Maloppio & Point Henry: Depicting Australian Historical Perspectives

An ADR submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MFA (Research)

Mark Thomas Walker

BA (Globalisation) Victoria University
BA (Fine Art) RMIT University
BA (Fine Art - Honours) RMIT University

School of Art

College of Design and Social Context

RMIT University

February, 2017
I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Mark Thomas WALKER
TITLE:
Maloppi and Point Henry: Depicting Australian Historical Perspectives

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:
Dominic Redfern – Senior Supervisor
Greg Creek & Geoffrey Hogg – Assistant Supervisors

ABSTRACT:
The Maloppi Project is the study of Point Henry through the development of a prolonged artistic exploration of the site, combined with an investigation of land use data, oral and recorded histories. Point Henry is known to Indigenous Australians, the Wathaurong people of the Kulin Nation, as Maloppi. The site holds significance for the Wathaurong as an historical meeting place, due to its proximity to Corio Bay and as a source of fresh water. Following European intervention at the site, it was subsequently developed as an aluminium smelter, and to the South, salt pans for salt production. The multi-national company Alcoa operated the smelter, until operations ceased in 2016.

This project has involved researching the various artists that have depicted the site in colonial artworks, meeting with former employees of the smelter and the curatorial team of the Geelong Gallery and combining the outcomes of this research in articulating what the site is comprised of in historical and physical form. These pursuits have engaged my artistic practice in research methods that emerge in the realisation and development of a series of artworks, including photography, sculpture, video, graphic art (cartography) and a combination of these forms.

RATIONALE:
This research project is built on the premise of uncovering narratives relating to Point Henry. It is informed by my interest and former studies in political science. I am principally a video artist who makes landscape videos that are often framed (or narrated) with political text. I have made a practice of visiting countries viewed as politically problematic or vexed in the mainstream western discourse. Countries that include East Timor, Iran and North Korea. My method is to shoot landscape and urban environments, then to add passages of text from a poetic position. Through the skewing and recontextualising of the fictional, peer-reviewed, or wholly fabricated text, I seek to align a broader, yet ambiguous and often confounding socio-political context to my work.

In addition to the political narratives found in my artistic practice, I am curious about the role of the worker and the social tenets or manifestations of power. In this project these inquiries are focused solely upon Point Henry. In practical terms, this means when I look at a large company such as Alcoa operating at the Point Henry site for over 50 years, I wonder what voices did the employees of days gone by hold? I also wonder about the previous inhabitants that occupied the site prior to European colonisation — where are their voices in the annals of historical documentation that I have researched? What of the voices of the voiceless? That is what I have sought to depict in this project.
BROADER RESEARCH CONTEXT:

During the course of this project I visited New Caledonia where I witnessed a similar situation unfolding to that at Point Henry, albeit on a grander scale. The Kanak population are primarily displaced and have often been moved on from their lands as French multinationals exploit nickel reserves. Having found my way into one of the mines myself, I returned to the capital Noumea to ascertain what artistic relevance I could glean from this similar circumstance to Point Henry. At the Centre Culturel Tjibaou, I discovered works by Nicolas Molé. Molé employs a variety of forms including video, sculpture and drawing. One particular work of interest to me is a monopoly board, titled Ille De Monopole (2013), which depicts numerous sites around New Caledonia peppered with multinational logos. Molé also constructed a topographical map of New Caledonia, approximately 3 metres long, made of nickel – the country’s primary mining resource (What will we leave to our children? 2013). Whilst not exactly subtle, I found this artist of particular value in assessing the way in which I might broaden the scope of form and let process drive my research. Molé’s influence thus led me to utilise the site as a material, tenets of which I expand on within my dissertation.

Another artist I’ve investigated in tandem with this project is Wang Gongxin. In Wang’s five-channel video Basic colour (2010), I was struck by his use of textural, brightly coloured materials in illustrating emotion and the self. Wang’s attribution of colour to personalities was particularly intriguing to me; I was led to explore the possible application of colour to represent site. I set out to define the stakeholders of the site by using colour – blue for the worker and the sea, brown as the land and the Indigenous histories and white for the sky and corporate interests. Although I do not continue with the 3-colour depictions, the blue has remained as a signifier for Alcoa and the employees of the smelter.

(Source: White Rabbit Collection. Image by Unknown)  
(Source: From the artist’s collection  
Mark Walker: Alcoa process 1)

Similarly, in the four-channel immersive video work of Yuan Goang-ming, which I encountered at the 2014 Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale, I could identify parallels within my own practice that related to content and form. In Before Memory (2011) Goang-ming investigates site, place and history, in terms of his personal background (rather than my socio-political bent). Before Memory nonetheless offered me the motivation to further scrutinise much of my own practice. The higher resolution and the use of 360-degree cameras and editing techniques are something I aspire to one day use and I was challenged to exhibit video in a different way. I discuss my use of projection mapping within the dissertation.

By applying the influences of the above artists, I have developed my practice to reflect the outcomes of my research, thus becoming more driven to explore site as a medium in its own right.
DISSECTATION:

The initial formulation of a practice-led study into the Point Henry site occurred to me as early as mid 2011, when I was invited to shoot a video with Andrew Turland at Point Lonsdale. Afterwards, we drove to the smelter at Point Henry. I'd previously seen this rusted industrial facility when driving through the region. Here was a series of buildings that appeared isolated and disconnected from the surrounding urban area, taking up a significant portion of the land that stretches into the shallows of Corio Bay. I drove up to the point, where I took some photos of the plant with the view to revisit or create a future work there.

In 2013 I made my submission to SGR for a PhD project exploring rampant development and 'ghost cities' in central China. Much of my previous works had focussed on the so-called Asian Century, with video projects Affirm, Irredentist and Arrogate (part of my Econasia Series) resting upon notions of rising military tensions in the East Asia sphere. I wished to elaborate and further intensify my study into the political tensions in the region. By late 2013 I'd been accepted into the MFA but had changed the area of investigation in my project from China to Central Asia. This occurred as part of my formal acceptance into SGR, my proposal titled Experiencing Dissidence in Central Asia.

In 2014, I began my research by embarking upon my nominal 'first' trip to Iran and Turkey. I captured videography at Vanak and Navvab in central Tehran. The videos I began working on sought to engage with my initial conceptions of power structures in Iran. Half of these works are currently unresolved; although a video Centrasia 3B and some collage on metal (Centrasia Black and Centrasia White) have since been completed and exhibited. In Turkey, I used google maps to locate a radio telescope in the middle of the country and went there to shoot a video.

During April of 2014, I met with the SGR panel and was advised not to proceed with Iran as part of my study. Although I accepted the panel's view, I'd also maintained the development of my project by continuing to edit the Vanak Project and sequencing videos for 2 corresponding video works. Maps and pictures from my 'first' trip adomed the walls of my adopted studio and continued to influence the outcomes of my practise. A notable exhibition I visited during this time was Kutlug Ataman's Küba (2004) — a Turkish artist that installed multiple televisions repetitively. Küba (2004) gave me food for thought on concepts
for formal ways of presenting my videos. Ataman provides a platform for people telling stories, simultaneously extracting himself from the storytelling process.

I then began to experiment with exhibition forms. This was notably displayed with my 3-channel projection of Explicate at Rubicon ARI. It was the first time I'd used multiple projectors in an art installation. During the middle of 2014, I was engaged by Tom Nicholson to shoot his Cinemas Project: Indefinite Substitution (2014). Whilst I was shooting Tom's video, I passed by Point Henry on a daily basis. During this period, I began to get a feel for what purpose the facility held and what the site was. It was at this point that I resolved to abandon the Centralsia (Central Asia) project and shift to Point Henry on the Bellarine. I'd remembered my previous visit to the site and the longing I had to embark upon the project now made more sense; given the proximity to where I lived (Melbourne) and the specific nature of the site (one geographical location on approx. 10 square kilometres), rather than the thousands of kilometres spanning Central Asia. Condensing the area of research and application would subsequently allow Point Henry to tell me its' story à la Ataman, but I was still unsure of how the natural and man-made environment may offer this 'story' to me.
While I was exhibiting at Rubicon, I visited the Wang Gongxin exhibition at NGV and began contemplating the use of vertical video and colour in emotional (or political) depictions of the Point Henry site. In this approach I sought to engage with Gongxin’s formal use of vertical screens but also try to establish a hierarchy of colour and subject. The outcome was to create a series of videos whereby each sequence would be governed by one of three colours: the blue waters of Corio Bay and blue skies would depict the worker, the whites of fog, metal sheeting of the smelter and grey skies the corporate entity (i.e. Alcoa) and the browns of the foliage, rusted buildings and soil pertaining to the Indigenous, pre-colonial history of the site.

While employed by Tom Nicholson to shoot Indefinite Substitution (2014) I met Lisa Sullivan, head curator of the Geelong Gallery and with her help I began looking at colonial works focused on the Geelong area. I discussed the intentions of my project with Lisa and was happy to find I had support at the gallery for research purposes. With the assistance of Geelong Gallery, I identified various colonial artists that had depicted the site in works by Walter Withers, Eugene von Guerard (and others) during the late 19th century.
In late 2014, I flew to Kyoto to install my E:onasia: Romaji solo show at Gallery TOMO / Kyoto City Gallery. The exhibition included 3 large format photographs and a 3-channel video for Explicate, alongside a series of single channel video projections with videos Arrogate, Affirm and Vicissitude. This show was a turning point for me as it culminated in the presentation of a number of forms I'd exhibited separately in the past. I also took the opportunity to travel the country and visited the Yokohama Biennale, Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale and Art Fair Sapporo. Amongst the plethora of contemporary and emerging artists, perhaps the most intriguing work I experienced was Yuan Goang-Ming's 4-channel immersive 360-degree video installations of Before Memory (2011) and Disappearing Landscapes – Passing II (2011). These works held a formal similarity to some of the environments I have depicted in video before; abandoned buildings and detritus of civilised society. The most significant difference between my work and Goang-ming was in the use of 360-degree cinematography. This format was utterly captivating in placing one directly in the environment Goang-ming captures and helped me reflect upon ways I could enrich the experience of depicting Point Henry. That is, I began to expand the way in which I’d seek to use video in depicting the site –which began by thinking about different ways of using video but ultimately led to discarding much of the video I’d already shot and moving towards more physical items such as soil, metal, found objects and sound recording from the site.

Source: QAGOMA online
Yuan Goang-ming: Disappearing Landscapes – Passing II

Toward the end of 2014, I’d embarked upon my first shoot at Point Henry. I shot the video at 50fps, twice the speed of my previous works (doing so to intensify the visual quality of the colours at the site), with the camera mounted in a vertical format. I had decided in the preceding months to develop a method of depicting site histories and those that had lived, worked and exploited the site using video. This had led me to the creation and submission of my amended Project Proposal, the third major change in the course of the research study. As mentioned, the defining rules for the shoots were to develop the works along the lines of the 3 principal colour palettes that would depict the stakeholders of the site. However, I found that this process was ultimately flawed. I simply wasn’t letting the site guide me in real
terms. I felt I was simply using my old methods of producing video; attaching a set of pre-conceived boundaries around my subject, so I abandon this approach.

I then chose to contact the Wathaurong community to begin this next stage of the project; I was seeking a pre-colonial perspective on the site. I was aware that the site had an importance to Indigenous Australians due to the discovery of a plaque beside the unsealed road at the northern tip of the point. After numerous attempts I met with only one member of the Wathaurong, face-to-face and was invariably told to contact 'someone else' to gain comment from the community. This was, curiously, much the same as when I contacted Alcoa (the company) and in my attempts to contact former workers at the smelter. From this inability to consult with the Indigenous community, I resolved that perhaps theirs (the Wathaurong) was not my story to tell. However, I continued my enquiries by visiting the Narana Cultural Centre, South of Geelong and at the Wathaurong Centre in North Geelong, I was redirected to the aboriginal community health centre. From there, I was put in contact with Barwon Health with the intention that I may be able to obtain health data records from the area. In that pursuit, I felt like I was a long way away from the historical perspective on the cultural relevance of Maloppio to the Wathaurong. I was fascinated by the notion of these health records, though, and began to think about how I might be able to translate the data in an artwork. My initial thoughts were to incorporate the data into a series of algorithms that would then be visualised in the moving image; perhaps as a series of patterns and distorted graphic imagery. However, this pursuit too proved dogged (not only as I wasn't particularly convinced that the data had any specific relevance to Point Henry / Maloppio) but by the fact I did not have the right to access this personal data: a member of Barwon Health staff informed me. Following my failed pursuit of Indigenous histories, I decided to resume my historical investigation at the Geelong Library & Historical Centre (GLHC), in their new building at Geelong's cultural precinct. Here, I was able to sift through documents from news and governmental sources to gain a better understanding of how the site was used and viewed in the period post-colonisation.

Source: From the artist's collection
Mark Walker: Maloppio Pier

I formed the view of Point Henry as a place that was continually changing in the 50 years from the first European intervention; a place that is mired in contentious arguments as to who named the site and what it was used for. As mentioned, it appears that the Wathaurong regard Maloppio as a place of cultural significance, the details of which I am either unable or not allowed to understand. Following European arrivals (notably of the escaped convict William Buckley), the Indigenous population was increasingly maligned and driven from the
area. Point Henry emerged as the (de)embarkation port for Geelong and surrounding areas gazetted for occupation. This is because a sandbar prevented ships entering Corio Bay (off the South West corner of Port Philip). The site then became a place of lurid accounts: drunken sailors and prostitutes servicing the port (a whole day from the Geelong settlement via bullock dray). Following the dredging of the Corio Bay entrance, ship traffic continued to the port of Geelong. However, Point Henry’s use as a site of hedonism continued. It was home to a number of leisure facilities, including tea rooms, wooden-pin bowling, numerous hotels and gardens. However, the leisure industry declined and the site (including a school and clinic) were all but abandoned by the mid-20th Century. At this point, the American company Alcoa constructed an aluminium smelter and rolling mill. A coal-fired power plant was constructed at Anglesea (on the ocean, some 50km to the South) to wholly power the Point Henry facility. Alcoa then formed one of the largest employers (along with Ford and Shell Oil) in the Geelong region, before the company rationalised their international assets during the 2010s and finally decommissioned the Point Henry plant altogether (beginning in 2015). The audio accompanying my exhibition offers a reflexive overview of the tenets of colonial art and corporate subjects. Natural sounds that accompany the video work are distorted and used as a somewhat ethereal soundscape to link all of the works together. Half a dozen former ‘Alcoans’ take candidly about their experiences working at the smelter and they bring the audience into the works and perhaps invite the viewer into the smelter’s past. As does the faint thud of the ocean that adds a lonely chorus to this audio, visual, tactile and sculptural depiction of point Henry / Maloppio.

As mentioned, a crucial part of my research has been an ongoing association with the Geelong Gallery. Due to this association, Lisa Sullivan’s musings on the different artists who have previously depicted the site and region are also contained in the sound loop accompanying the exhibition. My repeated visits to the gallery were often to view varied works but always with the goal of seeing part of the permanent collection that I had not yet viewed. One constant, though, has been A View of Geelong (1856) by Eugene von Guérard. This is perhaps the gallery’s pièce de résistance, a painting acknowledged as one of the most highly regarded works of 19th Century Australian art. A View of Geelong (von Guérard, 1856) is one of the earliest colonial artworks depicting Point Henry. It is but a tiny square of a giant panorama, a small slice containing details of the ships moored at Point Henry. You must look closely to make out the comings-and-goings of the ships, cargo and persons moving about the area, on their way to or from Geelong. After my third or fourth visit to view this work, I decided I would seek out the position from which von Guérard painted. From these visits to immerse myself in the artworks of von Guérard, Withers, and others, I resolved to revisit the Point Henry / Maloppio site in a physical context. The result, I have recontextualised A View of Geelong as a contemporary work using digital imagery. This draws my digital media practice into parallel with the work of von Guérard. The photo has a linear structure that depicts a timeline of the region, in keeping with the historical depiction of site. A macro-video, projected onto various geometries gives a pictorial representation of the site over the course of the research project. This projection also serves as a reference the topography of the site, almost as a deconstructed vista.
After emerging myself in the colonists view, I had begun to focus upon collecting data and oral histories, alongside anything that the site presented me through the course of my visits and inquiries. During the late months of 2015 I’d often mused on the physical and geological attributes of the site. What exactly was the site? What elements was it made of? Another company had previously used a vast part of the backwash west of the Point Henry coast, known at Singaree Bay. That area was made into salt pans; a massive salt farm operated by Cheetam Salt. As we know, Alcoa operated on the other major quarter of the above-sea level land.

Using the documents for the GLHC (Geelong Library and Heritage Centre) and Landata Victoria I was able to ascertain that a large section of the area was predominately silt and that the soil makeup of the point was a soft clay with scattered rock formations (particularly beneath the ground at the tip of the point). A lot of the information I read made reference to Alcoa’s use of the land and the associated impact that facility had on the soil and natural environment. This led me to the EPA (Environmental Protection Authority) Victoria and at their website I was able to find a series of tests and sampling records of various areas across the
Alcoa site and at Point Henry more generally. I was also shocked to see the levels of high-grade effluent and dangerous chemicals that were absorbed into the ground. That brought me back to my curiosity with the site as an exceptional place used by the Wathaurong. How could such an important place, used by Indigenous people for thousands of years, have become a toxic wasteland –crippled infrastructure and salt farms aside – a site of such a high level of contamination that the EPA had issued a Penalty Notice. And so together with the contamination reports, this Penalty Notice has become perhaps the epitome of my question into the physical make of the site and how I might depict this physicality in art. Thus I display the EPA notice on metal alongside my site inspired found objects. Aside from my display of the EPA, I have also represented the commercial resource of the site with ingots of aluminium from the factory. They are relics of the 'Alcoan' worker: a physical representation of those thousands of workers that inhabited the site. It adds another tactile dimension to the oral accounts throughout the exhibition space.

The over-arching premise of the project is in seeking out and defining the different forms and ways in which I can depict the site. In historical form, this has meant researching records and colonial artists in seeking to create artworks that have a specific relevance to the historical period. In this way, I depict Eugene von Guérard’s A View of Geelong in a photographic reproduction. I researched the oral histories of workers at the Alcoa facility and also found ways to transpose the working history of the site into tactile works in sculpture. For example, in my investigation into the physical make-up of the site, I’ve uncovered data from (and spoken with) the EPA in regard to the pollutants at the site, residue and detritus from the smelter operations. I have uncovered metal poles that were once used as security fencing and now form a metal sculpture. The aforementioned oral histories of the site will be recorded, edited and played in the exhibition space to cushion these sculptures. In drawing maps and researching different types of cartography relating to the site, I have then cut out a series of triangular shapes that resemble the different parts of terrain and land use at Point Henry. I have then taken a series of video shoots at the site with the aim of projecting those videos back onto the 9 or so shapes that I have cut out. Finally, in staging various exhibitions and collaborating with different artists I have sought to expand my process and formal approaches to my traditional form (video). The expansion of my approach to process is particularly relevant to the exhibitions I’ve recently held in Indonesia, Austria and Tasmania – using not only video but also found objects, sculpture and a desire to proceed with a process-driven approach to form.

LIST OF PROJECTS:

Project: New Caledonia Project
Documentation: Photographs 2015
My trip to New Caledonia found me amidst numerous mines and engaging critically with Noumea’s contemporary art. I was able to draw parallels with my own research and the
works of local artists. I also participated in various video shoots and have a strong body of work that is still in progress. I have included some of the still images that will make up this project; formed in tandem with the beginning of my research studies.

Project: Micro Galleries Denpasar
I was accepted to participate in a public art program in Bali, Indonesia during October 2015. I was teamed up with Jonas Gestakresna (Jakarta Biennale 2015) to collaborate on a site-specific project at the Badung Markets. In the weeks leading up to the exhibition, I lived with Jonas and we contemplated the site and what way in which we’d both develop a multi-faceted approach to video and the environment. In this case, I’d assumed my role as video artist and interrogator of socio-political impressions I received in Indonesia (and more specifically, Bali). However, in working with Jonas I was able to let process guide me. Jonas became a dear friend and peer. The restraint he used in preconceiving ideas really rubbed off on me. The result of the project was that I was able to try different ways of approaching
the exhibition and in the end we created something vastly different to the discussions we’d had in emails during the 3 months prior to me ‘moving in’ with Jonas.

**Project:** Photo Paste-Ups  
**Documentation:** Various Digital Photographs 2016

I decided to make my own physical interventions into the site. I’d studied countless hours of satellite imagery and ‘Street View’ images from Google. One day, though, there must have been a bug in the system as I found the imagery on street view to be distorted. Although it appears the street view had been affected ‘data moshing’ glitch, I could also manipulate this data-mosh by moving the cursor. I took screen shots of the images I produced / happened upon, with the view to use them as part of my investigation. I went through approximately 100 photographs from this screen shots, cropped them to a uniform size (removing desktop and browser etc), before finally cutting the collection down to about a dozen images. It was some weeks later, around May 2016 that I decided to print out 9 of these images and take them to the site. I used spray-adhesive to attach the photos to various points at the Alcoa building and onto signs at public and port authority property. I revisited the site weekly for 2 months, documenting what I expected to be the deterioration of the photos; curious to see whether they might constitute a work in themselves or perhaps conform to one aspect of my artistic process. The latter proved to be the life of these photos, as they barely deteriorated in visually quality – more often they were removed or disappeared without trace.

[Image of a screen with an X marked on it]

**Source:** From the artist's collection  
Mark Walker: DM-PH1 (Vision)
**Source**: From the artist's collection
Mark Walker: Vision In Stu (Four)

**Project**: The Poles

During the course of my visits to document my paste-up photos, I stumbled across half a dozen old, rusted, barbed-wire chain fence poles. They were discarded on the ground directly adjacent to the port authority pier and customs area. I found the poles to have a great texture and colour to them; making them a contender as a potential sculptural item. I returned a week later to retrieve them.

After retrieving the poles, I’d compiled them in several formations to ascertain how the sculpture might work to convey some of the things that had struck me during this study. One common thread for me is the plight of the worker – all around Geelong there is evidence of the decline of the manufacturing industry and those associated with it. I was able to compose the poles in a manner that (to me at least) represented the released, contorted fist of workers solidarity in a hand that is wrapped in barbed wire and left clenching the bloodstained soil. However, that is perhaps a digression from what is being welded and melded together – a metal sculpture made from a discarded chain fence, designed to keep the public out of the Alcoa facility yet now reconstituted into a cairn for the former workers of the facility.
Project: Public Art in Graz, Austria

Documentation: Photograph of Large Format Poster 2016

Another exhibition that holds relevance for this project is the Micro Galleries Graz event in Austria during August 2016. Following the success of the aforementioned Denpasar installation, the MG team approached me to ask if I would like to submit a video to the exhibition. I was happy to oblige but also asked to submit an alternative work. Given my research into von Guerard (born in Austria), I felt I could address some of my political musings with this artist. The result was that I created a series of large-format (A2) posters, in black & white that depicted Austrian emigrants to Australia over the course of 100 years (1850-1950). The posters were influenced by the What Is A Real Aussie? series by Peter Drew and used the word Auslander (outsider) at the top of the poster. I contacted Peter and spoke to him about
my project, which he happily endorsed and wished to hear more. As with the What Is A Real Aussie? series, the posters I produced reflected the rise of anti-immigration in Austria, against those Australians that had been seen as ‘outsiders’ in Australia yet had gone on to be national treasures. The inference being that the ‘outsider’ may also be the potential social asset and pride of a nation state. Von Guerard features in one of the posters—see at far right of Auslander Series.

Source: From the artist's collection
Mark Walker: Auslander Series

Project: A view of Geelong & Lisa Sullivan
I had resolved to ascertain from where von Guérard took his vantage point of Geelong to paint his notorious picture of the region. My initial drives and walks took me to the point at Montpellier in Highton but I could only make out certain vantages and was not convinced this was the spot. Since arriving in Geelong and in my continued visits to Geelong Gallery, I’d met with curator Lisa Sullivan and discussed my project with her. Lisa had agreed to record an interview / oral account of colonial artists in the Geelong region and assisted me with my questions as to the nature of some of these artists (and their works), with a particular emphasis on von Guerard. Likewise, I attended 3 separate guided tours at the gallery with one having an explicit focus on the artists I had been studying (i.e. von Guerard, Withers and others). And to this end, I was armed with the view that von Guerard was somewhat differentiated from his peers in that he tried to paint his mise en scène with an intent to provide for an accurate drawing—a document, if you will. And from that premise, I pushed on from Montpellier and found the highest peak in the area South of Geelong (but East of Ceres), at the Brown Hill. At this point, I was confident I’d reached the position from which A View was either painted or sketched, for incorporation into the ‘great work’.

I took a series of panorama photos with my camera, that I took back to my office/studio and studying them alongside a reproduction of A View. From there, I returned on 3 occasions to Brown Hill, capturing 75 large-format photographs on a DSLR camera. I was unsure what I would do with the images and began stitching the images together in numerous ways—for example, I tied them all together seamlessly. I tied them together and them took a pixelation filter to bring them to various degrees of abstraction. I tied them together with lines (or markers) that emphasised the fact they are separate images. I then printed out various versions of the photograph panoramas, often crashing my computer due to the sheer size of the RAW files. The panoramas were invariably quite short (about 25cm) but would range in a width of up to 4 metres. I settled upon a 4m-wide version of the ‘markers’ panorama that I
then displayed in a physical space and have resolved to include the piece in my final body of work.

Source: From the artist's collection
Mark Walker: View of Geelong (VG Entirety) and View of Geelong (Entirety).

Project: The Triangles (Geometric Sections)

Documentation: Photographs of the triangles & them ‘in situ’ 2016

Whilst viewing satellite, topographical, and various other maps of the site, I identified a common geometric thread – the point is a basic triangle shape, with rectangles abutting it to the North (sand bar) and North East (port authority pier). I drew various sketches and used Photoshop to superimpose shapes over a screen shot of the satellite image of the area. I then collected and cut with a bandsaw triangles to reflect the different elevations and areas on the site. For example, in addition to the 2 rectangles I created 7 triangles – 1 for the native rehabilitation area to the North of Alcoa, 1 for Alcoa, 1 for the salt pans, 2 each for the 2 industrial zones to the South and 1 for the expanse of coast that the public cannot access directly.

I’ve since painted these shapes white and have undertaken my first video shoot at the site since early 2015. With the shapes I’d super-imposed over the satellite map, I decided to capture video from the 3 corners of each triangle and from the base of the rectangles. I have to date compiled videography from 4 of the 9 geometric sections. As a side note, I also took the triangles themselves to the site, to place them in situ for the basis of another series of photographs; again tentatively embarking upon a process-driven aside to what I have previously envisaged for the triangles.
Source: From the artist's collection
Mark Walker: Cutting the triangles to shape

Source: From the artist's collection
Mark Walker: The Triangles above a satellite image of Point Henry
Source: From the artist’s collection
Mark Walker: The Triangles in situ 2

**Project:** Bearing at Sawtooth AFI
**Documentation:** Photograph
My latest exhibition was held in Launceston with Robert Zugaro, being exhibited at Sawtooth during November 2016. As with the other exhibitions I’ve listed here, the relevance to my research project lies in the way in which I approached the show, alongside Zugaro. We’d been accepted to exhibit at the gallery on the basis of the maritime works we’d created previously and incorporated into our proposal. However, after talking about the way in which we’d approach the exhibition, we decided to elaborate on the tenets of the proposal and document our trip to the gallery, intending to perhaps create additional video work(s). The outcome was that we caught the 10-hour all-day ferry between Melbourne and Devonport, interrogating the vessel (interior and exterior), and our surroundings en route. We then spent the next week in Launceston, visiting the space, designing the exhibition, and editing the video works. In the end, we created various videos and ended up using one each, that we’d captured on the ferry. I believe this latest show demonstrates that the way in which I’ve honed my ability to let process guide my artistic perspective (and participation in the gallery environment), the ability achieved as a direct outcome of my research project.

**Project:** Alcoa and the employees
**Documentation:** EPA Notice
+ Outstanding audio recordings & photographs
Alcoa has released various Media Releases dedicated to the decommissioning of the plant and for the ‘575 Masterplan’ that will dictate the future of the facility post-decommissioning. The company also espouses their commitment to the “wellbeing of staff” in this period after the workers have been retrenched.
I have made continued enquiries to Alcoa, to their media spokespeople and to the chair of the Community Advisory Board committee – a “forum for two-way communication between Alcoa and the broader community regarding issues relevant to all parties”. I wrote to them
as a Research Candidate from RMIT, involved in a study of the site. My requests were met with silence.

Having met a potential blockade from within Alcoa, I extended my enquiries more broadly into the community and posted notices in the local paper, Gumtree, Facebook and other online forums. This has led me to making contact with 3 former employees that I will meet in person for a recorded interview during November. I anticipate a meeting that is melancholic in nature; lubricated by some beer and recollections of “the good old days” to accompany the other forms that will form the body of work emanating from this project.

Fig. 1: Clean Up Notice from EPA to John Osborne (EPA Victoria Document 2016)

**Project: The Core Sample**

**Documentation:** Outstanding core sample & housing

Upon further introspection into what I’d learnt from the EPA, in physical visits to the site and in cartography and land use resources, I felt that I needed to see the site for what it was. My initial idea was to procure a core sample and if it appeared aesthetically pleasing I could incorporate it into a work. I had an idea that if I could get 10,000 year’s worth of soil sample, I could relate it to an indigenous history of the site (perhaps by adding a very small layer of brightly-coloured material to the top layer of the sample). I spoke to a friend of mine about my intentions in doing this and was pleasantly surprised that he knew someone that worked for ‘big oil’ and that could recommend someone to conduct the core sample. However, he has only just returned to the country and I have yet to confirm if this is going to proceed.

**Project: Final Body of Work**

**Documentation:** Various Photographs 2016

As mentioned, I already have a series of photographs spanning the 2 or more years of this research project. However, I do believe that only one will be included in the final culmination of this project: the large-scale panorama that offers an homage to von Guerard. In addition to this, I intend to mount my triangles and projection-map the videography I’ve captured from each corner of the site. The poles will be assembled in their final form and placed in the space as sculpture. Surrounding these different works will be audio tracks by the former Alcoa workers and Geelong Gallery curator Lisa Sullivan. On the walls will be some data exposing the soil contaminants and the Penalty Notice to Alcoa, alongside the Environmental Report by the EPA. These works are a given. However, whilst I do intend to procure the core sample to provide another sculptural item, I will not commit to this part of the installation until it is done. I am confident all of these elements will constitute a highly-informed evaluation of my efforts in researching the site that is Point Henry and Maloppi.
Project: Where next?

Documentation: Digital Reproduction of Melway maps 2016

During the course of this project, I have mentioned that I made a number of pursuits with maps in various formats. During these pursuits, I took screen shots of online Melway maps at Point Henry and used these to various degrees (for example, in the positioning of the triangles and in figuring out the vantage points for video shoots & photo paste-ups).

I've continued to take Melway screen shots of the entire Geelong region and have embarked upon a new project; stitching together these maps. In addition to this reproduction, I have been taking screen shots from the cities of Melbourne and Brisbane — again using the Melway and Brisway resources. At present, I have only just begun this project but I am reconfiguring the Geelong maps to incorporate parts of the cities of Melbourne and Brisbane. The aim of this project is to create a map of Geelong as a metropolis — not one that has grown into the future from the size it is today, but one that grew in the absence of growth in Brisbane and Melbourne. That is to say, I will attempt to move suburbs further away from the Geelong CBD and replace those (newer) suburbs with ones formed earlier in Melbourne and Brisbane. I am also viewing plans from vicroadslong-term growth map (leaked to The Age and not particularly desired for public viewing) to inform some of the development I am incorporating into this map.
Source: From the artist's collection
Mark Walker: Geeway – Greater Geelong
BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Alagappa, M 1995, Political Legitimacy: The Quest for Moral Authority, Stanford University Press, California

Crichley, S 1999, Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity, Verso, London


Massey, D 1994 A Global Sense of Place in Space, Place & Gender, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota

Neuerer, G (eds.) 2003, Untitled (Experience of Place) Koenig Books, London


REFERENCE LIST:


Goang-ming, Yuan 2011, Before memory, Four-channel immersive video, Exhibited at The Fifth Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale, Sept 6 – Nov 30 2014.


von Guérard, Eugene 1856, A view of Geelong, Oil on canvas, Permanent Collection, Geelong Gallery, Geelong.

Walker, Mark 2015, Alcoa process 1, Digital photograph, Collection of the artist.


Walker, Mark 2014, Centrasia black and Centrasia white, Photograph printed on metal, Collection of the artist.

Walker, Mark 2016, Cutting the triangles to shape, Digital photograph, Collection of the artist.

Walker, Mark 2016, DM-PH1 (Vision), Screen capture, Collection of the artist.

Walker, Mark 2014, Explicate, Digital photograph of the video exhibited at Rubicon, Collection of the artist.


Walker, Mark 2014, Journey to central Turkey, Screen capture, Collection of the artist.
Walker, Mark 2016, Maloppio at Dusk, Digital photograph, Collection of the artist.
Walker, Mark 2014, Maloppio Pier, Digital photograph, Collection of the artist.
Walker, Mark 2015, NC-M1, Digital photograph, Collection of the artist.
Walker, Mark 2016, The Poles—In Stu (A), Digital photograph, Collection of the artist.
Walker, Mark 2016, The Triangles above a satellite image of Point Henry, Digital collage, Collection of the artist.
Walker, Mark 2016, Vision In Stu (Four), Digital photograph of photographic paste-up, Collection of the artist.
Walker, Mark 2016, View of Geelong (VG Entirety) and View of Geelong (Entirety), Digital photograph, Collection of the artist.