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ABOUT THIS EDUCATION RESOURCE

This resource provides tertiary students with an introduction to The Stony Rises Project and a timeline acknowledging significant events and changes to the area's landscape until today. It also contains discussion questions for exploring key issues and themes in the artworks and for investigating contemporary arts practice. It may be used in conjunction with a visit to the exhibition or as pre or post visit resource material.

For further research please refer to the comprehensive accompanying publication **Designing Place, an archaeology of the Western District**, L. Byrne, H. Edquist, L. Vaughan (eds.), Melbourne Books, Melbourne, 2010.





INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL BACKGROUND

- The Stony Rises project is a touring exhibition that brings together new artworks by ten contemporary artists and designers all responding to the one place the Stony Rises region situated in the Western District of Victoria.
- The impetus for the new work was an artists' camp held over four days at the site in April 2009.
- The makers come from a diverse range of academic and visual art backgrounds including architecture, design, sculpture and printmaking.
- Their work exemplifies a range of contemporary art practices and strategies such as digital and video media, assemblage and installation, appropriation and collaboration.
- The makers have a common interest in the complex relationships between humans and the natural environment.
- Through this diverse exhibition, the viewer can form a deeper understanding of the 'place' that is The Stony Rises.

- The artists and designers have drawn on different aspects of the Western District's undulating volcanic landscape and rich cultural, geographical and social history in their work.
- In addition to the exhibition is the scholarship and research of Lisa Byrne, Laurene Vaughan, Harriet Edquist, Heather Builth, Ross Gibson, E.B. Joyce and Ruth Pullin published in the text **Designing Place, an archaeology of the Western District**. A comprehensive accompaniment to the exhibition, this publication also includes short essays by each of the artists.
- When viewed as a whole, the broad range of responses to the area creates a 'multidimensional perspective transforming a landscape and a region into the richness of place'.
- The central tenet for the project and publication was an exploration of 'place': 'Place is a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world', (Tim Creswell, 2008).²

For further discussion on 'place' see Laurene Vaughan, 'Introduction', in **Designing Place, an archaeology of the Western District**, L. Byrne, H. Edquist, L. Vaughan (eds), Melbourne Books, Melbourne, 2010, pp. 8-9.

^{1.} Laurene Vaughan, 'Introduction', in **Designing Place, an archaeology of the Western District**, L. Byrne, H. Edquist, L. Vaughan (eds.), Melbourne Books, Melbourne, 2010, p. 8. 2. Tim Creswell is a social and cultural geographer, cited in Laurene Vaughan, ibid., p. 9.



INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL BACKGROUND

THE STONY RISES OF THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VICTORIA – THE UNIQUE GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY OF THE AREA

- 'The Stony Rises are geological formations that span the volcanic plains of western Victoria, a region extending from Melbourne to Portland in the west, bounded to the south by the Otway Ranges and to the north by the Western Highlands'.3
- These distinct formations span the whole of the Western District of Victoria and are the result of lava flows from volcanoes that were active in the area, including the lava flow from Mount Porndon in about 7000 BC.⁴
- Stony Rises are characterised by their 'irregular stony surfaces, thin soils and woodland cover' that radiate from extinct individual volcanoes in the area, such as Mount Eccles, Mount Napier and Mount Rouse.⁵
- The rocky outcrops occurring in the Colac district around Mount Porndon, for example, have been described as consisting of 'innumerable hillocks or ridges of rocky fragments varying in height from ten to fifty feet, crowded together in tumultuous array, and traversing in every possible direction'.6

THE STONY RISES: INSPIRATION FOR CREATIVE RESPONSE AND SCHOLARSHIP IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Early references to the 'Stony Rises' and surrounding area exist in pictorial and written accounts from the nineteenth century including:

Eugene von Guérard, Stony Rises, Lake Corangamite, 1858 [see image on page 74 of Designing Place]

Eugene von Guérard, Purrumbete from across the lake, 1858 [see image on page 73 of Designing Place]

Eugene von Guérard, From the verandah of Purrumbete, 1858 [see image on page 35 of Designing Place]

Eugene von Guérard's sketchbooks, including XXVI, inscribed Western Plains/Cape Otway. 1857 and 1859, Dixson Galleries, State Library of New South Wales. [see Ruth Pulin's chapter in Designing Place, pp. 114-125]

Walter Withers, Journey Through Stony Rises, 1902, mural frieze at Purrumbete homestead, Victoria.

Written records of journeys by William Westgarth (1815-1889), merchant, financier, politician and historian in 1846 and English born teacher, author historian and archivist James Bonwick ten years later in 1857.

- 3. Joyce 1999, cited in Harriet Edquist, 'Stony Rises: The Formation of a Cultural Landscape', in **Designing Place**, ibid, p. 64.
- 4. Jenny Lowe, 'Revealing the Hidden: where the Manna Gums Still Grow', **Designing Place**, ibid., p. 40.
- 5. Joyce 1999, cited in Harriet Edquist, 'Stony Rises: The Formation of a Cultural Landscape', **Designing Place**, ibid., p. 64.
- 6. William Westgarth, 1948, cited in Harriet Edquist, ibid.

THE **STONY RISES PROJECT** TIMELINE OF THE STONY RISES



TIMELINE OF THE STONY RISES

45,000 years ago Arrival of people in Australia. 35,000 years ago Tower Hill volcano erupted. Mount Eccles lava flow – longest and most recent in Victoria. 30,000 years ago Around 12 volcanos erupted in area, possibly one every 2000 years or so.⁷ 20,000 years ago Oral accounts of volcanic activity by the original inhabitants, the Gunditimara people. Widespread freshwater swamp and lake environments on and around the lava flow. 13,000 years ago 6000 years ago Maximum Holocene water levels on the lava flow. 4600 years ago Damming of Lake Condah and construction of a weir to enhance water storage capacity – increased production of shortfin eel and aquatic plant staples. Fish-trap system in use at this time. The Gunditimara people managed and significantly expanded the wetland environment. Aquaculture system produced abundance of eels that were dried and stored for use throughout the year and for trading.

1830

European exploration then settlement via squatting rights – land modified for farming – pastureland required drainage and deforestation which changed the ecosystem – reduced biodiversity. Conflict between Indigenous Australians and European settlers over the land led to decline in Indigenous population. 'Family massacres, dispersion, displacement, disease and death. Incarceration in missions and non-access to traditional country. . .prevented regular cultural management and ceremony'.8

Information sourced from Designing Place, an archaeology of the Western District, L. Byrne, H. Edquist, L. Vaughan (eds.), Melbourne Books, Melbourne, 2010.

7. Joyce 2000, in E.B. Joyce, 'Geology, Environment and People on the Western Plains of Victoria', **Designing Place**, ibid., p. 107 8. Heather, Builth, 'The Cultural and Environmental Landscape of the Mount Eccles Lava Flow', **Designing Place**, ibid, p. 86. 9. 'The Eumarella War', T A Browne, use the term for the uprising between Indigenous Australians and European settlers, in Old Melbourne Memories, 1884, cited in Harriet Edquist, ibid., p. 67.



'The Eumarella War' - an 'explosion of hostility between Aborigines and Europeans 1845 - 1847 in the eighteen months between 1845 and 1847'.9 1846 William Westgarth, who was touring the district in 1846, encountered the massacre at the Stony Rises. His account stated; 'The natives were quickly driven from the fine pasturage that lay around these rises, and in return they attacked and carried off the sheep of the invading settlers, retreating to their rocky hiding-places'. 10 In retaliation for the murder of a shepherd and theft of sheep," "the tribe [was] almost exterminated" by a posse of settlers', stated James Bonwick. 11 His account of the massacre differed to Westgarth's, notably in his emphasis on the murder of indigenous families, 'mothers, husbands, babes, lay about the stones shrieking in maddening pain'. 12 Eugene von Guérard made series of expeditions to the Western District between 1855 1855 and 1857. 1855 visits Tower Hill – lake-filled maar volcano. Eugene von Guérard visited the Grampians and volcanic sites of Mount Eccles 1856 and Mount Napier. 1857 Von Guérard made two trips. March-April (explained in detail in Ruth Pulin's Chapter in **Designing Place**). December – Mount Gambier – sketched crater lakes. Subsequent visits made en route to other destinations until around 1868. 1857 James Bonwick, teacher, author, historian and archivist journeyed through Western Victoria on an educational tour of the denominational schools.

- 10. William Westgarth, 1948, cited in Harriet Edquist, ibid., p. 65.
- 11. James Bonwick, 1857, cited in Harriet Edquist, ibid.
- 12. According to H. Edquist, James Bonwick's account of what happened was a reworking of W. Westgarth's narrative. It was also, she stated, 'apparently put together from interviews', pp. 66-67.
- 13. R.Ferrett, 2005, cited in E.B. Joyce, ibid., p. 109.



TIMELINE OF

THE STONY RISES

Native Title Mount Eccles archaeological landscape analysis and Lake Condah

Sustainable Development Project in association with the Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation, worked with state and federal governments to restore Lake Condah

and re-establish some eel aquaculture.

2005 Geological heritage sites need to be maintained for further research and to

remain accessible as teaching sites for tertiary students studying geology and

environmental science.13

2008 Kanawinka Geopark encompassing the Western plains of Colac and across to

Mt Gambier – designated by UNESCO, is Australia's first geopark has been set

up to conserve and promote the significance of the area.

Today Geological heritage sites under threat due to:

Quarrying for bluestone (building material for houses, bridges, road toppings). Management of active and disused quarries remains a continuing problem.¹⁴ Revegetation by community groups could obscure the cone and craters if

not monitored.

Wind farms and siting of wind turbines – affecting the landscape.

New threat to environment – rock crushing, rolling and stone raking of stony flow surfaces to allow more productive farming in Mount Napier and National

Trust – classified Stony Rises of Mount Porndon. 15

Future Effects of climate change and diminishing rainfall in the region. Suburban

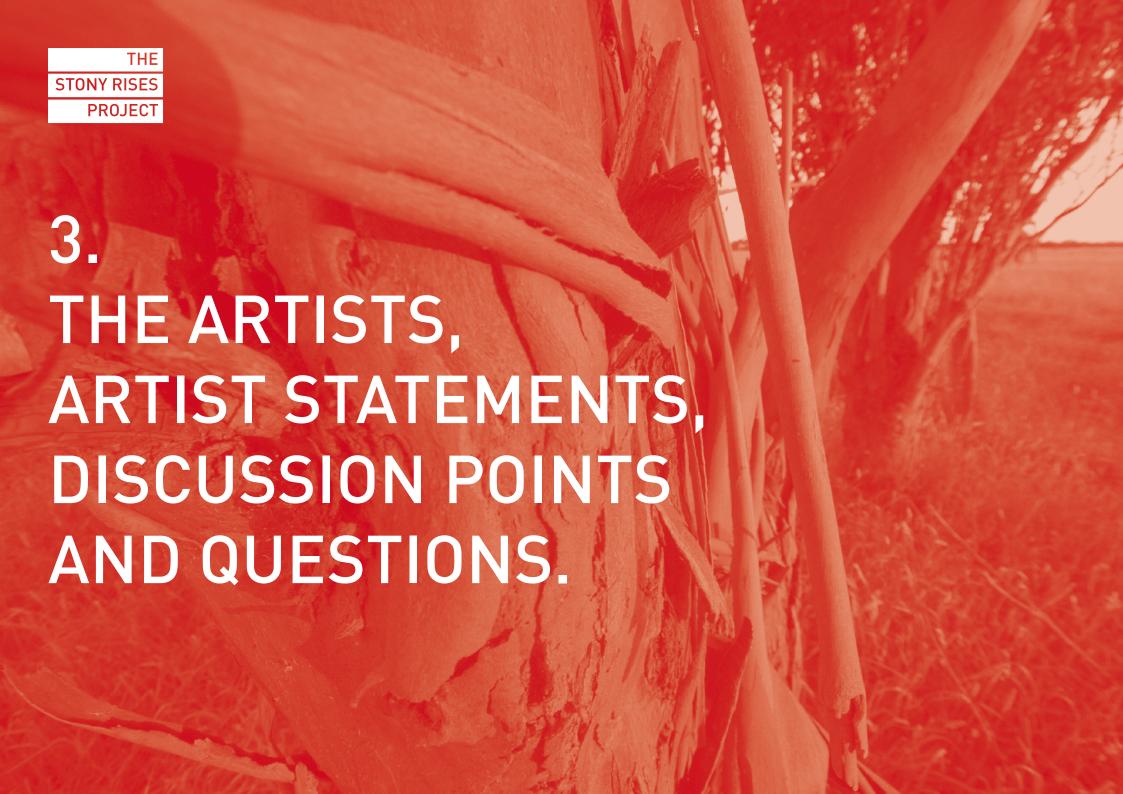
housing sprawl may also have an impact on the landscape.

Volcanic eruption not imminent but also possible in form of lava shield and scoria cones or a Mount Gambier maar ash eruption.¹⁶

14. E.B. Joyce, ibid., p. 109.

15. Ibid., p. 110.

16. Ibid., p. 111.



THE ARTISTS, ARTIST STATEMENTS

DISCUSSION POINTS AND QUESTIONS

Vicki COUZENS

ARTIST STATEMENTS

"Aboriginal culture is the longest surviving culture on planet Earth. Our culture is unique: it is founded on a fundamental belief in, or knowing of, place and belonging. This profound spirituality arises from an innate connectedness to Creation – the Dreaming, the beginning of all things – from the Earth, our Mother".

"Vicki Couzens developed her works from listening to her father talk about the battles and massacres that occurred in their Country in the early invasion times of the 1800s".

"Couzens was offended when she came across a small white cross marked "George Whatmore – speared by blacks 1841", which still sits by the roadside near Port Fairy".

"Vicki Couzens produced this body of work to inform, confront, unsettle; to give the viewer the opportunity to see an Aboriginal perspective on how this Country has been taken".

DISCUSSION POINTS AND QUESTIONS

- Discuss the artists' symbolic use of the white cross in this body of work and the layers of meaning it evokes.
- How does Couzens' work challenge the viewer to consider their understanding of 'colonisation'?
- Compare and contrast this work with that of other contemporary Australian artists (for example, Fiona Foley and the early work of Gordon Bennett), who have dealt with issues surrounding the misrepresentation of an Aboriginal perspective in Australian history.
- Art or artefact or both? Other possum skin cloaks created by Couzens are part of the National Musuem of Australia's collection. Explain the difference. www.nma.gov.au/collections





tambers strudy liked by whiter it Psurying Morring Yelay (Markeing stilly) 1849





Guunaward Gundidj 2009 Digital image on paper 90 x 60cm



3.

THE ARTISTS, ARTIST STATEMENTS DISCUSSION POINTS AND QUESTIONS

Vicki COUZENS





Loft

Moperer Gundidj cross 2009 Acrylic on plywood 246 x 120cm

Right:

Prangawan pootpakyooyano yoowa 2009 Possum skin cloak 150 x 110cm

3.

THE ARTISTS, ARTIST STATEMENTS DISCUSSION POINTS AND QUESTIONS

Lesley DUXBURY

ARTIST STATEMENTS

"A number of years ago I used to travel once a week by train to the Western District of Victoria to teach".

"I would get out my sketchbook and pencil and draw the landscape that I saw. . .in a disciplined way I would look and draw without taking my eyes off my subject or I would memorise what I could see and then quickly draw it in my book".

"the sky never ceased to be a problem. . .clouds were shifting and reforming almost imperceptibly, and there was never an opportunity to focus on any particular point or form".

DISCUSSION POINTS AND QUESTIONS

- Discuss the use of the picture frame in Duxbury's work. Use different examples to examine how the frame contributes meaning to her photographic images.
- An integral part of Duxbury's practice is the experience of extended walks in remote landscapes, which she documents using photography, sketches and extensive notes. Compare this practice with that of Eugene von Guérard who filled many sketchbooks on his journeys through the Western District in the mid 1850s, see Ruth Pullin's chapter in **Designing Place**, pp. 114-125. Discuss the changing role of the artist in your response.
- How does Duxbury's work engage with notions of place, past and present, and memory and reality?
- How does the artist deal with a shifting focal point in her work?



Inkjet print on paper, silkscreen on glass Overall size 44 x 54cm

Still VI 2009

Inkjet print on paper, silkscreen on glass Overall size 44 x 54cm







3.

THE ARTISTS, ARTIST STATEMENTS DISCUSSION POINTS AND QUESTIONS

Lesley DUXBURY



Still V 2009 (detail) Inkjet print on paper, silkscreen on glass Overall size 44 x 54cm