flinders, 1774–1814*. Melbourne: Nelson, 1966, pp.67–9.
 - 8 Rienits and Rienits, p.113.
 - 9 The opening sentence of Westall's letter to the Admiralty indicates he was anxious about the return of the sketches: 'As my returning to England direct for the purpose of executing the sketches that were saved from the *Porpoise* must appear absolutely necessary, I shall lay before you the principal reasons that have induced me to take India in my route home.' Westall sent the drawings back with his Canton letter and they were probably delivered by Lance. A letter dated August 1804 from Banks to the Admiralty states that at least by then the sketches had been sent home. See Letter, Banks to the Admiralty, 20 August 1804, Banks Papers CY3008/331–2.
 - 10 Rienits and Rienits, p.115, write that Westall returned to England in early 1805 but a diary entry for 9 August that refers to a conversation with Westall in Farington, vol. 2, p.273, implies that he was back by August 1804.
 - 11 Farington, vol. 5, p.136.
 - 12 The paintings he showed were *Cape Townsend and Islands of Shoal Water Bay* in 1810 and *View of Sir Edward Pellew's Group, Gulf of Carpentaria, December 1802* and *View of Port Bowen, Queensland, August 1802* in 1812, now held in the Admiralty House Collection, UK Ministry of Defence, London.
 - 13 Associates of the Royal Academy occupied the rung below the Royal Academicians and were chosen from participants in the annual exhibitions. To become an Academician you first had to be an Associate. For a discussion of the structure of the Royal Academy, see Hutchison.
 - 14 Letter, Westall to Banks, 31 January 1804, Banks Papers CY3008/171–6.
 - 15 Gilpin, pp.1–37. For a discussion of the picturesque see Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760–1800*. Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1989; Walter J. Hipple, *The Beautiful, the Sublime and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-century British Aesthetic Theory*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957; Sidney K. Robinson, *Inquiry into the Picturesque*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991; 'Picturesque Visions: Controlling the Seen', in Ryan, ch. 3, pp.54–100.
 - 16 Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful, and on the Use of Studying Pictures for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape*. 2nd edn. Hereford, England, 1798. Price argued that painting needed to come back from a concentration on an academic ideal to an observable nature.
 - 17 The only exception where Westall strays markedly from the picturesque is in his *View of Sir Edward Pellew's Group, Gulf of Carpentaria, December 1802*, which as both Smith, p.196, and Andrew Sayers in 'The Shaping of Australian Landscape

- Painting', in Elizabeth Johns, Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser and Andrew Sayers, *New Worlds from Old: Nineteenth Century Australian and American Landscapes*, Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 1998, pp.53–69, have noted is a bright painting showing a fresh reaction to the real landscape. It does not contain the dark framing or the variety seen in his other works. Smith, p.197, proposes that in his oil paintings Westall had 'a keener desire to render the truths of light and atmosphere than is to be found in his sketches' but in this chapter I argue the opposite. While Westall may have introduced a few exotic motifs, such as Australia flora and fauna, his main aim was to capture the picturesque and not some 'truth' of the Australian landscape.
- 18 Flinders, vol. 2, p.218; Tim Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition: Australian Landscape Painting 1801–1890*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985, p.90. Bonyhady is perhaps being generous in writing that Westall just 'embellished' accurate views.
- 19 Gilpin, p.19.
- 20 Amateurs and professionals alike travelled into the countryside with their sketchbooks and Claude glasses looking for scenes suitable for a picture, see Andrews.
- 21 In some of Westall's paintings there is a hint of the sublime, such as in the brooding clouds seen in *View of Malay Bay from Pobasso's [sic] Island, February 1803*, held in the Admiralty House Collection, UK Ministry of Defence, London. While Joseph Turner was using the sublime in his painting at this time he was not receiving critical acclaim.
- 22 John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730–1840*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980; Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740–1860*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1986. More recently, see Katherine Baetjer, *Glorious Nature: British Landscape Painting, 1750–1850*, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1993; W.J. Thomas Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994.
- 23 Barrell, p.16.
- 24 Gilpin, p.77.
- 25 Geoffrey Dutton, *White on Black: The Australian Aborigine Portrayed in Art*, South Melbourne: Macmillan of Australia in association with the Art Gallery Board of South Australia, 1974.
- 26 Flinders, vol. 2, pp.197–8.
- 27 Flinders, vol. 2, p.198.
- 28 Perry and Simpson, p.53. According to this catalogue entry, the armlets of cane or spear grass and belt are typical of north-eastern Arnhem Land. The flat belt was possibly made of narrow cane but would usually be made of human hair or vegetable fibre. The pubic covering may also have been made of paperbark strips.
- 29 Dutton, p.159, writes that the cicatrices were 'cuts made by sharp shells into which ashes and grease were rubbed and then kept open until the healing scar would make a ridge along the skin'.
- 30 It is interesting to compare Westall's work with that of the French artists Nicolas-Martin Petit and Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, who were part of Baudin's expedition and who also produced many portraits of Aborigines and aspects of their

lifestyle. While their art is very different, Westall, Petit and Lesueur obviously had a genuine interest in the culture they were observing. For a discussion of the French work see Rhys Jones, 'Images of Natural Man' in Bonnemains, pp.35–64.

A Voyage to Terra Australis: Published at Last!

- 1 Anthony Dyson, *Pictures to Print: The Nineteenth-century Engraving Trade*. London: Farrand Press, 1984, p.57.
- 2 For a discussion of the art of Cook's voyages see Anthony Murray-Oliver, *Captain Cook's Artists in the Pacific 1769–1779*. Christchurch, NZ: Avon Fine Prints, 1969; Rudiger Joppien and Bernard Smith, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985; Bernard Smith and Alwyne Wheeler (eds), *The Art of the First Fleet and Other Early Australian Drawings*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- 3 Rienits and Rienits, p.82.
- 4 The first volume on the French expedition, Péron's *Voyage de découvertes aux terres australes*, was published in 1807. See Frank Horner, 'The Baudin Expedition' in Bonnemains, pp.1–14, for a discussion of the rival French claims.
- 5 The one exception is the engraving *View of Port Jackson Taken from the South Head* which is based on a watercolour now in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney. One painting commissioned by the Admiralty, *A Bay on the South Coast of New Holland, January 1802*, now held in the Admiralty House Collection, UK Ministry of Defence, London, was not engraved for *A Voyage to Terra Australis*.
- 6 Farington, vol. 2, p.139. Also quoted in Perry and Simpson, p.14.
- 7 Bonyhady, p.88.
- 8 For an account of Flinders' writing of *A Voyage to Terra Australis* see 'A Thorny Passage' in Carter, ch. 6, pp.172–201. Carter points out that while Flinders is writing in a scientific mode entwined in this are his own personal experiences and values.
- 9 Flinders, vol. 2, p.312.
- 10 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp.169–70.
- 11 Bonyhady, p.68.
- 12 For information on printing techniques see Dyson; Bamber Gascoigne, *How To Identify Prints*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1986.
- 13 Letter, Croker of the Admiralty to Banks, 20 November 1812, Banks Papers CY3009/446. Westall received payment from the Admiralty of £21, 31.10, £84, £42, £83.8, £73.10 and £42 for making copies of his paintings. In the nineteenth century fees varied widely, see Dyson, pp.57–79.
- 14 This would be a reversed image. As the transfer of the original drawing had already been reversed once, the print was now back to looking the same as the original, the two reversing processes cancelling each other out.
- 15 Dyson, p.57. It was agreed that the Select Committee should hear evidence relating to engraving and John Landseer, John Burnet and John Pye were invited to appear before it. A petition to the King in February 1837 and a plea six years later to the General Assembly of the Royal Academy by R.R. Reinagle made no impact on the stubborn opposition.

- 16 Rienits and Rienits, p.116.
- 17 Farington, vol. 5, p.136. Westall was paid £200 a year to produce the oil paintings. Farington mentions other commissions and sources of income for Westall: selling a view of China for 50gns and a view of Bombay (Farington, vol. 5, p.51); a commission for Mr Chamberlain for which he asked 300 gns (Farington, vol. 5, p.217); 600gns for a painting of Christ and 400gns for another painting (Farington, vol. 6, p.24); and a commission from Mr Payne Knight for a copy of Chamberlains' Grecian Marnage for 1000 gns (Farington, vol. 7, p.12).
- 18 Robert Westall's original manuscript for the obituary article in *Art Journal*, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney. Also quoted in Perry and Simpson, p.16.

Conclusion

- 1 Rienits and Rienits, p.80.
- 2 Ibid., p.113. As Rienits and Rienits rightly point out, Barton, although maybe justified in his basic criticism of Westall, was also ignorant of a lot of Westall's achievements. Barton goes on to write that it is not known whether Westall went to the Hawkesbury River but as mentioned in Chapter 1 we now know that this was one of his favourite places and where he was most prolific.
- 3 Ibid., p.121, quoted from *Athenaeum*, 2 February 1850.
- 4 Perry and Simpson, p.21.

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ARCADIAN QUEST

WILLIAM WESTALL'S AUSTRALIAN SKETCHES

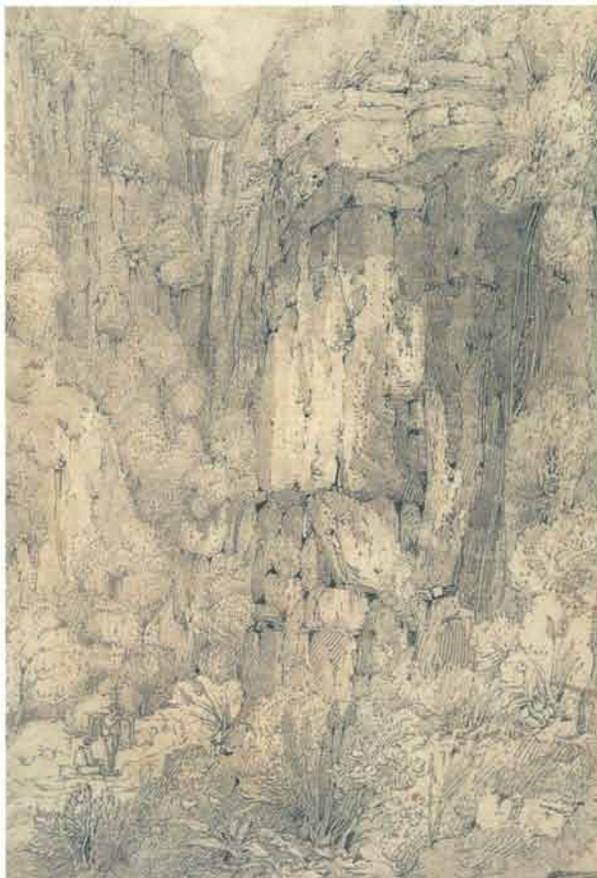
Elisabeth Findlay

When he left Portsmouth in July 1801, the young artist William Westall was on the assignment of a lifetime—at 19 he had been selected by the Admiralty as the landscape and figure painter to accompany Matthew Flinders on an expedition to circumnavigate Australia.

In *Arcadian Quest*, art historian Elisabeth Findlay presents a rich and diverse selection of Westall's watercolours, oil paintings and sketches. She demonstrates how they shaped nineteenth-century perceptions of Australia and examines their role in the process of colonisation.

Findlay also offers an absorbing portrait of a young, ambitious and troubled artist on his own voyage of discovery.

Dr Elisabeth Findlay works as a freelance art historian, curator and critic based in Townsville. She has undertaken extensive research into nineteenth-century Australian visual culture, and published and lectured on a diverse range of topics associated with colonial art.



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