CHAPTER FIVE

The War at Home

Charles Green

IMAGE 5.1 *Scatter 2 (Santa Cruz)*, 2016, by Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green. Acrylic and oil on digital photograph on Duraclear film on Perspex, framed, 87 × 290 cm. © Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green 2016. Courtesy Station Gallery and ARC One.

This essay is written from the idiosyncratic perspective of an artist: a painter and photographer, working in a life-long artist collaboration with Lyndell Brown. In addition, we make art in a decade-long collaboration with painter Jon Cattapan. Together, we three have been Australian official war artists for the Australian War Memorial (AWM): Cattapan with peacekeepers in Timor-Leste during 2008, and Brown and myself in Iraq and Afghanistan during the War on Terror in 2007. The subject of this essay, which aims partly to capture the gravitational pull of this most intricate subject – contemporary war art – upon our practice over the years after 2007, will be one of our recent three-artist paintings. The essay also reflects on the perspective we occupy – our particular voice – as postcolonial authors, which is also a speaking position I have written about since my first book, *Peripheral Vision* (1996), the first history of Australian postmodern art.[1] We explored the dark edges of that subjectivity all through the 1990s in large paintings that placed fragmented images from art history within aerial views

of contemporary cities, ports and airports – scenes of globalization – in virtuoso-painted trompe l'oeil (hyper-illusionistic, highly skilled hyper-realist painting), exploring the moral and ethical limitations of then-dominant postmodernism. We sought in art the widely accepted understanding that white Australia bears responsibility for the violence of colonization, as I wrote in *Peripheral Vision*, and we searched for the limits of the proliferating globalization of Western culture by inventing 'occidentalist' images from the method of the body tattoo, and superimposing images of journeying on top of images taken from the history of oil painting.[2] All this became intensely relevant to our experience of contemporary war art.

I will move backwards and forwards in time from one particular work of contemporary war art, *Scatter 2 (Santa Cruz)*, 2016, in the form of personal recollection, since this essay is autobiographical rather than scholarly. Within the present volume, it sits in the section that answers through artist-centred perspectives the question: What is contemporary war art? These answers may be radically different in discursive form, frankness and artistic licence from the volume's art historical, scholarly contributions. At the same time, to avoid the impression of duplicating the many self-presentations and talks an artist usually gives, I should explain that 'Scatter' is the third in a trilogy of essays. The first was a record of our first-hand experience as an official artist from the heart of the calamitous, misguided War on Terror.[3] The second was a wider reflection on participating in the lineage of war artists.[4] Here, in the third essay, I will meditate on the emphatic relevance of the postcolonial themes that formed the basis of the art we made up to the war artist commission, but which erupted once more from *Scatter 2*, 2016 onwards, as we shifted further and further away from the viewpoint we'd occupied so precariously as official artists. We remained indelibly affected by that experience. But by mid-2019, it would become increasingly clear that as Australian whitefella artists we must return to thinking about how to paint the wars at home that underlie the Australian present and, therefore, how to depict the colonizing contemporaneity of so-called postcolonial nation states.

IMAGE 5.2 *Santa Cruz Dusk 2*, 2018, by Lyndell Brown/Charles Green. Digital photograph on rag paper, edition of five, framed 87 × 290 cm. © Lyndell Brown/Charles Green 2018. Courtesy Station Gallery and ARC One.

A clear blue sky. Humid but not unbearable with the late-afternoon sea breeze. We're in a graveyard at the edge of Dili on the north coast of Timor-Leste, a tiny, independent nation situated way towards the east of the vast Indonesian archipelago; maybe you can sense we are in the tropics. The year is 2013, but it could be anytime between then and now. A year in the waning days of the contemporary, an era only just still ruled by the US. An era beset with that nation's endless wars. And from the north, this era is being swept aside with the force of a tempest. Images like this photograph of the graveyard in Dili are now called aftermath photography: ruins, massacre sites, battlefields. According to some cultural theorists, photographs of these subjects by artists like Simon Norfolk or Luc Delahaye depoliticize conflict through their beauty and their sublimity, betraying in the process, they say, a lack of political awareness. But we know that the sublime is not politically anodyne and, as Boris Groys perceptively observed, that momentous images emerging from modern conflicts articulate less a Kantian notion of the sublime, of Swiss mountains and sea tempests, but more the sublime at its origins in Edmund Burke's formulations, which capaciously included the savage, disruptive 'political sublime' of beheadings, tortures and disasters of war.[5]

But we jump ahead. We have a work of art to consider: *Scatter 2 (Santa Cruz)*, 2016, the fifth work in the second cycle of artistic collaboration between Lyndell Brown, Charles Green and Jon Cattapan. The image underlying this large (87 × 290 cm) work co-authored with Cattapan is a photograph of Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, the site of the infamous 1991 Timor-Leste massacre of students and demonstrators by the Indonesian military. An elongated panoramic photograph, it captures a moment. But only the gravity of eternity and the perspective of the Timorese themselves would befit a memorial adequate to the disasters of this war. Santa Cruz cemetery, gravestones, dusk: get ready.

The picture tells a story about the afterlife of war from the past into the present from a particularly limited perspective. For Santa Cruz cemetery is a dark star, the nadir of neo-colonialism. If you told the families of the young Timorese massacred by Indonesian troops on 12 November 1991 in this very spot that a few short years later Timor-Leste would be free, but that at the same time the Australian peacekeepers' own government would betray them, secretly swindle the new nation out of undersea oil and gas revenue, they might not have believed you.[6] Just as the Timorese students might not have predicted the vengeful devastation that the Indonesians would unleash across Timor-Leste in 1999 as they and their shadowy militias retreated across the border into West Timor ahead of peacekeeping forces that included Australian soldiers. Perhaps you think of Goya. A radiantly beautiful, mountainous country, Timor-Leste is a crossroads of history, a lot of it a dismal story of drab colonization and disastrous, multiple betrayals or fumbling mistakes by friends, most dismal of all, by ostensibly benevolent neighbours like Australia.

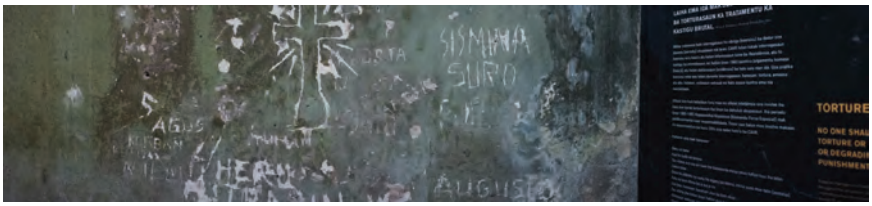

IMAGE 5.3 Wall, Centro Nacional Chega, Dili, 2013. Photo: Lyndell Brown/Charles Green.

A few kilometres west from here, and even a little further from the waterfront, is Centro Nacional Chega, a former Indonesian prison where terrible Indonesian human rights abuses took place between 1974 and 1999, recorded in prisoners' marks on walls. There, the work of the Commission for Reception, Truth & Reconciliation (CAVR) is presented in a series of photomontages mounted on panels, in uncredited assemblages that should sometime be reprinted and shown in a documenta or a biennal of contemporary art.

Meanwhile, let's start at the centre of our own painted photograph with the radiant, coloured headstone, a framed photograph of the image of Christ cradling a lamb in His arms, redeeming the world through self-sacrifice, yet calling everyone to account on the day of judgment. None of the political significance of the lamb would have been lost on Dili's Timorese mourners. Serpentine paths cut through the maze of tombs, in a sharp, one-point

IMAGE 5.4 Detail of *Scatter 2 (Santa Cruz)*, 2016, by Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green. Acrylic and oil on digital photograph on Duraclear film on Perspex, framed, 87 × 290 cm. © Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green 2016. Courtesy Station Gallery and ARC One.

perspective that connects us to the deep, dark space beyond. But there are no vast mausoleums or war memorials here. We're in a desperately poor country, one still impoverished by Indonesia's genocidal colonization. The burial plots are rammed up close together so the visitor steps from one narrow gap to another over fading flowers. Late afternoon sun has coloured the stones, and it is turning the maze of simple tombs into a city of spirits.

More than the many crosses, you see the force of history in the short epitaph – *aqui jaz* (here lies) – that precedes lists of names and dates on the tombs. We have stepped off the path and grip our camera on its tripod with both hands to frame the fading light. Our view is foreshortened and partial; we are looking at the ground and our peripheral vision recedes abruptly. The coming evening and its long shadows are bending everything out of shape, confusing near and far. There are a few local families and mothers walking slowly, but they are just beyond our viewpoint. What do we really know anyway? When we catch their glances, they smile gently but diffidently, also leaning into the past though they appear to us to be pressing on with the present and certainly without any particular desire to leave what they have come to do or pay us any more attention than we deserve, which is nothing. We know the dead here are at least moderately lucky, because they are not travelling alone. They are walking with friends, whereas the Indonesian military dead in the adjacent cemetery, just across the road, are having worse luck. Though their graves are immaculately tended by the Timorese and the grass is carefully clipped, there is no one to be seen there at all, no one visiting.

Scatter 2 puts war front and centre, but from the point of view of one-point perspective and deep recession. It is both aftermath photography and painting. We start with a panoramic photograph stitched together digitally from multiple photos we take at the scene, then our Melbourne master-printer, Chris Pennings, prints the file onto transparent duraclear film that he then mounts over Perspex. Light suffuses the image in a contemporary photographic update of stained glass that we delicately overpaint in oil and acrylic with images, both semi-abstract (at top, a bloody waterfall of red paint; right, the freely drawn tracery of memorial architecture over two foreground gravestones) and figurative (left, the intricate, detailed, painted pyramid of images). Across to the left and right of the Christ, one of

IMAGE 5.5 Ruined Ceiling, Arte Moris, Dili. Photo: Lyndell Brown/Charles Green.

us (Jon Cattapan) etches delicate geometric tracery in sky blue or pastel green across the tombstones. These are line drawings with blurred, bleeding edges and shadows. So far, we have hardly any more grasp on its meaning than anyone else. This photograph is becoming a painting and is certainly not a documentary study.

During the Indonesian occupation, Timorese were barred from public self-expression on pain of death. The country was almost totally closed. Extrajudicial killings and murders were astonishing in magnitude and frequency. In such a situation, all art is war art. Incredibly and perhaps farcically, the Indonesian occupiers established a National Museum at Comora, just outside Dili and not far from the airport, housed in an extraordinarily dramatic, ultra-modern building (think of Brasilia) now in a state of extreme ruin, as you can see. Do you note here, how the wrecked ceiling slopes up high, mimicking both the profile of Indigenous village houses and the soaring spaces of a cathedral? But it became until recently a cultural centre – Arte Moris (which means Living Art in Tetun, the language most Timorese speak) – created by young artist-squatters living and working without official permission in the museum's outbuildings. It was the only visual art centre in Timor-Leste. At Arte Moris, off and on, there were art classes, martial arts instructors, a drama troupe, a tattoo parlour and sprawling displays of paintings by mostly very young, substantially self-taught artists. The instructors were hungry for any assistance at all.

A large portion of the art was, as you would guess, semi-surrealist or inflected by the example of street art and graffiti. And some local techniques can be seen, too. Absolutely present – still contemporary – is the war waged

IMAGE 5.6 Installation view, exhibition, Arte Moris, Dili, 2013. Photo: Lyndell Brown/Charles Green.

upon these people. They lost almost everything in the genocide that the Indonesians unleashed; the militia even removed the wires and poles for electricity around the city as they left. Scorched earth, indeed! And how sharply and harshly this perspective pushes art world and art museum culture to one side. A new national museum? Where do you start? Where do you stand? In late 2021, the Timorese government forcibly evicted Arte Moris to make way for housing for veterans from the war for independence.[7] After a long fight that it seemed Arte Moris had won, paintings and easels and workshop equipment were dumped out onto the roadway outside. If I was to seek out contemporary war art on the Timor-Leste independence struggle, I might start with those artists, mostly born since independence, but then look for the Timorese who lived through that conflict and who themselves recorded those times. Australia's own war artists sit at the very edge of that conflict, maybe less qualified to sum it up but determined to think about their position in the long narrative of neo-colonial Western culture.

Back past Dili Airport to Santa Cruz cemetery, not yet a historic attraction for foreign visitors (there are almost none), the landscape of vivid gravestones is picturesquely magnetic, so much so, for such a notorious site, that we might confuse it for an Italian hill town seen from a humble retail drone. And that is a clue of our painting's melancholy. Its near-empty surf beaches aside and despite the unexpectedly short the flight from Darwin to Dili, Timor-Leste will remain a far distant outlier on Australia's map of complacent self-regard, marking many places along our national timeline of mistaken self-congratulation, reaching from 1975 with the Indonesian invasion (which Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's Australian government did not protest) to the present. And the tragedy of the cemetery at Santa Cruz and the ruined army bases, more than a day's difficult drive eastwards at the feet of the Mundo Perdido (Lost World) Mountains, the last redoubt of Fretilin fighters before a tide of international support turned towards them after the massacre at Santa Cruz, is an episode in the prolonged end of more than one colonial adventure, a little rock in the foaming tsunami of history. Darkness, behind the sharp perspective of the gravestones, sits at our composition's vanishing point, and we get finally to my uneasy point about an artist's

IMAGE 5.7 Ruined army base, Mundo Perdido Mountains, Timor-Leste, 2013. Photo: Lyndell Brown/Charles Green.

perspective drawn from the outside. A hallmark of European early modern art's luminous rationalism, Western perspective has more recently been a very different, shared signifier in contemporary art. It has come to mean irrational darkness, tragic conflict and war – the view from the heights. Think Julie Mehretu or Anselm Kiefer or Fabian Marcaccio or Thomas Hirschhorn or William Kentridge or Gerhard Richter or Hito Steyerl or John Akomfrah. We would have picked up on the recessive geometry of the cemetery even if it had not been under our noses in the warm, humid Dili dusk. And something else as well. Across the cycle of paintings made at the same time as *Scatter* 2, in the pyramid of paper and the line-drawn diagrams where we three employ the perspectival modifications common in Indian miniature painting that Brown and Green have studied during visits to India each year over more than three decades, and in which we were, all three, coached the year before by renowned Indian artists at a retreat in Jaipur, similar-sized figures or objects are in groups positioned along sightlines. Artists always import new knowledge, absorbing a perspective on ideas from examples that come, in turn, from art pointed to by other artists. I emphasize that this is what artists do, including the young Timorese at Arte Moris, sometimes with credit, often not, in a sometimes depressing landscape of ethical and moral rights.

Now look closely at *Scatter*'s stack of images at left, the next, densely overpainted part of the photograph: a sheaf of crumpled papers has been delicately arranged like a house of cards rising into the humid air. Newspaper cuttings, postcards, a map. Remember these? They were all common before

IMAGE 5.8 Detail of *Scatter 2 (Santa Cruz)*, 2016, by Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green. Acrylic and oil on digital photograph on Duraclear film on Perspex, framed, 87 × 290 cm. © Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green 2016. Courtesy Station Gallery and ARC One.

smartphones. We easily identify the left-hand fragment as a postcard of a painting by Venetian master Giovanni Bellini, *St Jerome Reading in the Wilderness*, 1480–5, in the collection of the National Gallery in London. Facing the saint on the right, part of a photograph by a famous war photographer of Gurkha soldiers being airlifted from a battlefield in Helmand province, Afghanistan, and a fragment of the headline, 'Whatever happened to the American empire?' It hardly matters that we don't see the full text: we already know the story that is unfolding. Gurkhas go everywhere in the West's imperial wars to clean up mess, each soldier a small part in a vast jigsaw of force: sudden deafening noises, long waiting, dust, the thousand natural hazards of modern war. Above them, a photograph of a Pakistan Army outpost on the border after it was attacked by the US Air Force (remember, as you do, Pakistan's duplicitous, mendacious harbouring of terrorists against its ostensible allies, ourselves). And finally, stacked right, an almost unrecognizable, crumpled-up newspaper clipping of Dr Muhamed Haneef, an Indian doctor working in a Queensland regional hospital, wrongly accused of terrorism by the populist, right-wing Australian government in 2007. War and its aftermath are spread across this painted paper pyramid and span our present-day postcolonial national settler story, the story that is sometimes called Australian art. One reason that the concept of the war artist has gained little traction in the art world is that, despite each conflict's universal and local urgency, each nation imagines its own national story. Even when subject to cosmopolitan revision, a nation's claim on war art proves remarkably resilient, crowding each work of war art's other characteristics; after all, the purpose of the Australian War Memorial's official artist commissions was first of all to record the nation's participation in war. Hence the current, deeply ironic situation in which the idea of war artist has no grip on the art world's imagination yet within the national canon it retains a key place. To make the same point differently, the sub-genre of war art has a life outside the normal critical mechanisms of the art world; we were stunned by the intense press attention to our AWM commission, humbled by the strength of the general public's feedback, especially from veterans and their families, and surprised by the works' longevity on repeated art museum display, especially by the fact that it was categorized within the genre of documentary.[8]

Here is, we think, the abiding relevance of our and others' Australian war artist commissions: acknowledging and showing the frame, by which I mean not the formalist frame of late modernism, but the philosophical frame – of the long, fraught, conflicted histories, networks and infrastructure underlying and supporting contemporary wars. We were revealing that frame when we painted *History Painting: Market, Tarin Kowt*, 2008, incorporating the ghosts of nineteenth-century Orientalist paintings of exotic Central Asia, and painting what, on first glance, given the tradition of history paintings in oils, looked like a large battle scene but which resolved upon inspection into an incongruous mix of the exotic and utterly contemporary. Above all, at

IMAGE 5.9 *History Painting: Market, Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 2008, by Lyndell Brown and Charles Green. Oil on linen, 155 × 155 cm. Australian War Memorial Collection © Lyndell Brown/Charles Green 2008. Courtesy the Australian War Memorial.

the painting's centre, is a documentary film: around the armed soldiers in camouflage, local traders, military vehicles; and, beyond, the vast Taliban-controlled mountains of central Afghanistan's Oruzgan province, into which we had flown. Ben Quilty was doing the same with his charismatic, agonized portraits of nude veterans, painted in his studio.

Australian Indigenous artists not far away, just across the Timor Sea, fifty years before, were weaving their own panoramic heritage together into a new, momentous perspective in response to endless wars at home, which were just as vicious. This is the point at which our story takes a different turn. In mid-2019, Ian McLean and I convened a week's intensive, hosted by Baku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre and Mr Wanambi, a renowned

IMAGE 5.10 & 5.11 Baku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre, Yirrkala, 2013; research colloquium session, Yirrkala, 2013. Photos: Lyndell Brown/Charles Green.

traditional Yolngu artist, at Yirrkala for an eighteen-researcher international colloquium. Before us was a great synthesis of resistance to colonization into art.

War had shaped the emergence of contemporary art, but I have made the point that war in art is relegated to a minor art genre (war art). Further, Australians will eventually acknowledge that war occurs not just at a great distance in the past, at Gallipoli or the Western Front, but in the frontier wars and in our own sad histories with asylum seekers and refugees.[9] But this may require the mediation of art to impact on Australian society, such is the impact upon Australian culture of art's iconic vividness. And if anybody has experienced war, it is Indigenous people, who have experienced 200 years of continuous violence, conflict and war at the hands of our settler society and yet who have continually chosen to communicate with our society through visual art. More than this: they show us that the separation between art and the judgement of law is without substance, not just for Yolngu but for us all – and this is crucial.[10]

Central at Yirrkala in the Baku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre, with its own, specially built chapel, is a huge but deliberately rarely reproduced (and then only in grainy old black and white) diptych, *Yirrkala Church Panel – Dhuwa* (1963), and *Yirrkala Church Panel – Yirritja* (1963), painted by great artists

who lived across northeast Arnhem Land. It is a major statement of Yolngu resolve, given they had successfully resisted displacement from their homeland; however, they were forced to live with disadvantage and the despoiling of bauxite mining in the heart of their lands. The *Church Panels* were a manifesto for mediating the new, neo-colonial era that was now upon them.

Yolngu artists have a long-standing desire to make collective visual statements that answer the legal question of their sovereignty as a people. Scholars and writers in ever-widening circles have since grasped at the ramifications. Howard Morphy first explained that the artists 'decided how they would use their art in communicating with outsiders and how their sacred law could be presented in public contexts'.[11] After the *Church Panels* followed the more famous Yirrkala petitions (a smaller version of the *Church Panels*), which curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev introduced to the yet wider world, hailing them as the world's first great activist art when she exhibited them in the 2015 Istanbul Biennial.[12] And, in Terry Smith's comprehensive narration of their creation, the Yirrkala *Church Panels* were made in a cross-cultural gesture of political and legal significance, where the clans of the region pooled their knowledge to work together for the first time on a single, shared, collaborative work of art.[13] The collaboration between Yolngu elders is clear but seamless; each painted their ancestral story, but they fit together perfectly.

The two *Church Panels* are the most important paintings ever made in Australia. This is not just because they are comparable in power and imagination to anything painted in the world at that time, but because they proposed a future from the experience of war that concepts like decolonial and postnational are only now in the process of describing. What do I mean? The *Panels* inaugurated a global period of transition from the period of modernism to contemporaneity. We need to push the inception of the period of contemporary art back a few years earlier from the dates we are accustomed to, so circa 1968 becomes 1962–3. The question immediately arises: had other art about sovereignty and generosity amidst war appeared, also waiting to be acknowledged? Could those responses to war underpin a vast, ground-up reformulation of the idea of war and contemporary crises for the rest of us, since we too now experience vast, dangerous emergencies – wars at home – in the form of climate change, pandemics and the closing of borders?

Completely redefining contemporary war art in this way involves two relatively new concepts. I must emphasize that the first concept – the postnational, because national boundaries do not help understand art – does not presume any diminution of national borders nor any move away from stubbornly xenophobic nation states.[14] The second concept – to decolonize, the imperative felt by First Nations peoples and those attempting to create a more diverse and equal art world – is increasingly used to explain what artists and writers do when they challenge colonizing cultures; the

word appeared alongside the idea of the postcolonial.[15] All three concepts refute the vague, easy idea of increasingly globalized art, a favourite reflex of biennial curators in the early 2000s. For contemporary war art, attention must instead be paid to specific, exogenous factors, because war has changed art rather than, as many ever-hopeful critics claim, because art has ameliorated war. These are crucial coordinates for a thorough rethink of contemporary war art. The experience of war had continually motivated the production and justification of culture in adaptation to both exogenous and endogenous crisis – not by the diffusion of influence within a hermetic and gender-oblivious world of art. Within a decolonized and postnational model, violent conflict did not always result in exodus of the displaced, but saw resistance, followed by the assertion of sovereignty, judgement and even, perhaps after all that, clemency. All this was deliberately communicated by colonized people in the realm of culture and art without the need for the reportage of visiting war artists, but we visitors would gain an irreplaceable and unique perspective on the betrayals and violence of our own culture across generations.

We then arrive at the wars at home, unfolding within the glum, divisive, disruptive logic that wars at home usually exhibit. We know that the notion of a war at home is not new. We have acknowledged that we need look no further than First Nations Australians enduring and surviving long struggles beginning with invasion and then the frontier wars. And in Australia, conflict was clearly renewed with the federal government's outright refusal of the nation's peak Indigenous elders' *Uluru Statement from the Heart* (2017).[16] And then there is the equally large conflict of climate warming born out of a savage war on nature; we all saw fires ravage Australia and the US as 2020 started. All this unfinished business is entwined with the impact of the arrival of Covid-19. For whitefella Australians, there is palpable shock, even anger, under the stress of isolation, quarantine, hard borders and repeated lockdowns to stave off Covid-19. What really surfaces from the debris of shirked responsibility is that we see Australian culture once again facing its deepest, most debilitating problems: the survival of the past into the present and specifically the survival of long wars and the refusal of long perspectives into the present. In 1995, when I wrote *Peripheral Vision*, I described art historians' collaborations with national art history as treachery, drawing on South African writer Rian Malan's excruciatingly honest book *My Traitor's Heart*.[17] Now, the ascendency of First Nations art in the international imaginary is in part a symptom of disenchantment with national ideology and its manifestations in art and art histories.

So, *Scatter* and all the works we made around that time, including the panoramic, seventeen-metre-long print *100 Years of Turbulence*, 2018, are a shift from our first responses as contemporary war artists. We were focusing on two themes: first, the great tension between Australia's vision of itself, profoundly shaped by wars starting 100 years ago – imperial wars fought by colonials in foreign lands, often in the unacknowledged company of First

IMAGE 5.12 *100 Years of Turbulence*, 2018, by Lyndell Brown/Charles Green. Four inkjet prints on rag paper, 110 high × 1761 cm. Edition of five plus two artist proofs. Courtesy ARC One.

Nations volunteers; second, a wondering about cultural self-regard that was profoundly bent out of shape by catastrophic crises abroad and at home that disrupt national stories – ongoing, never-ending crises of climate warming, a barely started process of Indigenous reconciliation, and stigmatized immigration and persecuted asylum-seeking, all rooted in war and peace unilaterally mandated 100 years ago and more.

Daytime at Santa Cruz cemetery has been replaced by dusk and a deluge of red lines and dots that fall from the sky like sparks of fire and rain over the most distant graves. Where Leonardo da Vinci's late drawings of flood and deluge captured the rules and laws of turbulence on delicate, off-white paper, we show paint on a photograph printed on transparent film mounted on Perspex. Under the bright lights of the gallery, the print throws a ghost image onto the wall a few centimetres behind. A wind blows across the Timor Sea to the master-printer at Fini Frames in post-industrial Cremorne, then down the highway to a painter's studio hidden in a drab industrial park in Moorabbin, then up the Calder Freeway across green hills to the artists' studio in Central Victoria. A whole infrastructure of support and specialization, more brittle than you realize in every way. The pressure of history is so fragile and ephemeral that the red flood of lines and dots is not anything as obvious as blood. It strikes you more that this resembles the vast bushfires to come with each season's extra climate change. Any single nation,

when the new storms strike, recedes from view. At this small cemetery in little Dili under the evening shadow of the coastal mountains, we have a premonition. Because a work of art's meaning does not lie in what it looks like, nor in how it circulates, and we can't assume any fixed economy of art after January 2020 and the start of the pandemic, a broken narrative can be

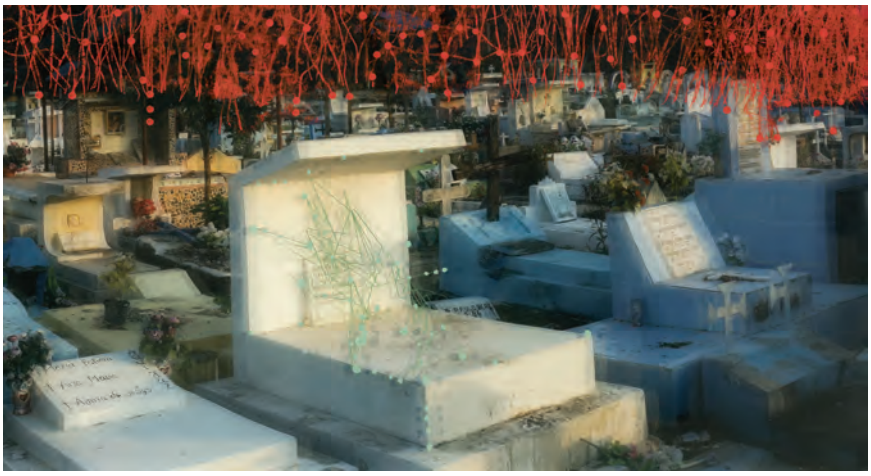

IMAGE 5.13 *Detail of Scatter 2 (Santa Cruz)*, 2016, by Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green. Acrylic and oil on digital photograph on Duraclear film on Perspex, framed, 87 cm × 290 cm. © Jon Cattapan and Lyndell Brown/Charles Green 2016. Courtesy Station Gallery and ARC One.

emphasized too much. But all we have is a metaphoric and metonymic network of images mimicking the fragmented but eager movement of authors towards truth. Broken recollections produce the illusion that the workings of obliterated, unrecovered memory govern the world, but *Scatter 2* – and in particular, the cascade of broken, folded objects and the deluge of red lines – tells us that the perspective of postmodernity is less and less true today. Therefore, hold lightly to what you can. The mountains fade into darkness.

Notes

1 Charles Green, *Peripheral Vision: Contemporary Australian Art 1970–94* (Sydney: Craftsman House, 1996).

2 On these paintings, see Jeanette Hoorn, 'The Desiring Phantom: Contemplating the Art of Lyndell Brown and Charles Green', *Art and Australia*, vol. 35, no. 3 (April 1998): 374–81.

3 Charles Green, Lyndell Brown and Jon Cattapan, *Framing Conflict: War, Peace and Aftermath* (Melbourne: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

4 Charles Green and Lyndell Brown 'No Agency: Iraq and Afghanistan at War: The Perspective of Commissioned War Artists', in *Mars and Minerva: Artistic and Cultural Responses to War (1914–2014) in the Anglo-Saxon World,* ed. Margaret Baguley and Martin Kerby (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 23–44.

5 Boris Groys, *Art Power* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 127.

6 Christopher Knaus, 'Witness K and the "Outrageous" Spy Scandal that Failed to Shame Australia', *The Guardian*, 10 August 2019. www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/aug/10/witness-k-and-the-outrageous-spy-scandal-that-failed-to-shame-australia, accessed 9 February 2022.

7 Team Independente, 'Horta Condemns Timor-Leste Government Decision to Evict Arte Moris', *Diariu Independente*, 2 December 2021. www.independente.tl/en/national/horta-condemns-timor-leste-government-decision-to-evict-arte-moris, accessed 8 February 2022.

8 For instance, our photographs' inclusion in the panoramic exhibition of international documentary photography, *Civilisation: The Way We Live Now*, curated by William Ewing and Holly Roussell (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2019).

9 For more, see Richard Frankland et al., 'Forever Business: A Framework for Maintaining and Restoring Cultural Safety in Aboriginal Victoria,' *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, vol. 7, no. 24, (2011): 27–30.

10 Howard Morphy, 'Acting in a Community: Art and Social Cohesion in Indigenous Australia', *Humanities Research Journal*, vol. XV, no. 2 (2009): 115–31.

11 Morphy, 'Acting in a Community', 119.

12 Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, *SALTWATER: A Theory of Thought Forms: The 14th Istanbul Biennial* (Istanbul: Istanbul Biennial, 2015). Christov-Bakargiev

included several works by Indigenous artists in this Biennial, including by Djambawa Marawili and Vernon Ah-Kee as well as many earlier pieces including *Maw and Dhangatji Mununggurr Maak Message Sticks* (1935), *Yirrkala Drawings* (1947), *Yirrkala Bark Petitions* (1963) and *Thumb Print* petitions (1963), and four *Saltwater Barks* produced by the Yolngu to support their claims for Sea Rights (1998–2000).

13 Terry Smith, 'Marking Places, Cross-Hatching Worlds: The Yirrkala Church Panels', *eflux journal*, no. 111 (September 2020).

14 The term is first used in relation to contemporary art by Ian McLean and first coined by Jürgen Habermas in 1987; see Ian McLean, *Rattling Spears: A History of Indigenous Australian Art* (London: Reaktion, 2016), and Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

15 Jennifer Loureide Biddle, *Remote Avant-garde: Aboriginal Art under Occupation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

16 'The Uluru Statement from the Heart', 2017, https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement, accessed 22 August 2021.

17 See Green, *Peripheral Vision*, 148; Rian Malan, *Blood and Bad Dreams: A South African Explores the Madness in His Country, His Tribe and Himself* (London: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990).