

Afterstorm

EDITED BY Charles Green & Jon Cattapan



Afterstorm

EDITED BY Charles Green *(t)* Jon Cattapan

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Acknowledgements

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It has been hugely important to us to create a document that attempts a genuine inter-disciplinarity and plurality of research. So, let us thank our two other research team investigators, Lyndell Brown and Paul Gough, and our esteemed contributors: Gary P. Anderson, Lisa Beaven, Kate Daw, Wulan Dirgantoro, Richard J. Frankland, Tessa Laird, Rebecca Mayo, Chris McAuliffe, Kit Messham-Muir, Jennifer Milam, Micaela Sahhar and Judy Watson. Creating a book collides in strange and often abrupt ways with the busy lives of contemporary academics. The role of collecting, collating, encouraging, attending to timelines, sourcing permissions and illustrations involves precise, patient attention, and for this we sincerely thank our colleague Zamara Robison.

Finally, as editors and architects of this project, we were acutely aware of the massive health issues faced by our dear friend, colleague and contributor Kate Daw, who courageously and generously contributed to both the symposium and this publication, offering her unstinting enthusiasm throughout. Very sadly, Kate passed away in late 2020. We thank her partner, Robert Hassan, her family and her estate for their continuing commitment to Kate's contributions.

This book is dedicated to Kate Daw.

Foreword

It is not surprising that, as close neighbours and with shared community values, the Victorian College of the Arts and Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria have entered into what promises to be a continuing collaborative engagement. Our first venture together, in 2018, saw the Royal Botanic Gardens host the exhibition *Storm* at Domain House, exhibiting the work of Cameron Robbins, Gary Anderson and Gabriella Hirst. *Storm* accompanied the single-day symposium ‘Storm: Art and Science’, held at Federation Hall on the University of Melbourne’s Southbank campus and co-convened by Jon Cattapan and Gary Anderson. Both institutions were delighted by the cross-over of audiences, not to mention the richness of ideas encompassing nature, culture and science.

We were therefore delighted to work together again on the two-day research symposium ‘Afterstorm: Gardens, Art, Conflict’, held at Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria’s Mueller Hall on 25–26 October 2019. From late September to early November 2019, we also presented the associated exhibition in Domain House: *Turbulence, Conflict and the Garden of Remediation*, featuring the collaborative works of Lyndell Brown, Charles Green, Jon Cattapan and Paul Gough. With these two events, we again discovered important synergies in our audience and community outreach, but also a genuine developing partnership with potential research intersections.

It is with great pleasure and considerable pride on behalf of our institutions that we present the fruits of both the symposium and the exhibition in this beautiful book, an important document of the research findings of the ARC Discovery Project (DP170101912) led by Jon Cattapan, Lyndell Brown, Charles Green and Paul Gough.

We invite you to dive in, experience and enjoy *Afterstorm*.

Professor Barbara Bolt
Director
Victorian College of the Arts

Robin Penty
Executive Director Engagement and Impact
Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria

Artists, writers and gardeners have continually delved beneath the stormy waters of their lives, seeking images to convey turbulence, find refuge, or even explain and forgive their own privileges through appeals to the laws of disruptive nature. In this book, we explore disruption and conflict in images of gardens and plants, which are usually taken to represent peace and harmony. The connection that artists make between art, gardens and conflict has changed over time because the understanding of conflict is always entangled with political, cultural and scientific change. Indigenous peoples have experienced this right up to the present, to their great cost. And of course, today, contemporary artists often frame their ideas about gardens within the overwhelming, urgent perspective of climate change. In this book, we aim to place gardens and plants and art within a long, panoramic view—across centuries of upheaval and war that have led towards the present.

From the early modern period to the present, through wars and humanitarian disasters, gardens have figured as refuges, as places for rehabilitation and healing and as ceremonial backdrops. A wide variety of landscapes, from colonial American plantations and desolate wastelands to Australian bush valleys, have been re-imagined as gardens. Plants have figured as potent reminders of home and place, as souvenirs, medicines, laurels of victory and, now, as harbingers of the effects of climate change. This book locates art—and images of conflict and connection—within landscape and country, imagining the place of gardens within the movements of humans embedded in turbulent flows, within the vast, involuntary, global movement of peoples, refugees and asylum seekers fleeing conflict and humanitarian crises over the last half millennium. Artists continue to depict sudden collapses, cataclysmic crises, battles, deluges and emergencies. They represent the aftermath of devastation through gardens and plants.

This book occurs within the context of new developments in the knowledge bases of art history and visual art. As conveners of the symposium from which this book grew, and together with those who contributed talks and chapters, we isolated different periods of art history, or excerpted contemporary artists' projects from which we could discover and explain new knowledge about turbulence through changing ideas of the garden. As conveners, we knew we were contributing to the now-considerable art-historical discourses that analyse approaches to world-making rather than seeking to define periods and biographies. This approach rejects the familiar modernist image of a river of artistic achievements flowing irresistibly towards the avant-garde present, in favour of recognising the multiple temporalities that always existed within each period of art (sometimes within a work of art), a phenomenon that gardeners recognise readily in their gardens. Discerning what is distinct and what is shared between nature and culture has been a challenge not only for scholars but also for artists. It has been approached in different and even incompatible ways: from the art historian George Kubler, famous for his epigrammatic book *The Shape of Time* (1961), and the American land artist Robert Smithson, creator of the seminal *Spiral Jetty* (1970), right up to the contributors to this book. For theorists of contemporary art, the postmodernism that scholars across almost all disciplines encountered from the late 1960s was a symptom of one of its own premises: that no single big story was going to dominate any sphere of human activity. But we all quickly found that neither modernism nor postmodernism could explain or communicate the changes that ensued from the end of the Cold War in

I.

Afterstorm: Gardens, Art and Conflict

Charles Green

AND

Jon Cattapan

1989: the era of globalisation, the spread of integrated electronic culture, the dominance of economic neoliberalism, the appearance of new types of armed and terrorist conflict, and the change in Australia's place in the world. All of this represented the emergence of a new cultural period—the contemporary—just as yet another period, the age of emergency, appeared in early 2020 along with a host of impacts from climate change and the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Even amid this very recent shift, we still need to proceed from the now-familiar contention (familiar from theories of contemporaneity) that a set of terms mark new art not just as new but as contemporary. These terms include 'place-making', 'connectivity' and, most crucially for our purposes, 'world-picturing'. They have overridden older distinctions based on style, medium, and ideology that dominated art and art theory during the modernist period. The concept of world-picturing is extraordinarily suggestive, both to art historians of earlier periods and to contemporary artists.

Our contention in the project that led to this book—an Australian Research Council Discovery Project, 'World-Pictures: Path-Finding Across a Century of Wars, 1917–2017', whose artists were Jon Cattapan, Paul Gough, Charles Green and Lyndell Green—was that the culture of the contemporary period has been indelibly marked by global conflict, violence and terror. This understanding resonated with an emerging consensus that art during the Cold War was profoundly marked by that conflict, but our generous contributors offered us the chance to see that this was also true of pre-20th-century art, as well as of popular culture at the end of modernism, for instance in science fiction and comics. More widely, artists participate in comprehending present-day conflict; they have worked through United Nations and humanitarian welfare programs, in art therapy, in communicating human rights. Indigenous artists have spoken through music, theatre, film and art about local wars between White and Black, often at great personal cost. However, such roles have their problems, so our project navigates critical issues with care and open-mindedness; for instance, as we know from our extraordinary experiences as Australia's war artists, when victims of war, refugees and migrants beset by turbulence are aestheticised, depicted as nameless human flows or in realist art as passive recipients of aid, this can offend both refugee and host communities. We also know that while art asserts its powerful role in challenging hostile representations of migrants, in reality opportunities are limited for victims of war and refugee artists, along with opportunities for intercultural exchange with resident Australian artists.

Further, 'Afterstorm: Gardens, Art and Conflict', the symposium we convened in late October 2019, occurred a couple of months before the epochal global pandemic appeared, with all its vast shocks to medicine, public health, social cohesion and the survival of cultural institutions and economies. 'Afterstorm' was the successor to 'Storm: Art and Science'—a 2018 biomedicine-creative arts symposium and exhibition conceived in collaboration with the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, the Victorian College of the Arts and the Faculty of Medicine, led by Gary Anderson and Jon Cattapan. Conceived against the background of the 2016 Melbourne thunderstorm asthma catastrophe, the symposium was driven by the resemblances we could see between art and biomedical research methods. Both touch on the deepest aspects of human life: illness, mortality, fear, disability. To some in the community, though not to artists, modes of biomedical

enquiry, such as artificial intelligence, gene manipulation, chimeric organisms, artificial life and cell therapy for cancer, seem abstract and distant. Researchers in both biomedicine and visual art understand that the solutions to our most pressing problems are not immediately obvious and will most likely arise from entirely unexpected insights sparked by abstract creativity. The most important and tangible aspect of 'Storm' was that it was envisaged as the spearhead of a program of cooperation that might find new ways to engage with the public on health and well-being. The quixotic aim of both 'Storm' and its successor 'Afterstorm' was to bridge the divides that limit engagement between biomedicine, botany and art. For even when areas of inquiry are apparently cognate—different periods of art history, or art practice and art history, for example—we know that the inhabitants of those closely connected territories very rarely talk to each other. Models of cooperative cultural strengthening remain surprisingly rare in the creative arts, to our detriment. In this, loner artists can benefit from the ease inside the sciences and medicine with co-authorship rather than the mythology of individual adventure. Hence *Afterstorm's* emphasis on connections between art, gardens and the sciences, and its focus on biomedicine, which is playing such a leading role in fighting the current pandemic.

Eminent researchers have integrated digital and interactive technologies with art and adapted medical processes into art. Beyond these few technology-driven projects and the occasional spurt of academic interest, curiosity about cross-disciplinary projects has generally been weak. Silos remain, as attendance at the 'Storm' symposium showed, with serious interest confined largely to the general public and arts practitioners. We know the same occurs in reverse—very few artists read even general scientific journals and almost none understand basic mathematical formulae. Artists have paid lip-service to bridging the divide between the arts and science, the divide that was identified in C.P. Snow's famous lecture 'The Two Cultures' (1959). In Australia, these bridges did not focus on our shifting national story and certainly did not cede to Aboriginal voices a leading role in creating the connection which we propose in *Afterstorm*. We argue that it takes humbly accepting mentorship by Indigenous voices to locate that pathway.

The answer, as Richard Frankland puts it with magisterial clarity in this volume, is to slowly build friendships and trust across cultures, to actively seek cultural strengthening and to seek clarity about the present. Just as the meaning of turbulence and disruption for Australians has shifted dramatically over the last year, White Australia's comprehension of the vast duration and accomplishments of First Nations culture is changing. In *Afterstorm*, we acknowledge the leadership of Indigenous artists and scholars in jointly seeking explanations for the astonishing, momentous gap we find between the Australia's happy ideas about itself and the real disruption that accompanies the fracturing and tumult of places and peoples and gardens. Because Australia's Indigenous peoples continually and inextricably underpin our national identity, the turbulent history of their ongoing struggle for fundamental recognition should be central to Australian cultural identity. Our national stories are inevitably disrupted when we recognise the revelatory evidence of tens of thousands of years of Indigenous civilisation.

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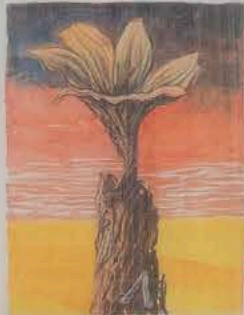
Remediation

Charles Green

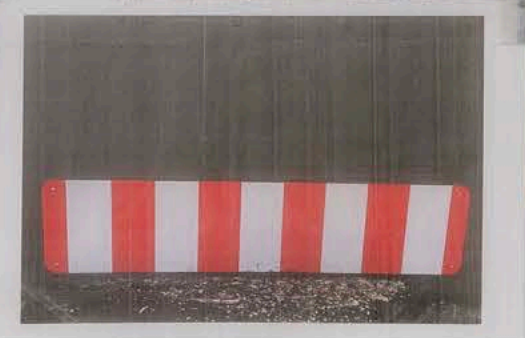
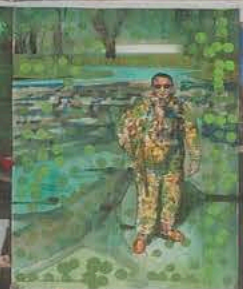
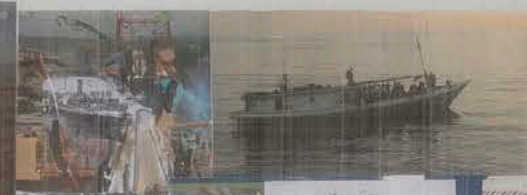
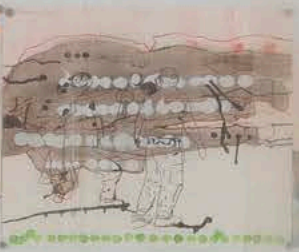


Late winter. A dusk sky. Chilly and clear, but a hint of warmth. The calm after the storm. We're near Castlemaine, on the hills that extend north from the Great Divide; you might be able to smell the eucalyptus just by looking at these branches and leaves. The year is 2019 or thereabouts: that 'thereabouts' is a big deal, for these are the waning days of the 50-year period of contemporary art, mere months before great fires and then a pandemic that ends the age of the contemporary. From the north over summer, a hot wind and then the pandemic will blow in with the fierceness of an army of dragons and make a war that reaches home, and an economic catastrophe.

Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green
Afterstorm 2019 (detail)
synthetic polymer paint and oil on digital photograph on canvas
The University of Melbourne Art Collection



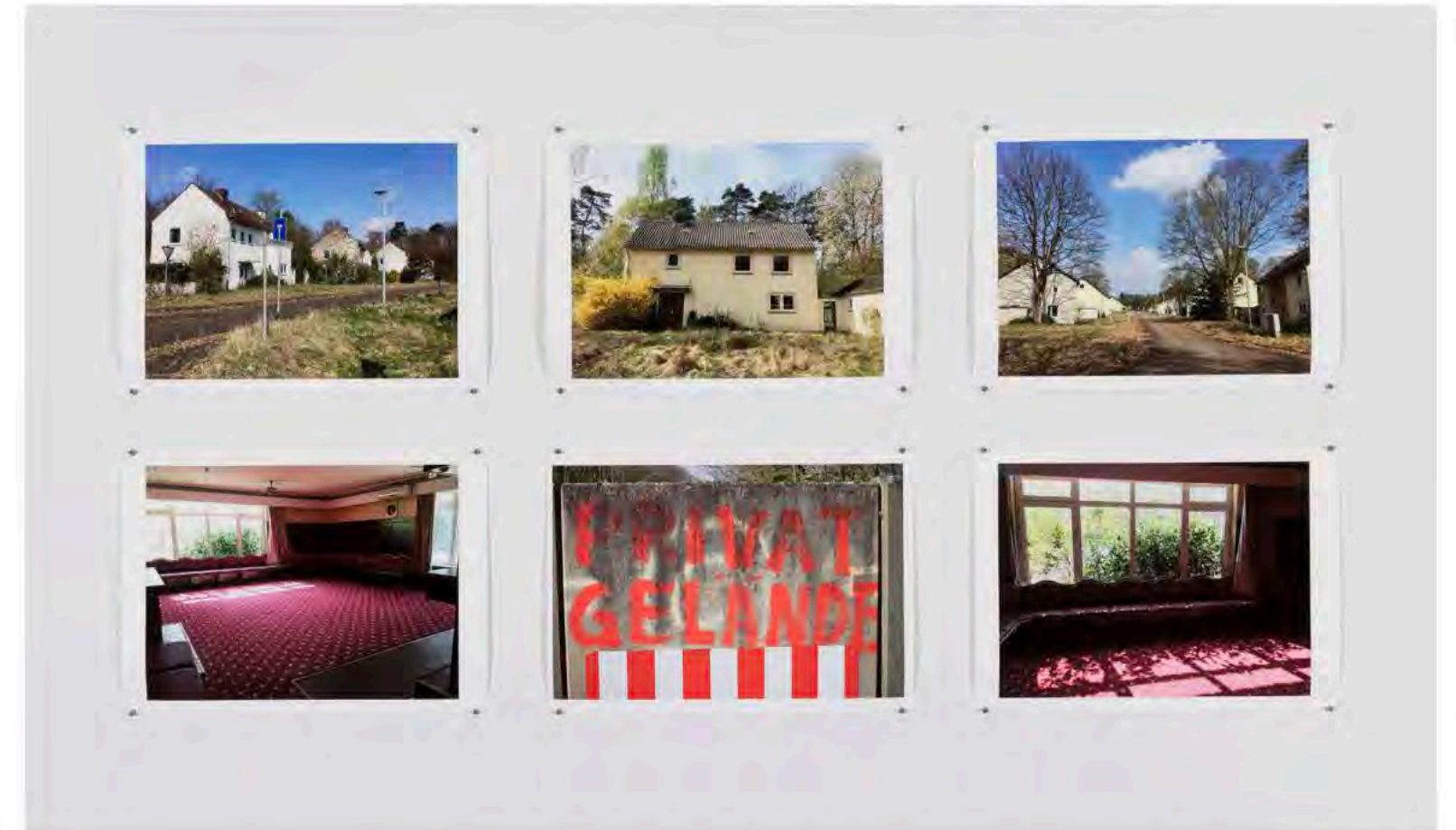
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Afterstorm (2019) is the latest in a decade of collaborative paintings, the 25th joint work in a long cycle by three artists who all have personal ties to war. Lyndell Brown and Charles Green, who have worked collaboratively since 1989, were appointed as Australia's official war artists in 2007. Lyndell was the first Australian woman to work in a war zone as an official war artist. The pair visited military installations and bases throughout the Middle East, including Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf, and the two artists photographed in great detail their experience of Australian troops and the environments in which they operated. Jon Cattapan worked alongside peacekeeping forces in Timor-Leste in 2008–09. In the years after that, the three explored Australia's involvement in wars and peacekeeping since Vietnam, visiting battle sites and bases together, assembling an archive of photographs, notes and scribbled drawings upon which all three artists worked. Their first response back in the early 2010s was to imagine they were seeing entropy in action as the so-called natural world moved back.

Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green
Afterstorm 2019
 synthetic polymer paint and oil on digital photograph on canvas
 2 panels, 140 x 386 cm overall
 The University of Melbourne Art Collection



The ability for nature to reclaim such places—to turn wreckage into gardens—had fascinated and inspired many artists, not least the fourth artist with whom the three now collaborated: British painter Paul Gough, who made photographs of mothballed NATO army bases in Germany, of geometrically neat but obsolescent buildings slowly deteriorating. His sharply focused, matter-of-fact but at the same time weirdly exotic streetscapes and interiors deliberately updated the New Objectivity that had flourished in German photography during the Weimar Republic. They were the keystone works that led to the four artists collaborating on a large wall installation made of precisely arranged fragments covered in almost transparent, specially woven Indian silk from Chanderi: *Turbulence, Conflict and the Garden of Remediation* (2019; pages 12–13) in the Domain House Gallery at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne.

Paul Gough
BAOR Quarter Married Men's 2017
 inkjet prints
 6 parts, each 42 x 59.4 cm
 Collection of the artist



Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green
Pierrot (Sarbi) 2014
 oil and synthetic polymer paint on linen
 185 x 250 cm
 Collection of the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne

PREVIOUS:

Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green and Paul Gough
Turbulence, Conflict and the Garden of Remediation 2019
 handmade Chanderi silk stretched over oil and synthetic polymer paint,
 gouache, pastel, watercolour, coloured ballpoint and fibre-tipped pens,
 pencil on paper, found objects, gelatin silver photographs,
 Polaroid photographs, Type C and Cibachrome photographs
 250 x 300 cm

Let's move backwards, however. In 2014, Cattapan, Brown and Green completed *Pierrot (Sarbi)*, which is now in the permanent collection of the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. Based on a photograph shot at a forward operating base in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan, it's one of the three artists' most complex collaborative images from that phase of their work together. It self-consciously channelled the most iconic portrait from previous Australian war artist commissions—George Lambert's *A Sergeant of the Light Horse* (1920). They changed Lambert's Sergeant into a handler with his sniffer dog. His arm cradles the eager hound but his gaze is elsewhere. The real subject of the painting is the bomb-sniffer dog Sabi, trained to hunt for improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The dog is a fanatical retriever and her expression is befittingly theatrical and extraordinarily attentive to the viewer. Shortly after Green and Brown took Sabi's photograph she vanished, lost in an ambush out in Taliban country, reappearing 14 months later in a village where an American soldier noticed an Australian dog with a local villager and brought her in. She became a delighted media star overnight.

And if the two—the man and his dog—posed for the camera in the dirt-and-rock setting of a dusty mountain base, in the painting they are bathed in clusters of luminous dots against a cascading backdrop of orange–green. The most eloquent explanation of the dichotomy between the handler's absorption and the dog's theatricality is Michael Fried's *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (1980). Personal absence and misplaced identity in art had been explored in Denis Diderot's long 1767 essays on landscape painter Claude-Joseph Vernet. In the celebrated Salon of 1767, Diderot imagined himself stepping into and taking country walks in Vernet's landscapes. To extrapolate from Michael Fried's elaboration on Diderot's theories, this imagining was prompted by Diderot's proposal that the spectator of a painting must be free and active, not just a passive consumer, and conversely that the painting itself should seem to be an impassive object in nature and not appear to be asking to be looked at. Diderot was arguing for two ideas: the beholder has an active role in the work of art and the work of art can be a place in which the artist or the viewer could 'go for a walk', mentally moving around within the picture-space. Fried also observed that 'the fundamental question addressed by Diderot in his Salons and related texts concerned the conditions that had to be fulfilled in order for the art of painting successfully to persuade its audience of the truthfulness of its representations'. The resulting artistic preference for the painter's self-effacement and depersonalisation represented a departure from previous Rococo ideas of theatrical self-presentation and the spectator's appreciation of such theatricality.



Mental travel was part of the process of dissociation in a special case of absorption—the pastoral—in which the disembodied spectator became a visually active phantom participant in the work itself. According to Fried, the risk of the overtly theatrical was the failure to convince the beholder of the reality of the illusion presented on the pictorial surface. The artist, though, could systematically negate the element of theatre through the representation of profound self-absorption, as in Chardin’s paintings of boys intently building houses of cards or blowing bubbles. Fried’s explanation of Diderot provides a conceptual model for understanding artistic self-representation where the attributes of a declamatory, assertive artistic self are apparently absent, and it provided the three artists a model through which to understand how to paint *Pierrot (Sabi)* and then *Scatter 2 (Santa Cruz)* in 2014.

For *Afterstorm*’s other precursor was painted the same year: *Scatter 2*, now in the permanent collection of the University of Queensland Museum of Art. A very large painting like *Afterstorm*, it depicted Dili’s Santa Cruz cemetery in Timor-Leste, the site of an infamous massacre of pro-independence demonstrators by Indonesian soldiers during their horrific occupation of East Timor; with its tight perspectives, the graveyard resembles a miniature city. But unlike *Scatter 2*, which began like *Pierrot (Sabi)* with a photograph and which presents a moment, *Afterstorm* started from a mural-sized scrapbook of images arranged across the studio wall forming an atlas of 100 years of conflict that Brown and Green then gradually photographed with their large camera in several frames.

Master-printer Chris Pennings then combined and stitched together the photographs into two new works: first, he printed their wall of images onto two large canvases across which Cattapan, Green and Brown painted freely, much as Cattapan had enveloped Brown and Green’s Santa Cruz cemetery view in a web of crimson lines. This became *Afterstorm*. For *Afterstorm*, Cattapan first covered both sections of the diptych in a net of green and white lines across the painting that captures and defines the underlying collage with a propulsive force that feels almost cinematic. A panorama, trees, night-time: hold onto your hats and think back to his green-toned night vision photographs from Dili on patrol in 2008.

Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown / Charles Green

Afterstorm 2019 (detail)

synthetic polymer paint and oil on digital photograph on canvas

The University of Melbourne Art Collection

PREVIOUS:

Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown / Charles Green

Scatter 2 (Santa Cruz) 2014

oil and synthetic polymer paint on linen

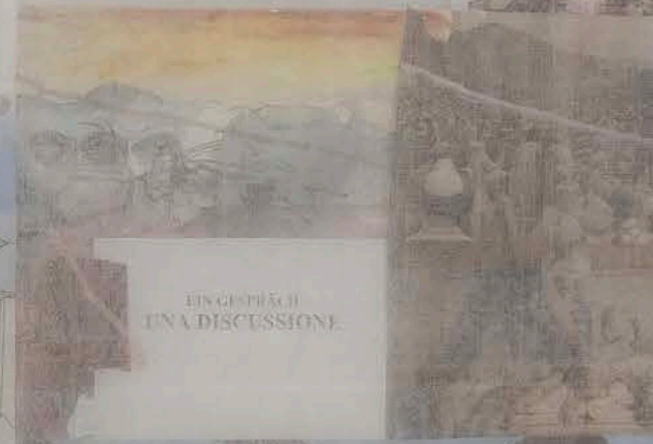
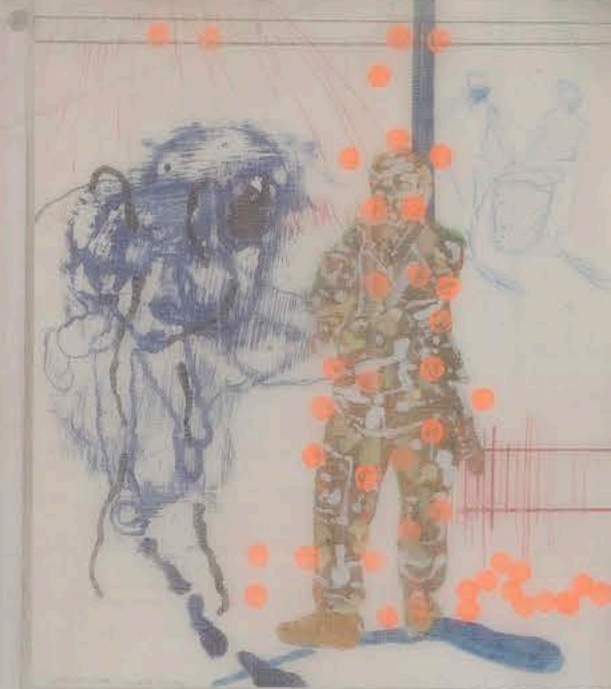
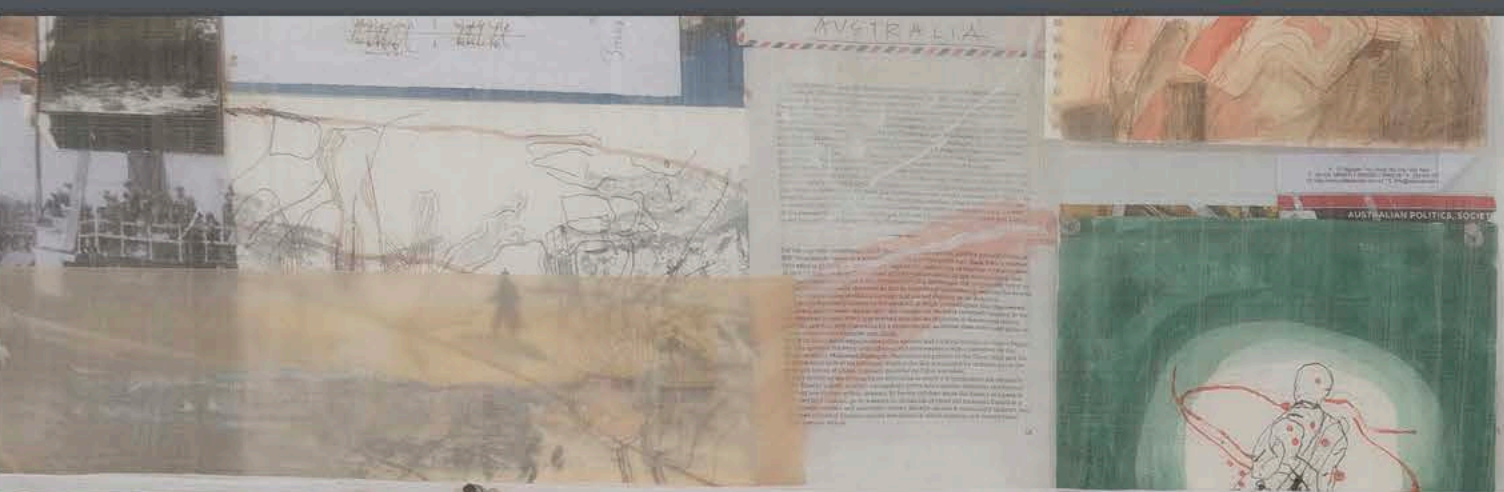
185 x 250 cm

Collection of the University of Queensland

Remediation • Charles Green

18







Jon Cattapan
Night Vision, Gleno #1 2008
digital colour photograph
archival inkjet print on rag paper
127 x 186 cm
edition of 50

But though Cattapan's image was a documentary photograph from a potentially violent peace-keeping zone, it was serene and counter-intuitively tranquil, like *Afterstorm* 10 years later. And *Afterstorm* was something more: it told a story about how images circulated and clustered in a bitterly postnational world.

So how does an artist—or, here, three working as one artist—jump from depicting one moment (*Scatter* or *Pierrot*) to depicting many at once (in *Afterstorm*)? The Apollo 11 moon landing shimmered across the globe on flickering televisions at the pinnacle of modernity. Fifty years ago, if you had told us that America would turn its back on the rest of the world and we would all need to start to navigate the future without the US, we'd never have believed you. The stumbling astronaut in the painting—like the fully kitted and presumably very hot Australian trooper in Cattapan's night photograph from Timor-Leste—is enmeshed in a web of pathos, in a restless archive. Brown and Green had carefully laid out images next to each other on large tables like a deck of reluctant tarot cards, regardless of media: the cards were snapped up onto the wall and a virtual meta-cinema of flickering figures emerged, in which individual artists and works disappeared, replaced by a combinatory landscape of repeated gestures, decay and entropy. Cattapan connected the dots. You see the method clearly in a detail from the Royal Botanic Gardens installation.

Let's start with the dots: the serpentine meanderings cut across a photograph of Sana'a, the Yemeni capital, taken at night just as that catastrophic war started: the highway of conflicts that connect decades before 9/11 to now. No sweet landscape, this. We're definitely disoriented. Along the top of the painting, Himalayan wildflowers from Almora, where the global counter-culture converged in the 1960s, and Dylan and Ginsberg and Leary, all paying unlikely and ungainly spiritual homage to mystic German expatriate Tibetan monk Lama Govinda, waving gently. But a gusting winter wind is sweeping that veil aside, and it's blowing a gale over the peaks of the Grampians in western Victoria.

NEXT:
Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green and Paul Gough
Turbulence, Conflict and the Garden of Remediation 2019 (detail)
handmade Chanderi silk stretched over oil and synthetic polymer paint,
gouache, pastel, watercolour, coloured ballpoint and fibre-tipped pens,
pencil on paper, found objects, gelatin silver photographs,
Polaroid photographs, Type C and Cibachrome photographs
250 x 300 cm



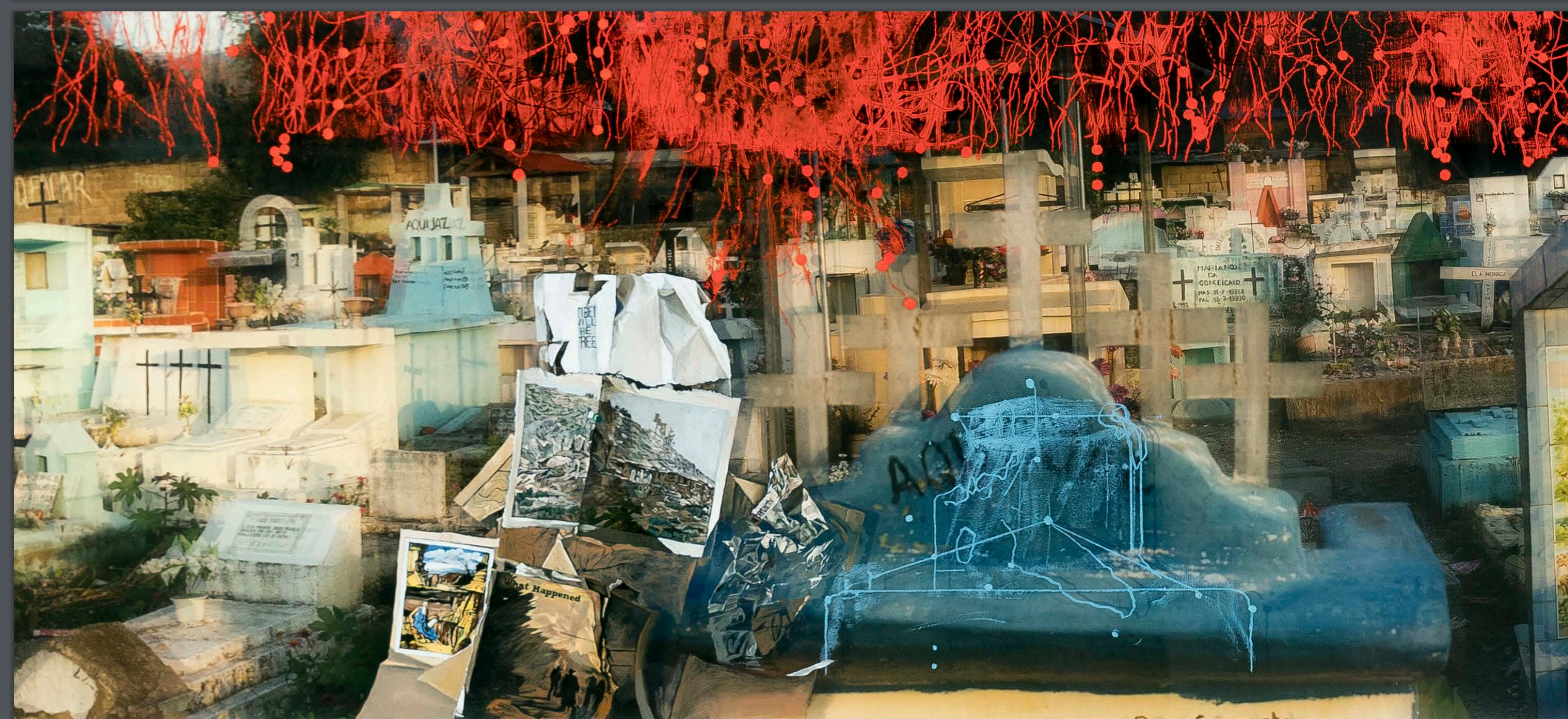
Apart from registering its effects on the landscape, you see the gust's sheer affect in a swathe of red, one moment a barcode, in another instant a Barnett Newman zip that loops you back to the astronaut and the 1960s. The red zip does its job spectacularly, like Gough's red-striped road barriers in *Turbulence* (pages 22–23). It defines *Afterstorm*'s spatial structure while simultaneously dividing and uniting the two separate parts of the diptych. This red zip drips down, gripping the windswept Grampians with bloody force, continuing its path over photographs of crumpled letters and an envelope, a letter to Green from Georges Didi-Huberman, the French philosopher of phantasmic atlases and *l'image survivante*. The gusting wind has bent the papers out of shape and jammed them right up against the Castlemaine forest.

Meanwhile, that stumbling astronaut is leaning into an abyss, testing the depths with his stick. Moving on, one foot in front of the other. His moonscape is little more than an interregnum: on the right, across an orange-ochre cross, facing into the same abyss, is a young Australian soldier (Green's uncle) repairing a fence in Palestine in 1940, helped by two young locals. We know he's at least lucky because he's not dead; he'd just retrieved a precious Leica camera from an enemy corpse on a battlefield and, a gifted amateur photographer, would go on to make memorable images during World War II across present-day Lebanon, Syria and Israel and then up through PNG and across present-day Indonesia. He's equably working with these young boys, he's the only one with a clearly visible face and yet we have hardly more insight into his inner life than into that of the astronaut on the left. This painting is clearly not a collection of portraits or landscape studies.

Look closely at the shape in between: an orange-dot-edged cross, inside of which are loosely described ship shapes painted from photographs rotated 90 degrees, as if the ships had been tossed into the air and upended. They are the ocean liners converted into troop carriers that shipped young Australians across the world to fight in Europe and the Middle East in 1940 and the photographer was that young man at the right mending the wire fence in Palestine. It hardly matters to posterity who the photographer is but he's going to go everywhere, each place adding to his archive of black-and-white photographs: lucky accidents, gorgeous detail, the 10,000 catastrophes of 100 years of wars. It all means nothing to the western Victorian mountains with Mount William up top, somewhere on the horizon, to the swaying subalpine Himalayan flowers, to the pine trees of 1940 Aleppo—that once deeply magical Syrian city—in the painting of a photograph on the left-hand side of *Afterstorm*. Trees and gardens appear everywhere in this panoramic painting. They are front and centre, on maps and itineraries, and in a trompe l'oeil painting of a fold-out panorama of the Vale of Kashmir copied from a 19th-century travel journal.

Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green
Afterstorm 2019 (detail)

synthetic polymer paint and oil on digital photograph on canvas
 The University of Melbourne Art Collection



Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green
Scatter 2 (Santa Cruz) 2016 (detail)
synthetic polymer paint and oil on digital photograph on DuraClear film on Perspex
127 x 186 cm (frame)

That is a clue to *Afterstorm*'s intention: gardens are postnational and tied to war, even in Australia. War never failed to mark art, but by the end of World War I in 1918 the distinct genre of official war art clearly emerged. Governments wished to commemorate national experiences of war; artists were not only commissioned to depict warfare and heroes, but also encouraged to re-make (or re-picture) the symbols and narratives of war, sometimes in highly experimental ways, especially in Canada and the UK. War art became widely and publicly linked with national identity.

Because war art is a slippery concept, we distinguish between War Art and war art. War Art, which emerged during World War I, is art officially commissioned to commemorate a nation's experience of war, often nationalist and self-congratulatory but also often soul-searching, and all three artists have been incorporated into its heritage, for better or worse. This is a subset of the vaster field of war art. Made across the globe, it takes the experience of war as its subject, is mostly not commissioned and often scathing about the artists' own nations, sometimes with humanitarian intentions. So, war art, not War Art, really requires transnational—we shall call this postnational—storytelling. World authorities within art history prefer a view that either privileges the narrow perspective of the acknowledged centres of the global art market or consists of proud but brittle national histories bound up in reaction to those centres. We must emphasise that the idea of the postnational definitely does not presume we are seeing any diminution of national borders nor any move away from often xenophobic nation states; further, it refutes the idea of globalised art and insists on a tightly framed narrative.

What this does mean? National boundaries don't explain art-making and attention must be paid to exogenous factors: circumstances changing art rather than, as many optimistic, over-hopeful activist critics claim, art changing circumstances. This is definitely not a celebration of regionalism, nor in any way to be confused with an over-worn interest in artists depicting the countryside, or a celebration of landscape or place or gardens. But it is to say that a garden is an immensely charged motif that revolves around turbulence and inevitably, in Australia, on the place (or absence) of Aboriginal people.

Do you see, here, how almost everything is lost and found? And how sharply the landscape slopes up? The Australian countryside and its plants and its inhabitants are all folded onto each other towards Mount William beneath the stormy sky, which sits at the composition's apex, reassuring us that we are definitely part of Western landscape paintings' long tradition of manipulating where near and far are, and playing games with what is up and what is down. The anti-perspectival technique dates back to American Pop artist Robert Rauschenberg's famous flatbed space with which he wove the disparate elements of his late-1960s combines, created in the period of the NASA space missions of which the Apollo 11 moon landing was the culmination. *Afterstorm* updates Rauschenberg's mixing of perspectives and spaces along with his fastidious allegory, though even pacifist Rauschenberg gave the market what it wanted: images of an empire triumphant in war.

But by 2019 the end of a period was already looming. With COVID-19 in January 2020, the world charged into another age. The idea that we had reached the end of a period of immense growth in contemporary art, widely discussed across professional media and in Green's own 2016 book on biennials, was thrown into stark relief by the pandemic. Even before January 2020 the impacts of climate change, racial injustice and social inequality provoked general consternation and intense questioning across the global art world. But with the impact of COVID-19, it became clear that culture was now frontally impacted by several wars at once. There were already signs: the commercial gallery system shaping so many artists' experiences was hollowed out after the Global Financial Crisis of 2008.

Despite vast displays of wealth at the tiny top end of the international art world, and despite the efflorescence of artist initiatives and art centres at the base of the food chain, artists' lives (and the lives of workers in music and performing arts) became more precarious and casualised, the so-called precariat. Despite decades of effort by particular art historians and curators to recognise diverse groups, minorities and women, the rage of Black Lives Matter and #MeToo showed that too little had changed across the art world. But the vast, apparently prosperous international art system stuttered on until the 2020 pandemic and is now gone.

In *Scatter 2 (Santa Cruz)* (2016), a painting on transparent film on Perspex of dusk at the Dili cemetery, a moving mountain of scarlet lines hovers against a darkening sky just above all the graves, casting shadows onto the dizzying sharp perspectives of a miniature city of crosses and tombstones, saturated late-afternoon colour, calligraphic abstract diagrams, a cascade of press clippings and postcards at left. Fly up, swoop right, sweep down. You hold on to what you can in this explosion of force.

You wanted to see a vision of memory, a memorial, but this painted photograph shows you are in the presence of the opposite: a decaying but much-loved graveyard in the shadow of the abruptly rising coastal mountains; you are surrounded by images in tempestuous motion. *Afterstorm* was painted a mere couple of years later, capturing just a little of the coming epochal shift, just before the great bushfires and then the pandemic. As you already saw, it is a compendium of more than 100 images, a painting underpinned by photography that was in turn nourished by the printmaking sidelined by art history. The wind has blown from the digital printer to an artist's mid-suburban studio, then up the Calder Freeway to central Victoria and finally into the Royal Botanic Gardens. You already knew, in 2007 in a chopper above the mountainous desert during a black, starless night over Afghanistan, how quickly and thoroughly an image's meaning can change, mountains fade into night, and art ends up made in darkness.

Contributors

Gary P. Anderson

Gary P. Anderson is a Melbourne-based artist and biomedical scientist specialising in lung pharmacology and immunology. He holds an MFA in visual art from the Victorian College of the Arts. He is founding Director of the Lung Health Research Centre at the University of Melbourne and has authored more than 200 research papers. He focuses on conditions where current treatment is ineffective, especially on discovering molecular mechanisms in severe asthma, COPD, lung cancer and fibrosis. His work has contributed to the discovery and development of four medicines used worldwide, with two further medicines in advanced clinical trials. He conceived the endotype concept of disease. He was awarded the Research Medal of the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ) in 2006 and was elected a fellow in 2014 (FThorSoc). In 2015 he was elected a fellow of the European Respiratory Society (ERS) and in 2018 of the American Thoracic Society (ATSF). In 2018 he received the ERS President's Award for his contribution to lung research. His art practice often deals with transience, impermanence and complexity.

Lisa Beaven

Dr Lisa Beaven is Senior Lecturer in art history and visual culture at La Trobe University, Australia. In 2014–18 she was a postdoctoral research fellow at the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions at the University of Melbourne. Her research interests are concentrated on 17th-century Italian art patronage and collecting, digital mapping, religious emotion and the reception of devotional art in early modern Italy. She has contributed to books such as *Possessions of a Cardinal: Politics, Piety and Art* (Penn State University Press, 2010), *The Early Modern Villa* (Wilanów Palace Museum, 2017), *The Routledge History of Emotions in Europe: 1100–1700* (2019) and *The Early Modern Companion to Rome* (Brill, 2019). Her book *An Ardent Patron: Cardinal Camillo Massimo and his Artistic and Antiquarian Circle: Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin and Diego Velazquez* was published by Paul Holberton Press, London, and CEEH, Madrid, in 2010, and she is co-editor (with Angela Ndalians) of *Emotion and the Seduction of the Senses, Baroque to Neo-Baroque* (Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2018).

Jon Cattapan

Jon Cattapan is Honorary Professorial Fellow, Victorian College of the Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne. From 2017 to 2020 he was the VCA's director. Cattapan is a widely exhibited and significant Australian artist who began his exhibiting career in 1978. His works are held in many Australian state, regional and university museums, and represented in public collections in the UK and South Korea. In 2008 he became Australia's 63rd official war artist and was deployed to Timor-Leste. Cattapan received the Bulgari Art Award through the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2013. With his academic research teams, he has also been awarded two Discovery Project



Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green
Scatter 2 (Santa Cruz) 2016 (detail)
synthetic polymer paint and oil on digital photograph on DuraClear film on Perspex
127 x 186 cm (frame)

Grants from the Australian Research Council. Cattapan's research interests deal primarily with ways of representing the topographies and narratives of urban societies. He has also long held a preoccupation for the way human beings negotiate territories and conflict.

Kate Daw

Kate Daw (1965–2020) was an artist, curator and head of VCA Art, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne. Daw's practice engaged personal memory, nostalgic recollection and female experience to explore issues of authorship, narrative and the creative process, continually moving between the spheres of domesticity and the workplace, the everyday and the imagined. Daw exhibited widely in Australia and internationally from 1992, with recent exhibitions at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne (2018), Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne (2018), Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney (2016) and the 19th Biennale of Sydney (2014). She was interested in involving other people in her art practice and worked on numerous collaborative projects with artists in India, Scotland and throughout Australia.

Wulan Dirgantoro

Dr Wulan Dirgantoro is a McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellow at the School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne. Her research interests are gender and feminism, as well as trauma and memory in Indonesian modern and contemporary art. Her publications include *Feminisms and Indonesian Contemporary Art: Defining Experiences* (Amsterdam University Press, 2017) and 'Aesthetics of Silence: Exploring Trauma in Indonesian Painting 1970–1980', in *Ambitious Alignment: New Histories of Southeast Asian Art* (Power Publications and National Gallery Singapore, 2018). She has also contributed to various art publications in Asia, Australia and the UK on Indonesian modern and contemporary art.

Richard J. Frankland

Richard J. Frankland is Associate Professor in Cross-Disciplinary Practice in the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne, and from 2015 to 2018 was the head of the VCA's Wilin Centre. He is a proud Gunditjmara Elder. In 1981 and again in 1983–86 Frankland joined the Australian Defence Forces. In 1988–91 he worked as a field officer for the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. He has written, directed and produced more than 50 video, documentary and film projects and has received a number of Australian Film Institute awards. *Harry's War* (1999), a film based on his uncle's service in World War II on the Kokoda Trail, was screened at the British War Memorial and was awarded the Jury Prize for Best Short Film at the Black Hollywood Film Festival in 2000, where he was also inducted into the Black Hollywood Hall of Fame. Frankland co-authored *Forever Business: A Framework for Maintaining and Restoring Cultural Safety in Aboriginal Victoria (Indigenous Law Bulletin, 2011)*. This report involved interviewing more than 131 people in six communities across Victoria. As a result, Frankland has now conducted some 700 workshops for community, government and business groups on lateral violence and cultural awareness, and these issues form his ongoing research interests.

Paul Gough

Professor Paul Gough is Vice-Chancellor at Arts University Bournemouth, UK. A painter, broadcaster and author, he has exhibited internationally and is represented in the permanent collection of the Imperial War Museum, London, the Canadian War Museum, Ottawa, and the National War Memorial, New Zealand. Along with leading roles in international higher education and global research assessment, his research into the representation of war and peace has been presented to audiences throughout the world. He has published nine books, including monographs on the British painter Stanley Spencer, Paul and John Nash, and several comprehensive studies of art from both world wars. He worked in television for 10 years and is currently writing his second book about the street artist Banksy.

Charles Green

Charles Green is Professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Melbourne in the Art History Department, in the School of Culture and Communication. He has written *Peripheral Vision: Contemporary Australian Art 1970–94* (Craftsman House, 1995), *The Third Hand: Artist Collaborations from Conceptualism to Postmodernism* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001) and (with Anthony Gardner) *Biennials, Triennials, and documenta* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016). He was Australian correspondent for *Artforum* for many years. He is also an artist: Lyndell Brown and Charles Green have worked together as one artist since 1989. The pair was Australia's official war artist in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2007–08.

Tessa Laird

Tessa Laird is an artist and writer, and Lecturer in Critical and Theoretical Studies at VCA Art, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne. She has been a respected art critic in Aotearoa New Zealand since the 1990s, writing for numerous journals, magazines, catalogues and monographs, and editing *Monica Reviews Art*, *LOG Illustrated* and, more recently, *Art + Australia* online (2017–19) and the *Multinaturalism* special issue of the *Art + Australia* journal. Her speculative inquiry into colour, *A Rainbow Reader*, was published by Clouds in 2013, and her cultural history of bats was published in 2018 as part of Reaktion's *Animal* series. She is currently working on a book about animal aesthetics in experimental film.

Rebecca Mayo

Rebecca Mayo is Lecturer in Printmedia and Drawing in the School of Art (t) Design, Australian National University. She was awarded her doctorate 'Labours of Care: Art Practice and Urban Ecological Restoration' in 2019. Her recent exhibitions include *Open House: 3rd Tamworth Textile Triennial* (2019), Local Colour, UNSW Galleries, University of Sydney (2018) and *Habitus*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne (2017). Her art practice is concerned with human–plant relations, a subject she explores through the materiality of plant dye, walking, ecological restoration and print. Her methodology is underpinned by ethics and practices of care.

Chris McAuliffe

Professor Chris McAuliffe holds the Sir William Dobell Chair at the Centre for Art History and Art Theory, Australian National University, and is a widely published critic and art historian. From 2000 to 2013 he was the director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne. His curated exhibitions include *Robert Smithson: Time Crystals*, University of Queensland Art Museum/Monash University Museum of Art (2018) and *America: Painting a Nation*, Art Gallery of New South Wales (2013). His research interests include 19th- and 20th-century art (Australia and America), with a focus on earthworks (Robert Smithson), abstract expressionism (Jackson Pollock), art and sport, and art and rock music. He has published extensively on Australian art, including monographs on Linda Marrinon (2007) and Jon Cattapan (2008).

Kit Messham-Muir

Professor Kit Messham-Muir, Curtin University, is an art theorist based in Perth, Western Australia. Since the 1990s, his research has examined aspects of conflict in relation to contemporary art and visual culture. Messham-Muir has taught art theory and museology at universities in Australia and Hong Kong, and won multiple awards for teaching, including an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning in 2011. He publishes frequently in both peer-reviewed journals and the popular press and is the author of *Double War: Shaun Gladwell, Visual Culture and the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Thames and Hudson, 2015). He is currently lead investigator on 'Art in Conflict', a three-year Australia Research Council Linkage Project with the Australian War Memorial.

Jennifer Milam

Professor Jennifer Milam is currently Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic Excellence) at the University of Newcastle. She is an art historian with interests in garden design and philosophical thought during the Enlightenment. Her research has been supported by an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship.

Micaela Sahhar

Micaela Sahhar is Lecturer in History of Ideas, at Trinity College, University of Melbourne. She has published poetry and commentary on the question of Palestine in a range of Australian journals, including *Southerly*, *Arena* and *Overland*. In addition, her scholarly research has been published in edited books and journals on the subjects of settler-identities, settler-state treatment of its others and contemporary resistance strategies in Palestine. Her interests include narrative formation and appropriation, identity and indigeneity, and questions of resistance in settler-colonial contexts, and she is currently working in both creative and scholarly mediums with these issues.

Judy Watson

Judy Watson is a Brisbane-based Indigenous artist whose matrilineal family is from Waanyi country in north-west Queensland. Watson engages with site, collections and archives, and collective memory to reveal the impact of colonial history and discrimination against Aboriginal people, and to celebrate the strength of Aboriginal cultural practice. Working across painting, printmaking, artist books, drawing, video, sculpture and public art, she has exhibited extensively in Australia and overseas.

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