Climbing the landscape:

Mt Arapiles – explorations in place and the printed image

Bridget Hillebrand

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Department of Fine Art

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Abstract

This research explores my engagement as a rock climber with the landscape of Mt Arapiles in Western Victoria, a site of personal and cultural significance. As a climber my experience and perception of place is informed by cultural, kinaesthetic and corporeal knowledge. My visual art research explores the relationship between the physicality of both making printed images and climbing, as a response to the corporeal dimension of the experience of place.

Traces of a climber's actions are also incorporated into written representations of place. Climbers mark place and claim ownership of their climbs by writing about their experiences. Climbing discourses mediate the exploration of the landscape and its written and pictorial representation. Words render the formerly invisible nuances of a rock face, visible and real, and present the promise of an unexplored climbing route. My art practice also researches specific texts, guide books, climbing magazines and club newsletters that reference the language, systems and structures through which the climbing fraternity constructs its vernacular landscape. I have documented conversations, conducted and recorded field surveys and have discovered unpublished primary resources. These materials provide evidence that climbers share a common understanding and a particular reading of the landscape. I developed art works that incorporate tactile surfaces in response to these texts to explore, via the studio research, a climber's intimate knowledge of Mt Arapiles and their temporal and sensory encounter with the rock.

I developed innovative printing techniques using raw materials sourced from Mt Arapiles which were then incorporated into art works as receptive elements signifying the ephemeral and unpredictable surfaces encountered while climbing. Investigating the interactive potential of tactile works led to and understanding of the phenomenological engagement of a viewer as they observe and engage with an art work. Challenging museum standards of conservation and traditional methods of viewing printed works I encouraged the viewer to touch the surface of the works. These innovations explore the potential of a new narrative that is constructed from the marks made by the viewer's repetitive touching. In an investigation of rock climbing, printmaking and studio practice my research explores the ephemeral and tactile nature of art works as a viable alternative to traditional representations of landscape. This research questions the relationship we have with our surroundings and rethinks our presence within the landscape, by referencing climbing discourse and the haptic process by which climbers comprehend and experience place.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Bridget Hillebrand

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Introduction

In the summer of 1986 I arrived at Mt Arapiles in the dead of night as many first timers do, after a long Friday night drive from Melbourne. I was with a group of experienced climbers who stumbled their way to 'The Pines' campsite and jostled to find some remaining flat ground for their tents. The next morning I awoke to see the bluffs in all their sun drenched glory. Who can forget their first encounter climbing Mt Arapiles? I remember the touch of warm stone and its texture. I remember asking for chalk as my hands began to sweat when I attempted to climb its smooth surface. I made desperate moves and called for a tight rope. I pulled and grasped at hand holds when I should have been looking at my feet. I scrutinised the rock features before me, I calmed my nerves and took glimpses of the vast plains below. I learnt how to 'belay', when to give 'slack' and when to 'take'. I learnt how to 'second' and remove gear placed in the rock by the leader. I took photographs, I collected rocks, and I basked in the sun at the base of each climb and marvelled at all the possibilities. At the end of a long week I dragged my sore muscles and weary body back home. A few weeks passed before I returned again… I was captivated.

— *Extract from author's diary*

Figure 1. Sunrise at Bard Buttress Mt Arapiles, 2014, Victoria. © Bridget Hillebrand.

Located approximately 350 kilometres from Melbourne, Mt Arapiles is a rock formation that rises 140 metres above the Wimmera plains in Western Victoria, Australia. It is a site which represents a broad array of human interaction with place. Indigenous people, European explorers, missionaries, pastoralists, international and domestic travellers all looked or look at the landscape and experience it differently. When I first visited Mt Arapiles over twenty-five years ago, I never imagined or experienced a climbing landscape. In the past my treks into the Australian bush were mainly to engage visually with the fauna and flora and the occasional panoramic vista. The impact of my first encounter with rock climbing on that warm summer's day, remains vivid in my memory. It was an encounter that not only challenged my engagement with rock but more importantly changed my perception of the landscape. From that day forward I could no longer look at the face of a cliff, without imagining 'lines' for possible climbing routes. As British academic Robert Macfarlane suggests, I began to learn to read and interpret the surface of the rock face before me, through the shared cultural memory of a climber.

I began my research with the view that art-based research could contribute a unique perspective to the study of how climbers engage with and perceive place and how climbers experience landscape through kinaesthetic and corporeal knowledge. I agree with theorist Paul Carter who states that creative research is a "process of material thinking" that "enables us to think differently about our human situation."[1] There are a number of contemporary scholars that have explored the significance of place, notably in fields such as sociology, archaeology, anthropology and psychology. Anthropologist Dr James Weiner invites us to accept that "the traces of people's actions left on the earth and in the environment generally also leave traces in people's consciousness."[2] This in turn affects our perception and participation in the landscape. Archaeologists Meredith Wilson and Bruno David similarly state that "People, places, and things are constantly engaged in a process of inscribing place. Through this process identities unfold in a continual process of (re)negotiation."[3]

My research questions how I and other climbers know and experience the landscape of Mt Arapiles. My investigation into touch as a pivotal sense utilized by climbers in learning to know a climb led to another question: how does the tactile experience of engaging with rock inform my approach to printmaking, and does a haptic engagement with an art work suggest a more intimate encounter with the work and what possibilities does this offer contemporary visual art practice? And more

[1] Paul Carter, *Material Thinking, the Theory and Practice of Creative Research* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004), xii.
[2] Bruno David and Meredith Wilson, eds., *Inscribed Landscapes; Marking and Making Place* (USA: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 8.
[3] Ibid, 8.

specifically, how does the inclusion of materials found on site and incorporated into the art work communicate the particularities of a locality and ways of encountering a place as a climber? Referring to artworks and theoretical discourse, my research explores some of the mechanisms through which climbers construct meanings and relationships with the landscape of Mt Arapiles. Documented conversations with climbers, recorded field surveys as well as discoveries of primary sources provide evidence that climbers share a common understanding of a particular reading of the landscape of Mt Arapiles. Art works were developed drawing on these texts and employing elements of tactility that incorporated printed crushed rock from the site of Mt Arapiles. The works reflect my intimate knowledge of climbing in a temporal and sensory encounter with the rock.

As a rock climber my experience and perception of place is informed by cultural, kinaesthetic and corporeal knowledge. The performative action of climbing offers a unique perspective of place. Rock surfaces are seen in close proximity with intense points of focus. During an ascent, the landscape is viewed from multiple high vantage points, unlike surveying the terrain from a stationary position in a single view. Phenomenology posits our relationship to our world is not based on cognition or intellect alone, but is also grounded in our awareness as bodies: bodies that move and feel sensations. Knowing the world through physical experience links my climbing, my art practice and participating in the physicality of being in the world. I know the environment through touch, smell, moving and seeing. I am aware of my surroundings and this experience forms my engagement with place. Christopher Tilley points out that "when we consider landscape we are almost always thinking about it primarily in terms of visual construct… Landscapes are not just visionscapes but also soundscapes, touchscapes, smellscapes."[4] Motion translates a place to a person kinaesthetically. "Walking is the only way to measure the rhythm of the body against the rhythm of the land,"[5] writes Rebecca Solnit. Could the same be said of climbing?

Traces of a climber's actions are also incorporated into written representations of place. In writing, climbers mark place and claim ownership of it. Guide books provided an opportunity for climbers to document previously unnamed rock features at Mt Arapiles and commemorate first ascents and associated stories. In this way climbers began to create their own connection with place. My art practice investigates specific texts, such as guide books, climbing magazines and club newsletters; referencing the language, systems and structures through which the climbing fraternity constructs its vernacular landscape. This research led me to reflect on the significance of language and its

[4] Christopher Tilley, *Metaphor and Material Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 93.
[5] Lucy R. Lippard, *The Lure of the Local Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New Press), 17.

importance in mediating the pictorial representation of Mt Arapiles and how I, as a climber, know and experience landscape via text and the spoken word. My research explores how language constructs landscapes, and in turn how language might influence our subjective experience of it.

My creative works offer a unique representation of a specific place, Mt Arapiles and suggests the physical engagement and interactions of a climber. Alternate ways of seeing and experiencing place are supported by my research of engagement with touch. My research methodology has been to develop a sustained interaction between climbing and making artworks in situ and in the studio. This is an interaction that is directly connected with the specific site of Mt Arapiles and my personal engagement as a rock climber with the landscape of Mt Arapiles. It is my active involvement as a climber that is represented in my way of seeing Mt Arapiles.

The exegesis is structured into five chapters. In Chapter one, *Climbing and a sense of place: an Australian context*, I investigate how naming geological features in the landscape may provide an insight into human occupation and the perception of landscape. I discuss the history of perceptions of Mt Arapiles and how those perceptions were formed, inherited, altered and reshaped over time. I make reference to the Djurite Balug clan (the traditional Aboriginal people of the Mt Arapiles area) and their engagement with the landscape, discuss early colonial and contemporary artists who depicted Mt Arapiles and the surrounding region and discuss what these art works tell us about the place, Mt Arapiles. I introduce the initial phases of my practice-based research where printed works were made in situ. I make reference to artists and writers who have referenced Mt Arapiles and propose that our embeddedness in particular places is linked to the shaping of landscape through both a topographical and literary heritage.

In Chapter two, *Ties that bind us,* I make reference to authors who are united in the view that landscapes are constructed in social engagement and reflect on documented conversations and recorded field surveys which provide evidence that climbers share a common understanding of a particular reading of the landscape of Mt Arapiles. I discuss my collection of rock from the site of Mt Arapiles to use as a printing medium for my art practice and I consider how the use of certain materials can communicate the particularities of a locality and ways of encountering place as a climber. In Chapter three, *The language of climbing and its particular landscape*, I discuss how climbing discourse is contextualised and enriches my studio practice. I explore the significance of language, oral and written, and its importance in mediating the pictorial representation of Mt Arapiles. I discuss the discourses through which climbing landscapes are constructed and interpreted

and consider how I as a climber, know and experience landscape through the verbal and written word.

In Chapter four, *Climbing: the pursuit of experience,* I consider how the performative actions of climbing and printmaking might enact, construct and alter meanings in a site and subsequent representations in the studio. In Chapter five, *The tactile print*, I challenge notions of the archive and conservation and traditional methods of engaging with prints. Referencing climbing discourse and the haptic process by which climbers comprehend and experience place, I invite the viewer to physically engage with my printed works. I discuss how printing with crushed rock results in an unstable tactile surface that changes with time. The substance of rock, which would have once been worn away by time and weather, is now touched and retouched and eroded by the viewer's hand on the surface of my printed artworks.

In the conclusion I outline the challenges and achievements of my research practice. I summarise how my work explores the relationship between the physicality of both printing and climbing as a response to the corporeal dimension of the experience of place. I summarise my response to key questions raised in the introduction and also identify where future research may develop. My creative practice has been enriched by my research of specific texts, such as guide books, letters and magazines which led me to reflect on the significance of language and its importance in mediating the pictorial representation of Mt Arapiles. In developing artworks that reflect a climbers intimate temporal and sensory encounter with rock I present new possibilities for seeing and looking: where the viewer becomes an active agent in the work.

Chapter One

Climbing and a sense of place: an Australian context

> When we look at a landscape, we do not see what is there, but largely what we think is there. We attribute qualities to a landscape which it does not intrinsically possess – savageness, for example, or bleakness – and we value it accordingly. We read landscapes, in other words, we interpret their forms in the light of our own experience and memory, and that of our shared cultural memory.[6]

Naming Mt Arapiles

Many names have been attributed to Mount Arapiles and its rocky outcrops over time and these names provides an insight into human occupation and perception of the landscape. Each name tells a story that allows us to understand the mountain's cultural significance.

The Djurite Balug[7] clan of the Jadawadjali Aboriginal language group inhabited the south-west Wimmera until the 1840s, and were based at Mount Arapiles (which was then known as Djurite) as evidenced by archaeological finds[8] and records of the first European explorers and colonial squatters. Archaeologist Andrew Long suggests that the Djurite Balug clan were climbing the cliffs of Mt Arapiles, searching for the very hard silicified sandstone that was ideal for working into stone tools, long before the first Europeans inscribed their stories onto its rock face. He states "Aborigines took considerable risks… to quarry this rock, and the scars[9] can be seen in quite surprising places on the cliffs."[10] He further contends, "Given the lack of modern equipment or footwear and the weight of quarried rock they would have carried, it is astonishing what dangerous positions they would have reached."[11] Aboriginal sites are social and cultural markers verify that a connection between the

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[6] Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: A History of Fascination* (London: Granta Books, 2003), 18.
[7] Historian Ian Clarke identified the Djurid (Djurite) Balug clan of the Jadawadjali language group, as occupying the Mt Arapiles area. One of thirty seven clans in the Jadawadjali language group.
Ian D. Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800-1900* (Australia: Monash University, 1990), 257.
[8] In 1992 an archaeological survey at Mt Arapiles was commissioned to locate evidence of their occupation. Forty-two Aboriginal archaeological sites were located. Including "quarries" for hard stone implements, scarred trees and rock art sites.
[9] A mark or trace on a stone or rock surface showing the point of attachment of a flake that has been removed.
[10] Andrew Long, "Aboriginal Occupation at Mt Arapiles/Djurite," in *A Rock Climbers' Guide to Arapiles/Djurite,* ed. Louise Shepherd (Australia: The Victorian Climbing Club, 1994), 11.
[11] Ibid, 12.

Djurite Balug clan and their land. Stone tool quarry sites, scar trees, and traces of rock art are surviving fragments that testify to a rich indigenous occupation. Small rock shelters reveal significant yet faint markings in red ochre and extensive stone quarries are evident on some of the upper cliffs.

Aboriginal land-use began to be displaced by the arrival of squatters and farmers and a vast pastoral economy. European settlement was harsh on the Aboriginal population. From 1846 onwards, disease and violent confrontations with early settlers of the region forced the Aboriginal people at Djurite out of the area. Historian E.S. Parker wrote that the settlement of western Victoria was accompanied by "a fearful sacrifice of human life."[12] By the early 1970s the last of the Djurid Balug had been relocated to mission stations.[13] Historian Ian D. Clark writes, "From the late 1860s, the remaining north-eastern Jardwadjali began to frequent Ebenezer mission station… relocation was both voluntary and forced."[14] Today informative signs located at Mount Arapiles confirm that the Djurid Balug Aboriginal clan of the Wotjobaluk people inhabited the area prior to European settlement and some of their descendants still live in the area surrounding Mt Arapiles. It is not in the province of my research to account for the different stories and histories of the Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jadawadjali, Jaadwa and Jupagalk (collectively Wotjobaluk) people[15] who are recognised as the traditional owners of the Wimmera and southern Mallee as far north as Ouyen. I acknowledge the spiritual and cultural connection the Wotjobaluk people have to Mt Arapiles which is maintained and recognised by their descendants today.

When George Augustus Robinson, the Chief Protector of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, arrived at Mt Arapiles in April 1845, he ascended the summit and noted the smoke from a native fire to the north. In his journal Robinson wrote, "The Mountain is called by Natives, Choorite."[16] Today, the Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative in Horsham uses the spelling Djurite. Australian

[12] E.S. Parker, *The Aborigines of Australia* (Melbourne: Hugh McColl, 1854), 14.
[13] The Ebenezer Mission Station, situated 20km south of Lake Hindmarsh on the banks of the Wimmera River, was established in 1859 by Moravian missionaries as the Lake Hindmarsh Aboriginal Reserve. At its peak more than a hundred people lived and worked in more than twenty buildings at the Mission, which operated to convert Aboriginal people to Christianity and to provide education in the setting of a self-sustainable rural community. The National Trust which managed the entire site until 1991, handed over the remaining (freehold) section on 5 December 2013, to the Traditional Owners, the Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation.
[14] Ian D. Clark, *Scars in the Landscape: A Register of Massacre Sites in Western Victoria, 1803-1859* (Canberra ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres strait Islander Studies, 1995), 144.
[15]The Barengi Gadjin Land Council is the trustee of the Native Title rights and interests of the Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali and Jupagalk (collectively Wotjobaluk) people who were the first group in Victoria to be recognised as maintaining Native Title over their traditional lands. Native Title Services Victoria.
[16] Ian D. Clark, ed., "The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Philip Aboriginal Protectorate, Volume Four: 1 January 1844 -24 October 1845," (Victoria, Australia: Heritage Matters, 1998), 273.

climber, Louise Shepherd acknowledged this documented history by naming her 1994 climbing guide, *A Rock Climbers' Guide to Arapiles/Djurite.* Major Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor General of New South Wales, was the first recorded European to visit the area and on July 23, 1836 he renamed the peak Mt Arapiles after a hill in Spain which overlooked the battle site of Salamanca during the Napoleonic wars. He wrote, "I ascended this hill on the anniversary of the battle of Salamanca, and hence the name."[17] Historian Paul Carter argues that explorers such as Mitchell selected place names to conform to European needs and expectations. Mitchell provides his own account:

> To give appellations that may become current in the mouths of future generations, has often been a perplexing subject with me, whether they have been required to distinguish… such great natural features of the earth, as mountains and rivers. I have always gladly adopted aboriginal names, and in the absence of these, I have endeavoured to find some good reason for the application of others, considering descriptive names the best, such being in general the character of those used by the natives of this and other countries. Names of individuals seem eligible enough, when at all connected with the history of the discovery, or that of the nation by whom it was made.[18]

Australian academic George Seddon writes, "The naming – which was in fact a renaming – gave substance to their inventions."[19] The renaming that Seddon refers to acknowledges that the Mount was already named by the local Aboriginal people. Robert Macfarlane suggests another possibility and writes, "The urge to mark places in a landscape with names – to attempt to fix a presence or an event within time and space – is a way of allowing stories to be told about that landscape… For the explorers, names gave meaning and structure to a landscape which might otherwise have been repetitively meaningless."[20]

Written and pictorial responses to Mt Arapiles and the surrounding plains varied widely over the following years. Early European and colonial descriptions of Mt Arapiles are steeped in the language of eighteenth century European aesthetic concepts involving beauty, the picturesque and the sublime. In 1888 historian Alexander Sutherland describes the view that Mitchell witnessed when he climbed an escarpment at Mt Arapiles on 23 July 1836, "He ascended by its sloping side through pines and she-oaks and pleasant ever-green shrubs, and, from its precipitous brow, looked out on a broad level of sunny, pastoral tranquillity."[21]

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[17] Thomas Mitchell, *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia* (Australia: T. & W. Boone, 1838), 189.
[18] Ibid, 179-180.
[19] George Seddon, *Landprints: Reflections on Place and Landscape* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 24.
[20] Macfarlane, 191.
[21] Alexander Sutherland, *Victoria and Its Metropolis: Past and Present*, vol. 1 (Melbourne: McCarron, Bird & Co., 1888), 89.

Figure 2. Major Thomas L. Mitchell, *Mitre Rock and Lake, from Mt Arapile*s, 1838.
Published by T. and W. Boone, London.

Mitchell made a number of images (lithographs and watercolours) that represent Mt Arapiles, including the work *Mitre Rock and Lake, from Mt Arapiles* (see fig. 2). The scene accurately depicts the view from the cliff face of Mt Arapiles looking towards Mitre Rock[22] and Mitre Lake. Depictions of rays of light emanating from the clouds, and white tonal contrasts in the sky and land are used to add drama and contribute to the picturesque conventions of image-making of the time. In the far left corner of the image are two figures, one pointing to distant Aboriginal fires on the horizon. Mitchell wrote about the surrounding Wimmera, describing it as bountiful: "Every day we passed over land which, for natural fertility and beauty, could scarcely be surpassed; over streams of unfailing abundance, and plains covered with the richest pasturage."[23] He was so impressed with the fertile landscape that he named it Australia Felix – Latin for 'fortunate Australia'. Carter discusses Mitchell's glowing description of the Wimmera landscape:

> His journals, like the survey, like his names, were planned as instruments of persuasion. Their elaborate preparation, their ornate style and picturesque illustration brought into being a country that readers could imagine, and therefore inhabit. In this sense Mitchell's reports were blueprints for the movement of people; they provided, not simply the maps, but the rhetorical incentives to travel.[24]

[22] Mitre Rock was named by Mitchell due its similarity in outline to a bishop's mitre.
Gregory C. Eccleston, *Major Mitchell's 1836 'Australia Felix' Expedition: A Re-Evaluation* (Monash University Australia: Monash Publications in Geography, 1992), 70.
[23] Mitchell, 194.
[24] Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 121-122.

Seddon holds a similar view to Carter, and likens this form of persuasive writing to the writing of "estate agents of today that describe houses in glowing terms with the aim of having them sold."[25] Mitchell was describing the landscape as habitable and encouraging future pastoralists to work and occupy the land to ensure Australia's future prosperity.

In 1937, the Minister for Lands and Forest, Albert Lind visited Mount Arapiles and described the view from the summit as, "the most beautiful panorama of fertile land in the world."[26] Once again the perception of the Mount as an elevated point from which to survey the agricultural bounty of the surrounding wheat lands was affirmed. Over seventy-five years later similarly glowing descriptions of the Wimmera written to encourage visitors of a different kind were made in the 1962 September issue of *The Royalauto.* A photograph picturing Mitre Rock (see fig. 3) was on the cover, with a caption stating, "The Rock, near Mount Arapiles – a prominent tourist attraction in the Natimuk area."[27] According to Australian pioneering climber Peter Jackson, it was this striking image that attracted the first rock climbers to Mt Arapiles in 1963. In the magazine's article titled, 'Spring in the Wimmera', although there is no mention of the possibility of rock climbing, there is a description of a rough track leading to the summit and lookout where, "on a clear day there is an all-round panorama of the surrounding countryside."[28]

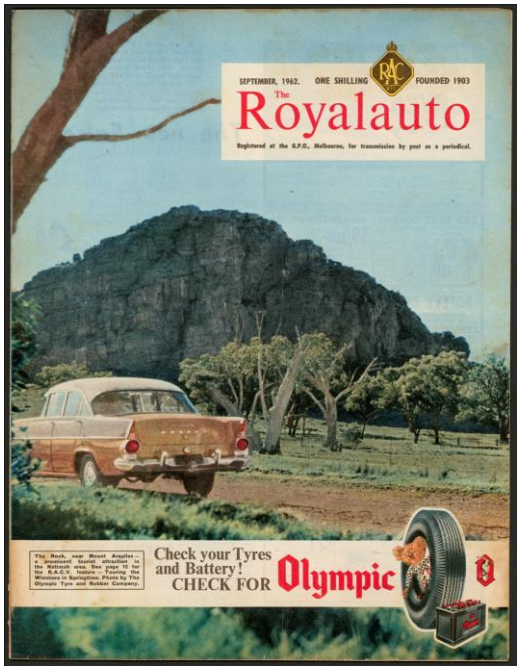

Figure 3. Olympic Tyre and Rubber Company, *Mitre Rock*, September 1962, The Royalauto, Melbourne.

[25] Seddon, 40.
[26] Chris Richards, "The Micro-Toponomy of Mount Arapiles," *Placenames Australia,* 2004, 10.
[27] P.V. Fahle, "Spring in the Wimmera," *The Royalauto,* 1962, 1.
[28] Ibid, 12.

Clearly the aim of the article was to encourage tourists to visit the area. Camping facilities, fauna and flora, and weather conditions were described to inspire walkers, campers and photographers to come to the Wimmera. In the following years as facilities at Mt Arapiles were made available for recreational purposes, various features on and around the mountain were named and renamed. According to George Seddon this process of naming places is a form of taking possession as naming, "ties the unknown to the known, reducing unfamiliarity."[29] For Australian climbers, the Mount was discovered as a climbing venue by Bob and Steve Craddock in November 1963, when the first rock climbs were recorded. The first climbing guide was published only two years later and today the Mount has over three thousand rock climbing routes which attract climbers from all over the world. Like Mitchell's, early descriptions of the Mount, climbing guides became 'instruments of persuasion' to a new generation. The process of renaming features at Mt Arapiles to incorporate perceptions of a climbing landscape had now begun in earnest. I explore the significance of language, oral and written, and its importance in mediating a pictorial representation of Mt Arapiles in greater detail in Chapter three where I make reference to how climbing discourse is contextualised and echoed in my studio research.

Representations of Mt Arapiles and the Wimmera

My research draws on my experience of climbing, and my experience of the social history of Mt Arapiles, and investigates how other artists at other times responded to Mt Arapiles. The Wotjobaluk people have a rich and proud history of connection to the Mount. It is clear from archaeological reports that Mount Arapiles was a base from which Wotjobaluk clan members hunted and gathered food and engaged in a range of activities. The existence of ochre markings on the rock echoes my own interest in making pigments with crushed rocks found on site at Mt Arapiles. Generations of artists have depicted Mt Arapiles and the surrounding region, from Major Thomas Mitchell, Nicholas Chevalier and Eugene von Guerard in the early 1800s to Sidney Nolan. What do these works tell us about the place Mt Arapiles? Simon Schama suggests that our idea of landscape is "the product of our shared culture (and)… a tradition built from a rich deposit of myths, memories, and obsessions."[30] My research has shown that each era has contributed something different, imagining Mt Arapiles and the surrounding plains in varying ways.

In 1863, Nicholas Chevalier accompanied by fellow artist Eugene von Guérard, journeyed to the Wimmera. Chevalier's *Mt Arapiles – Sunset* (1864) (see fig. 4) and *West Side of Mt Arapiles* (1863)

[29] Seddon, 23.
[30] Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 14.

and von Guerard's, *The Mitre Rock and Lake from Mount Arapiles* (1874) exemplify the highly romanticised style of a nineteenth century European picturesque tradition. The works convey a sense of nature as overwhelming, and this sense of nature dominated early depictions of landscape in Australia. Chevalier and von Guerard employ panoramic formats and construction of pictorial space with the images divided into foreground, midground and far distance.

Figure 4. Nicholas Chevalier, *Mt Arapiles - Sunset,* 1864, chromolithograph, 21.5 x 31.7cm. Horsham Regional Art Gallery.

Figure 5. Proximity of Mitre Rock to Mt Arapiles from the north east, 2016. © Bridget Hillebrand.

In *Mt Arapiles – Sunset,* Chevalier adapted the landscape to suit the pictorial conventions of the time. In reality, Mitre Rock is not a ruined castle as his image suggests, and is located further away from the main mount (see fig. 5). Chevalier's image presents a modified landscape, incorporating multiple perspectives of the landscape into the same work. Both Chevalier and Mitchell acknowledge an Aboriginal presence in the landscape with depictions of Aboriginal people camped in the foreground of their images or in Mitchell's, *Mitre Rock and Lake, from Mt Arapiles,* with a depiction of Europeans pointing out to distant Aboriginal fires on the horizon.

Chevalier's 1864 image, a chromolithograph[31] also conveys an idyllic scene but not the harshness and realities of early colonial life. That same year, the Cooper – Duff children became lost in the Wimmera scrub west of Horsham not far from where Chevalier had set up camp. Isaac, nine, Jane, seven, and three-year-old Frank, set out to collect broom bush and wandered more than one hundred kilometres and survived for nine days. A search party, led by three Aboriginal trackers, found them barely alive. An excerpt from the 1864 edition of *The Australian News for Home Readers* states, "The blacks pointed out a spot where they said one of the children had stopped to lift the younger one, and further on they pointed out where the child has been set down again, after being carried a considerable distance."[32] The skill of the Aboriginal people at reading the land saved the children's lives and challenged the settlers' mainly hostile views of local Aboriginal people. Can this story tell us how early explorers viewed the landscape as opposed to how it was lived? Chevalier was asked to illustrate the story and alongside the accompanying article in the *The Australian News for Home Readers* his image provides readers with a romanticised and heroic version. The romanticised landscapes of Mitchell and Chevalier may depict an awe inspiring landscape, but their images reveal very little of the lived experience of the earlier settlers and their encounters with an unfamiliar landscape.

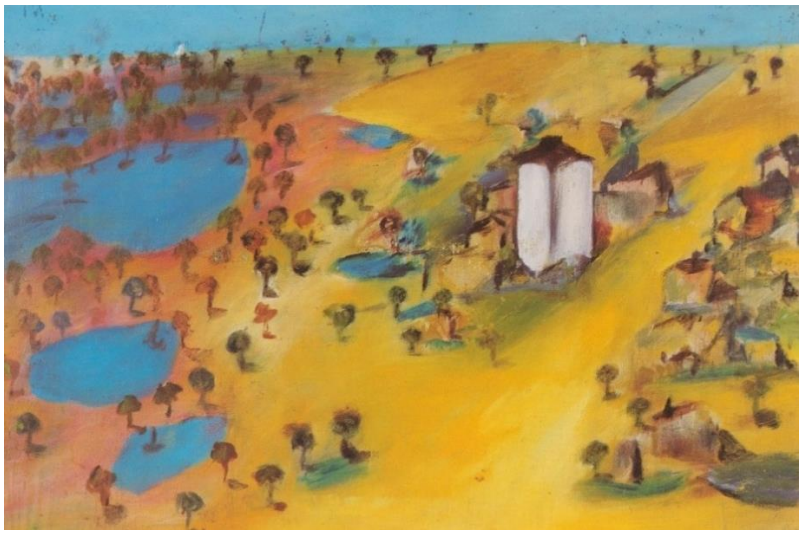

Figure 6. Sidney Nolan, *Wimmera (from Mt Arapiles),* 1943, ripolin enamel on canvas, 63 x 76cm. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

[31] Chromolithography is a method for making multi-colour prints and was commonly used in 1840 -1930s. The technique involved the use of multiple lithographic stones, one for each colour. Chevalier was a master lithographer and the process was used as a way of making his work more accessible to the public through creating multiple reproductions.

[32] "The Lost Children," *The Australian News for Home Readers*, September 24, 1864.

After thorough research, I discovered that in the intervening years few artists depicted or ventured to the remote rocky outcrop of Mt Arapiles. It was not until 1942 when Sidney Nolan, stationed in the Wimmera for almost two years while in the army during World War Two, completed a number of paintings including *Wimmera (from Mt Arapiles)* 1943, (see fig. 6). Nolan's vision of the landscape was, as he wrote to Sunday Reed, "as hard as a mirror... that was the Wimmera as we knew it."[33] His paintings capture his feelings of isolation generated by the strange and unfamiliar environment. There is a strong feeling of vastness and the heat of summer in his flat painterly treatment of a dry, monotonous landscape viewed from above in *Wimmera (from Mt Arapiles)*. Unlike the picturesque depictions of the early eighteenth century artists Nolan responded to the flatness and the severity of the Wimmera environment.

His painting *Wimmera (from Mt Arapiles)* depicts the monotony of the vast wheat fields. He wrote in January that year: "Sometimes the silos look so powerful here, that seen from a distance standing up from the trees you could imagine them as made by the Aztecs for no other reason than to worship the sun, which would not be out of order either, with the sun the dominant factor in this country."[34] Nolan was attracted to Mt Arapiles but his interest in the Mount was mainly as a platform from which to view the plains. In December of 1943 Nolan revisited the Wimmera and wrote, "Yesterday out to Natimuk and the strange formation of Mt Arapiles. An outlander sort of atmosphere, perhaps near to exotic, with dull and isolated rocks… looking over a bright salt lake and a few miles out to the edge of the desert sand which seems to go on forever."[35]

Nolan's letters to John and Sunday Reed in the 1940s reveal a very different interpretation of the Wimmera than the writings of Mitchell. Art historian Richard Haese wrote that Nolan's letters reveal "a concern for the ways in which men occupy and use the land and its spaces, how they change it and in turn are changed by it."[36] Nolan could not have possibly imagined the changes men and climbing would have over twenty years later, on the same rocky outcrop from which he viewed the surrounding plains. Nolan arrived in Dimboola as an army conscript. From all accounts it was initially a place he had no fondness for, or relationship with. Unlike Australian artist Phillip Hunter who, when describing his relationship to the Wimmera wrote, "It's where I'm from, where I was born, but

[33] Richard Haese and Jan Minchin, *Sidney Nolan: The City and the Plain* (Melbourne, Australia: National Gallery of Victoria, 1983), 21.
[34] Jane Clark, *Sidney Nolan: Landscapes and Legends* (Sydney, NSW: International Cultural Corporation of Australia Ltd., 1987), 53-54.
[35] Haese and Minchin, 13.

that also sets up its own problems. One has to be on guard against the nostalgic, the inevitable blurring of one's own memory. You have to be very conscious of other fictions not taking over."[37]

Both Nolan and Hunter spent long periods in the Wimmera district but their notions of it as place are vastly different. The influence of Australian writer, Gerald Murnane's 1982 novel *The Plains* was particularly important to Hunter. The novel is set in a small town, presumably in the Wimmera. The narrator is an unnamed filmmaker who arrives on the plains to document the culture of the people who live there. The book provokes the reader into questioning how we know and perceive place beyond our initial subjective view. "What had at first seemed utterly flat and featureless eventually disclosed countless subtle variations of landscape and abundance of furtive wildlife. Trying to appreciate and describe their discoveries, the plainsmen had become unusually observant, discriminating and receptive to gradual revelations of meaning."[38]

Murnane's description suggests an encounter similar to my own engagement with the landscape of Mt Arapiles. As a consequence of my research and sustained engagement with Mt Arapiles I have also become more 'observant, discriminating and receptive 'in my perceptions and experiences as a climber, and in observing how these perceptions contribute to the development of my studio research. Hunter states, "I wanted to read people who had a specific insight about living in this place that would elaborate upon and add to my own views."[39] Similarly, I sought oral and recorded descriptions of Mt Arapiles to broaden my knowledge of the shifts and changes in perceptions of the Wimmera landscape over time. Like Hunter I have researched the many layers that are embedded in place: its culture and history, which gives structure and meaning to the land. At a campsite near the base of Mount Jeffcott, Hunter produced a series of drawings far removed from the domesticated landscape made by Mitchell. Hunter explains: "My intention is not to illustrate a geographic location, but to create an analogy a vehicle for exploration, to digest what has been seen and to then reinvent that subject and all that it implies."[40]

[37] Ashley Crawford, *Wimmera the Work of Phillip Hunter* (Australia: Thames and Hudson Pty Ltd, 2002), 23.
[38] Gerald Murnane, *The Plains* (Australia: Norstrilia Press, 1982), 12.
[39] Crawford, 28.
[40] Peter Haynes et al., "The Plains: Wimmera and the Imaging of Australian Landscape," The University of Melbourne The Ian Potter Museum of Art (Victoria, Australia: The Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne, 2001), 38.

Figure 7. Philip Hunter, *Night Paddocks – Wimmera*, 2001, oil on canvas,
228.5 x 213cm. Collection: Heyball, Leonard Stent Architects.

Hunter's painting *Night Paddocks – Wimmera*, (2001) (see fig. 7) depicts a living landscape where tractor lights leave a passage of activity in the light of a full moon. The desolate fields of Nolan's work are in sharp contrast to Hunter's traces of dams and patterns of lines that suggest movement and the physical imposition of man on the landscape. The traces of lines in my work *Night Climbs*, (2013) (discussed in detail in Chapter three – see fig. 32, page 61) also suggests the movement of rock climbers in the landscape as they navigate their way up a cliff guided by the light of head torches. In 2010, Artistic Director of La Trobe University Museum of Art (LUMA), Vincent Alessi wrote in the catalogue accompanying Hunter's exhibition, *Between the Lines*, "Hunter views and records the landscape as something that is fluid, contains history and is experienced. It is space of *place*; a landscape that is seen from the inside, as opposed to it being simply viewed as a vista."[41] Hunter and I are both interested in the histories of the Wimmera and our experience within it, but where Hunter works with paint on canvas to express his concepts, I create a tactile and multi-layered response printed from the material – the rocks - found on site at Mt Arapiles.

[41] Vincent Alessi, *Between the Lines, Phillip Hunter Drawings* (Victoria: La Trobe University Museum of Art, 2009), 5.

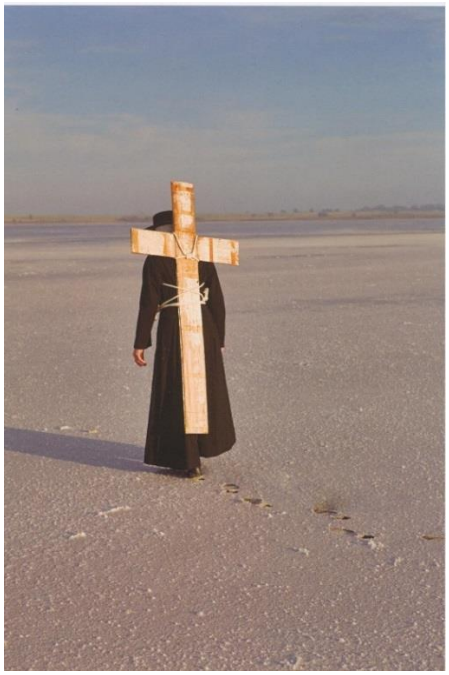

Figure 8. Jill Orr, *Southern Cross – to bear and behold - 1,*
2009, photo-performance.

A concern for a landscape's cultural and geographical history is also evident in the works of Australian artist Jill Orr. Orr utilises a combination of performance, photography, video and installation in her representations of Mitre Lake and the surrounding Wimmera landscape. Her photo - performance *Faith in a faithless land,* (2009) explores how "repressed or unspoken secrets are passed, predominately in the form of traumatic interactions, from one generation to the next."[42] Her photographs were made as documentation of her performance on Mitre Lake. *Southern Cross – to bear and behold -1* (see fig. 8), depicts Orr dressed as a missionary carrying a makeshift cross strapped to her back. She trudges across the salt lake: her footprints leaving a distinct trail in the lake's fragile crust. The performance references the histories of local missions and the early Christian settlers who lived across the region. Unlike the colonial artists, Orr's performance highlights the early settlers in the Wimmera, who wore costumes that seem distinctively out of place in the harsh landscape of Mitre Lake. Orr writes, "The missionary's struggle is that of faith in an environment that renders this action as ridiculous or mad but never the less the footprints have been indelible."[43] I shares Orr's interest in investigating the changes human actions have wrought in the natural environment. But where she looks at the relationship between early settlers and the Wimmera, I focus my attention on the impact and relationship of climbers to the specific site of Mt Arapiles.

[42] Damian Smith, "Jill Orr, Faith in a Faithless Land," (Victoria: Jenny Port Gallery, 2009), 3.
[43] Jill Orr, "The Southern Cross - to Bear and Behold," http://www.jillorr.com.au/e/southern-cross-to-bear-and-behold.html (2016) (accessed April 7, 2016).

Works in situ – establishing a relationship

In the initial phases of my practice-based research, a number of my works explored concepts of place and materiality. Works were made in situ and I turned my attention to how the site of Mt Arapiles was layered with various meanings and experiences. The physical layering one surface of ink and paper over another was a process I was very familiar with in my printmaking practice. I compare the act of layering a variety of printed papers to the layers of meaning found within the landscape, where the site of the paper provides a variety of conceptual possibilities and material outcomes; it is a place where different fragments, textures and perspectives coexist. I began by making numerous plein-air sketches from a bluff I revisited often on Mt Arapiles looking towards Mitre Rock and the salt lakes beyond. Drawing from observation strengthened my visual dialogue and mark making. I observed the varying light and colour of the salt plains, the gliding shadow edge cast by a cloud and the falling shadows. I incorporated a greater variety of marks in my work in response to the greater variety of textures I observed and experienced in the landscape.

Similarly to the works of Nolan and early eighteenth century artists, Mitchell and Chevalier, these drawings made on site and from an elevated view, informed my perception of the Wimmera landscape. This form of engaged looking led to an intimate and sustained contemplation of the landscape. I was not engaged in capturing the broad sweeping (picturesque) perspective of the landscape (as was Chevalier), but like Nolan and Hunter I described forms that most impressed me. An excerpt from my diary of the time reads, “The clouds hang low over the parched Wimmera fields. I draw over and over again the outline of Mitre Lake, trying to capture its hovering affect over the landscape, a vast mirror to a white sky.” Unlike my predecessors, my images sometimes allude to a landscape viewed through a pair of binoculars or as a fragmented landscape viewed from multiple points. I adopted these pictorial devices for their implication of another way of seeing. The view from a telescope offers a close observation of the texture and variation in the surface of the landscape. What is viewed from far away becomes close and what is close becomes intimate.

I further extended my interaction with site in related drawings, photographs and documentation, as well as collecting and archiving historical materials, including letters and climber’s diaries. I researched the historical narrative of Mt Arapiles, as it is written in the landscape about the landscape and by the people who experience it. This concept of place as seen and experienced intimately is particularly relevant at Mt Arapiles where communities of climbers have camped at the base of the rock for prolonged periods of time. In 2009 I organised a chartered flight over Mt

Arapiles and the surrounding plains. For the first time I viewed a series of salt lakes immediately west of the Mount. I was overcome by the strange realisation that the shimmering singular Mitre Lake that I had spent so many years drawing from a familiar outlook on Mt Arapiles was in fact, part of a much larger chain of salt lakes that are the last remnants of the receding inland sea. The sea's maximum advance was about twenty million years ago when the Grampians and Mt Arapiles stood as ancient sea cliffs. Viewing place is all about perspective: culturally and physically.

Figure 9. Bridget Hillebrand, *Seven-and-twenty lakes,* 2010, linocut, unique state. 40 x 130cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Australia.

My work *Seven-and-twenty lakes,* (2010) (see fig. 9) consists of twenty-seven circular prints on individually raised supports. The images depict a series of viewpoints of the salt lakes from Mt Arapiles and reflect the changing geography; what was once an inland sea is now a series of salt lakes. Just as the surface of the landscape is interrupted, so are the surfaces of the prints. The texture of the surface of the prints echoes the topography of the landscape. Just as the salt lakes reveal their luminosity at certain times of the day, the prints, when viewed closely and from a specific angle, also reveal a glistening and fractured surface. This variation of surface is repeated in the layered surface of the chiaroscuro[44] linocut technique (see fig. 10). The imagery draws inspiration from the play of light on the shimmering glass like surface of the salt lakes and Alexander Sutherland's description of Major Thomas Mitchells' view from Mt Arapiles in 1888: "A wide plain of grass and sylvan expanses lay far as eye could range, and, dotting it with an exquisite charm, slept the mirror-like faces of seven-and-twenty lakes, all circular, all of silver glimmer."[45]

[44] Chiaroscuro linocuts are similar to chiaroscuro woodcuts, an early form of European colour printing that uses a key block, then several other blocks with clear tonal changes.
[45] Sutherland, 89.

Figure 10. Bridget Hillebrand, *Seven-and-twenty lakes*, (detail) 2010, linocut, unique state. Collection of the National Gallery of Australia.

At the time of producing these prints, working outside in the landscape was a crucial part of my practice. I immersed myself in the landscape, sitting in the wind amongst the rocks and listening to the sounds it carried, smelling the approaching rain and becoming absorbed in it. I kept returning to the same place but from a slightly altered point of view. The resultant works were records of a mixture of experience felt and remembered and represented: a composite. My long association as a climber with the Wimmera landscape enriched my awareness of the landscape's mutability and fragility. I remember a time when billabongs were full and now luminous saltpans rippled with waves.

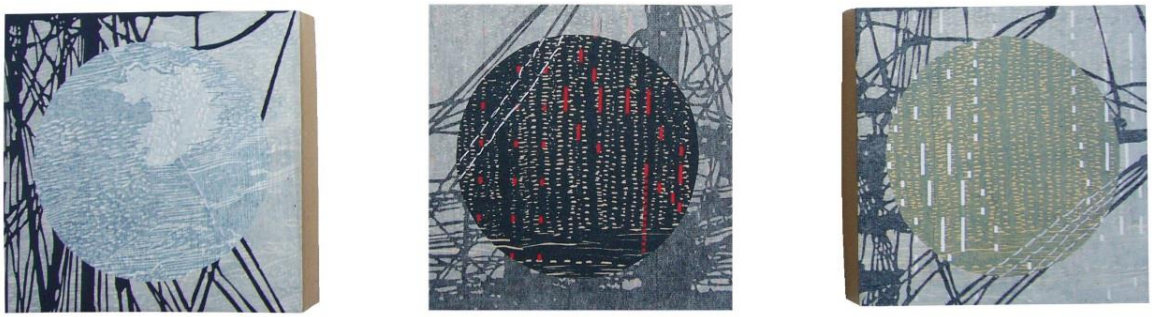

Figure 11. Bridget Hillebrand, *Rope Below,* 2010, linocut and hand stitching, unique state, 12.5 x 47.5cm.

In the same year I completed a series of linocut prints entitled *Rope Below,* (2010) (see fig. 11). The circular format alludes to the view from a ship's porthole. Seamen hauled ropes on the tall ships that were part of the early expeditions to Australia. Today rock climbers cast ropes from the rocky escarpments of Mt Arapiles which were once part of ancient sea cliffs surrounded by a vast inland sea. In April 2010, I wrote in my diary "dawn is breaking… looking out from the bluff I sit and watch as a thick blanket of low white cloud rolls towards me, it completely obscures my view of the surrounding plains. I half close my eyes and imagine the ancient sea is here again, lapping against an ancient sea stack." All landscapes embody memories. The imagery in *Rope Below* explores the representation of a play of light on an ancient sea, falling ropes and the tender veil of replenishing rain.

In 2011 I made a series of sketches of an approaching storm while sitting in a cave on the bluffs overlooking Mitre Rock. From these drawings, I developed a series of prints titled *Cloud Seeds* (see

fig. 12), which responded to the breaking of the drought[46] and the past practice of cloud seeding in the Wimmera.[47] The circular format of the individual prints suggests a specific field of view as seen through the eye of a telescope and references the intense observation of prevailing weather conditions.

Figure 12. Bridget Hillebrand, *Cloud Seeds,* 2011, linocut, unique state, 40cm x 70cm, (15 circular panels each 10cm in diameter).

Seven-and-twenty lakes, Rope Below and Cloud Seeds are displayed on raised supports, rather than the conventional method of displaying prints, mounted on board within a glass frame. The viewer engages with the works without the traditional constrictions of a framing device, as the surface and tactile qualities of the work became visible without a reflective glass barrier. The layered, printed papers were also selected for their punctured and rippled texture. Stitched Pianola paper and fine

[46] Drought in Australia is defined by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology as rainfall over a three-month period being in the lowest decile of what has been recorded for that region in the past. From 2003 – 2012 drought was recorded in many regions of Australia including the Wimmera. On Jan 12, 2011 the township of Natimuk (located approx. 20 km from Mt Arapiles) was in flood after the Wimmera River and its tributaries burst their banks. For the first time in over ten years Mitre Lake was full, and nearby billabongs were teeming with bird life and the sound of bell frogs.

[47] In *The Age*, July 4. 1967, '*Rain can be too late for Wheat*', Roger Sanders reported that the Victorian Agriculture department purchased a new Beechcraft C-55 cloud-seeding aircraft for cloud-seeding flights in the Western District and the Wimmera.

Japanese Kozo papers embedded with crushed cicada wings, are reflective and tactile; and this becomes evident as the viewer moves around the work.

In this chapter I have discussed the historical complexity of the landscape of Mt Arapiles, investigating how I and other artists have perceived and represented Mt Arapiles and the surrounding plains. In the following chapter I make reference to authors who are united in the view that landscapes are constructed in social engagement and provide evidence that climbers share a common understanding of a particular reading of the landscape of Mt Arapiles.

Chapter two

Ties that bind us

> Place is latitudinal and longitudinal within the map of a person's life. It is temporal and spatial, personal and political. A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has width as well as depth. It is about connections, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there.[48]

Place and space

The notion of place has been widely written about – it has been the concern of philosophers, social scientist, geographers, anthropologists, psychologists, historians and art historians. I make reference to authors who are united in the view that landscapes are constructed in social engagement and that landscapes exist in relation to the people who engage with them and imbue them with meaning. Geographer Tim Creswell defines place as a 'meaningful location', "they are all spaces which people have made meaningful. They are all spaces people are attached to in one way or other."[49] In this chapter I will discuss how the place of Mt Arapiles is constructed by community and social engagement and that a climber's relationship to the place of Mt Arapiles is linked through the perception of landscape through both a cultural and literary heritage.

Humanist Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan believes 'space' is a more abstract concept than 'place'. He likens 'space' to movement and 'place' to pauses:

> What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value… The ideas "space" and "place" require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.[50]

As a climber I agree with Yi-Fu Tuan's suggestion that when space becomes familiar, it becomes place. Climbers engage with the landscape of Mt Arapiles and imbue it with meaning through physically climbing and writing about their experiences. According to Yi-Fu Tuan, "space is

[48] Lippard, 7.
[49] Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), 7.
[50] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 8.

transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning."[51] Naming is one of the ways space can be given meaning and become place and I discuss this in detail in Chapter three, and I also explore how space is perceived through the spoken and written word.

The notion of Mt Arapiles as a climbing landscape was realised when the first rock climbs were recorded. English historian Simon Schama noted:

> Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock… But it should also be acknowledged that once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery.[52]

Rock climbing guidebooks record a climber's conversion of space into place. Yi-Fu Tuan states, that by recording representations of the environment those representations can "gain access to and take hold on public consciousness and achieve thereby a higher degree of stability and permanence even though no physical manipulation of nature had occurred."[53] And Australian climber Simon Mentz recounts, "I always had my head in these guide books, devouring them, because the guide books were the tickets to these great adventures and I would be reading them constantly."[54]

Place is constructed with history and memories. My own memories of Mt Arapiles are added to and altered with each subsequent visit and these alterations inform my experience of place. The way I perceive the landscape of Mt Arapiles is invariably shaped by my prior experience. Other visitors to the Mount bring their own memories, they have in fact as Macfarlane suggests, "perceived that wilderness, as just about everything is perceived, through a filter of associations."[55] Simon Schama echoes similar sentiments when he writes, "Before it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock."[56] Climbers experience cliffs in a very different way from a passing tourist or bush walker. But what we see has always been contingent on where it is that we look from. Lucy Lippard noted, "Both landscape and place can be broken down into their social components, the vortices where people

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[51] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 136.
[52] Schama, 61.
[53] Yi-Fu Tuan, "Language and the Marking of Place: A Narrative Descriptive Approach," in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81, no. 4 (1991): 688.
[54] Peter Jackson et al., "Arapiles 50. A Celebration," in *Arapiles 50. A Celebration* (Centenary Park, Mt Arapiles: 2013).
[55] Macfarlane, 18.
[56] Schama, 6.

and place work on each other. But place is where we stand to look around at landscape or look out to the (less familiar) view."[57]

Mt Arapiles has not always been perceived or experienced as a 'climbing landscape'. My research reveals that only after climbers Bob and Steve Craddock viewed an image of Mitre Rock (a monolith adjacent to the much larger Mt Arapiles) printed in the 1962 issue of *The Royalauto* did they consider a reconnaissance trip to the area to see if any climbing was possible. Australian climber Peter Jackson remembers the first time he contemplated the idea of climbing at Mt Arapiles with fellow climber Ben Lyons. "I was walking across towards Bard Buttress[58] and I said to Ben, Isn't it incredible? Look at that! (We were looking up at the Bard) and I said, do you reckon the days will ever come when somebody will climb up these walls? And he said, oh yes, in England people climb up that sort of thing all the time."[59] To the climbers of the early 1960s Mt Arapiles was a landscape full of potential places waiting to be climbed, mapped and named. To the early pioneers it was an elevated point from which to view the seemingly untouched Wimmera plains. Jackson and the early pioneers believed they were chartering unknown territory. Robert Macfarlane notes that assumptions and preconceptions affect the way we perceive and behave in a place, "(when) traversing even the most unchartered landscape, we are also traversing the terrain of the known. We carry expectations within us and to an extent we make what we meet conform to those expectations… our cultural baggage - our memory - is weightless, but impossible to leave behind."[60]

Projects

The Pines project - 2011

'The Pines' campground is a significant landmark at Mt Arapiles. Climbers from many generations remember it as a place to meet, sit in the shade and hear epic climbing tales and to view the looming cliffs ahead and plan their next assault. Australian pioneer climber Iain Sedgman recalls his memories, "The Pine plantation then was a great camping spot and still had a small wire fence running around the perimeter. Camping was on a thick bed of pine needles close to the eastern, or bottom end. One could not venture much further in as the pine trees then had branches right down

[57] Lippard, 9.
[58] Bard Buttress, located at Mt Arapiles, is a large pillar of rock adjacent to an area known as Tiger Wall. It features steep, exposed and multi-pitch climbs.
[59] Jackson et al.
[60] Macfarlane, 195.

to the ground. These branches slowly disappeared over the years so that by the mid-seventies one could camp pretty much anywhere."[61]

Figure 13. 'The Pines' campground, with newly planted Callitris Pine seedlings in the foreground. 2011. Mt Arapiles-Tooan State Park. Vic. Australia. © Bridget Hillebrand.

The Pines is the site where I first began talking with climbers, recording their impressions of Mt Arapiles and the effect that climbing has had upon their lives. The camp site itself has changed dramatically over time and plans for its future have been the topic of many heated discussions. But long before climbers discovered 'the Pines', Centenary Park, also located at the base of the Mount, was visited and appreciated by the community that surrounded it. Picnickers, rifle clubs, band performers, walking clubs and birdwatchers all enjoyed another kind of attachment to the Mount, which didn't involve climbing. When the Mount Arapiles Centenary Park Committee was formed in the early 1930s, it was the first committee of its kind on forest land in Victoria. In 1936 members of the committee and many local school children planted five hundred Cypress Pines in what is now known as 'The Pines' camp ground. It was part of the celebrations organised by the Committee to recognize the centenary of Major Thomas Mitchell, who first came to the Mount in 1836. Yi-Fu Tuan suggests that tree planting is part of a deliberate design to create place. He writes, "(trees) can provide a stage for warm human encounters; each sapling is a potential for intimacy… Trees are planted for aesthetic effect, deliberately, but their real value may lie as stations for poignant, unplanned human encounters."[62]

In the early days of climbing post 1960, 'the Pines' were dense, dark, fenced off and almost impenetrable. In the coming years as more climbers and visitors arrived seeking refuge from the

[61] Jackson et al.
[62] Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, 141-143.

heat, ‘the Pines’ was the place to camp. But the trees began to struggle with the increased traffic. Individual trees were removed if they were deemed unsafe and by 1997 the number of pines had decreased from five hundred to one hundred and ninety-seven, with another thirty-seven in decline. The long drought resulted in the end for many more. Subsequent campaigns to save the pines have focussed on their heritage value both for the national and international climbing community, and for the heritage of Centenary Park. In 2009 hundreds of native Callitris Pines, propagated from the Mount a year earlier, were planted to assist in revegetating the increasingly sparse camp site.

Figure 14. *The Pines Project*, 2011, Natimuk Creek, Natimuk, Victoria. © Bridget Hillebrand.

Figure 15. Goroke P-12 College students at ‘The Pines’ campground with their tree drawings, 2011, Mt Arapiles-Tooan State Park. © Bridget Hillebrand.

In April 2011 I headed a working bee, and enlisted the help of volunteers to install wire guards around the recently planted native pine seedlings, (see fig. 13) in an effort to ensure their survival during the oncoming and popular spring climbing season. As a climber and a camper who frequented the area, I felt responsible for their care and welfare. I took particular interest in their growth patterns. I documented their height at different times of the year, taking note in which areas they thrived and which areas they struggled. I began to think about ways I could encourage more young people to engage in their role as future custodians of the trees, as their forefathers had done so many years before. As a result, later that same year, I completed the *Pines Project*, (see fig. 14) a collaboration between the local school students and the campers who visited the Mount which fostered connections and discussions about the importance of place and memory. Eighty-one local school children from Goroke P12 College (see fig. 15) and Natimuk Primary were invited to each produce one drawing of the eighty-one remaining pine trees. Eighty-one members of the community were also asked to record their memories of camping at the pines. Their written responses were incorporated into the final images presented on tree guards with hanging candle lights. Some of the

transcribed stories were also burnt onto the stakes that supported the works. It was installed along Natimuk Creek at the 2011 Natimuk Fringe as a site-specific memory installation.

Figure 16. Bridget Hillebrand, *Whispering Pines*, (detail) 2011, mixed media, dimensions variable.

The Pines Project provided the impetus for a body of work entitled *Whispering Pines* (2011) (see fig. 16) where the stories I had collected about camping at the pines were transcribed and printed onto the now worn and faded tree guards that had shielded the Callitris pine seedlings of 2009. Remnants of soil, spider webs and pine needles still clung to the deteriorating and torn plastic. In an installation at Monash Art Design & Architecture, the tree guards were suspended at varying heights, hovering in space like ghostly counterparts of the seedlings they once protected. The worn plastic sleeves were evidence of the passage of time, not only ecologically but historically and culturally. This project led to further research and to printing on unstable substrates which reflected the ravages of wind, rain and weather.

The fifty year climbing forum - 2013

In 2013 a forum to celebrate fifty years of climbing at Mount Arapiles was held (see fig. 17) The aim of the forum was to reflect on climbing at Mt Arapiles over the last fifty years, from the sport itself to the environment we engage in. I delivered a presentation that incorporated images of the changing landscape of Mt Arapiles and my recorded conversations of climbers who recalled their experiences and impressions of climbing and camping at the Mount. The forum was presented by Friends of Arapiles, Cliff Care, Victorian Climbing Club and Parks Victoria. In attendance were a number of notable climbers who were responsible for a vast majority of first ascents including, Geoff

Schirmer, Michael Stone, Simon Mentz, Peter Jackson, Keith Lockwood, Simon Mentz, Ross Taylor and Louise Shepherd.

Figure 17. Mt Arapiles 50 Year Climbing Forum, 2013, Centenary Park, Mt Arapiles –Tooan State Park. (Photograph by Simon Mentz).

The climbers presented slides and told their own unique stories about their experience of Mt Arapiles. A lively discussions ensued about climbing past and present, what has and hasn't changed and how climbers perceive the environment they engage in. Peter Jackson reflected on his impressions when he first visited the Mount in 1963:

> The impact on me was sensational… the little grottoes and secret gullies which exist everywhere fired up my imagination. I've always loved rocks and I couldn't get over this new kind of rock that didn't exist anywhere else. The calm surroundings… there was no one else here, nothing, just us, and there was, and there still is of course, a presence… presence is not just being in a certain place, its being affected psychologically and spiritually for all sorts of reasons and immediately this place hit me with presence more than anything I've experienced before.[63]

Australian climber Geoff Schirmer echoed similar sentiments:

> My experience of climbing here in the 70s was that there were relatively few climbers around. We seemed to have the Mount to ourselves. The silence added to a sense of awe, a sense of magnitude of the place, the mystery of the place. There were priceless moments of contemplation.[64]

Also in attendance at the Forum were Parks Victoria representatives Graham Parkes (Grampians District Ranger) and Alan Braithwaite (Mt Arapiles Ranger in Charge). Braithwaite confirmed what

[63] Jackson et al.
[64] Ibid.

was already widely known and agreed upon, “Climbing has such a strong following and this is what people come here for.”[65]

It was a rare occurrence to have so many members of the Australian climbing community in the same place at the same time. I gathered more personal and autobiographical experiences from the attendees. I sewed fifty metres of cloth into a rope and presented it at numerous sites at the Mount. I provided markers and invited participants to write on the rope a response to the question: do you have a memory of Mt Arapiles that you would like to share? I gathered anonymous responses from climbers and campers, which reflected geographical facts or observations, personal aesthetic responses and historical reflections.

Over eighty climbers responded with messages that stretched to fifty metres. A number of responses related to the unique environment which promotes a sense of peace and wellbeing. “Today, this morning was the first time I heard birds singing like that: A breath of fresh Arapiles is good for the soul: Arapiles is my meditation: A sound sleep; peaceful and safe.” Others commented on the strong sense of community that camping in close proximity to the Mount brings. “Good climbing, good friends: Arapiles, sun, people, climbing and camping –Awesome!” The cloth rope was then physically wound and tied through the landscape as a reminder of the hopes and memories that bind us to the special place we now call Mt Arapiles.

The Rock Climbers Questionnaire – 2012 - 2015

During the course of my research I interviewed, recorded and documented numerous conversations with climbers camped at the base of Mt Arapiles. I also interviewed a number of pioneering climbers who were at the forefront of developing climbs at Mt Arapiles. I drew on these primary responses in the course of this research as they articulate how climbers perceive and interact with the landscape of Mt Arapiles. From 2012 through to 2015 I developed and distributed one hundred self-completion questionnaires (see Appendix 2) to people over the age of eighteen who are involved in rock climbing activities at Mt Arapiles. Eighty-five questionnaires were completed and received. The participants responded to the questions by themselves in their own time. The questionnaires were used as a tool for collecting and recording information about the way climbers perceive and engage with Mt Arapiles, which included personal stories and memories associated with climbing and camping at the Mount. They provided a unique insight to first-hand responses, as many of the handwritten responses suggested a going-over, a going-back to erase and reassess the written

[65] Ibid.

memory. I discuss the significance of handwritten text as opposed to typed text and its inclusion my work in greater detail in Chapter three.

In investigating how other climbers experience the landscape of Mt Arapiles I was seeking a broader understanding of my own perception of Mt Arapiles. My research revealed that 86% of climbers surveyed were introduced to Mt Arapiles by family and friends or University mountaineering clubs, through word of mouth. Considering how information is easily accessible from the internet, I felt that this indicated a need for personal recommendation and assurance that is only gained by speaking with someone. I was also introduced to Mt Arapiles through friends and incorporate verbal and written descriptions of climbs in my work as an acknowledgement of this personal communication. This personal interaction heightens my experience of the place Mt Arapiles. When climbers were asked how they chose what route to climb, 'reading a guide book' received the highest response rate, with 'verbal descriptions' as the second most frequent response. However, when asked how climbers gain knowledge about the physical aspects of climbing the majority responded, 'exploring the landscape first hand' closely followed by 'verbal descriptions' and 'reading descriptions from a guide book'.

It was evident from my survey that first-hand knowledge gained by climbing rock, verbal and written descriptions were the main factors in determining how and in what ways climbers engage and gain knowledge about climbing the landscape of Mt Arapiles. This supported my supposition that climbers engage with the landscape of Mt Arapiles through kinaesthetic and corporeal knowledge as well as by referencing oral and written descriptions of climbs. My research also revealed that the majority of climbers not only climb for the mental and physical challenge, but for the opportunity to gain personal insights and to further understand the world around them. They wrote:

> A sense of connection with the environment brings you present into the moment.[66]
>
> I love the problem solving needed, the adrenaline and the personal satisfaction of getting to the top. If I have difficulties one day, then later try the climb again and can do it. It's awesome to see the personal growth and achievement.[67]
>
> Night climbing… when you only have the light of your head lamp it decreases your peripheral vision and is like climbing in a bubble, you only get to see where your head is facing.[68]

Two-thirds of the climbers indicated that they chose to climb at Mt Arapiles because of the strong sense of community and friendships that are formed:

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[66] Anonymous. *Group 1-Rock Climbers*. Questionnaire. No. 35. April 17, 2013.
[67] Ibid. No. 62. September 23, 2014.
[68] Ibid. No. 25. April 17, 2013.

> Stories of shared experiences with other climbers make it a great community… I like being with like-minded people enjoying the same pursuit.[69]

> I began coming here more regularly and got to know some prominent climbers and locals. This changed the Mount for me and it became more familiar and friendly. I now feel a part of the community here, even though I don't live here.[70]

Others wrote of the motivation and the physical challenges climbing provides:

> It's a weird mix of adrenaline, fear and achievement.[71]

> I enjoy the physical sense of gaining strength, balance, flexibility, conquering fears, spending time with friends.[72]

> It forces you to focus on the immediate.[73]

The responses were varied and often reflected an individual's rich personal climbing history in a mixture of memories, extrapolations, fears and retellings.

Place and materiality

Working plein-air is an uncertain methodology and embraces the unexpected. Wind, dust, rain, insects and the glare of the sun are all contributing factors to working outdoors. When drawing outdoors I sometimes worked directly onto relief printing blocks, first drawing the form or shadow of the features of the landscape and then carving out line detail on the blocks. The blocks were often cut in situ and then completed and printed in the studio. However I began to question whether a different method of making work, could suggest the tactile experience of engaging with rock. Using printmaking as the language of my exploration, there seemed to be an obvious correlation to direct print techniques using the rocks as the starting point for making an image and creating prints directly from the landscape.

Inspiration to work with mud, limestone and crushed rock began while working on site at the base of Mt Arapiles at the nearby creeks and Mitre Lake. It was 2012, the end of the drought in the Wimmera and I floated large sheets of paper in a billabong which had recently filled with rain (see fig. 18). While letting the sheets dry on the grassy banks I foraged for discarded objects, shot gun

[69] Ibid. No. 38. April 18, 2013.
[70] Ibid. No. 62. September 24, 2014.
[71] Ibid. No. 72. September 23, 2014.
[72] Ibid. No. 75. September 23, 2014.
[73] Ibid. No. 19. December 17, 2012.

pellets[74] and other pieces of ephemera that lay half buried under the mud and sand. My physical engagement with organic mediums of water, earth and rocks found on the site of Mt Arapiles, began as a process of investigation into soaking, staining and burnishing sheets of paper with found objects to imbed and impress something into the paper of the renewed living natural environment after the long drought. The resultant works act as records, archives of place, as they are permeated with the soil, water, seed and rock found at the site of Mt Arapiles.

Figure 18. The author working in situ at the billabong located near Mt Arapiles, 2011.

My initial experiments proved that the found natural materials had considerable potential to be used as a tactile medium in my work and resulted in a series of prints entitled *Billabong Series* (2011–12). The muddy residue from the water hole settled on and stained the large sheets of white paper and the soil that I rubbed into the paper became an important part of the fragility of the work and its relationship to a specific place. As the works dried in the sun some of the soil residue fell away from the paper which rendered the works fragile and unstable when handled. As they were produced in situ, they are an immediate response to the changing landscape that had for over ten years remained dry and lifeless. Barbara Bolt discussed the agency of materials in art practice and wrote, "Matter is not impressed upon but rather matter enters into a process in the dynamic interplay through which meanings and effects emerge. A picture emerges in and through the play of the matter of objects (the dynamic object), the matter of bodies, the materials of production and the matter of discourse."[75]

[74] Watchtower Faces situated at Mt Arapiles was once the backdrop for the local Natimuk Township Rifle Range from 1926 – 1976. Bullet remnants can still be found on ledges and at the base of the cliff.
[75] Barbara Bolt, *Art Beyond Representation: The Perfomative Power of the Image* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 178.

Figure 19. Bridget Hillebrand, *Billabong Series*, (detail) 2011-2012, unbound artist book, linocut, earth and seeds on paper, each 38 x 28.5cm.

Presented as a set of fifteen loose pages, *Billabong Series* (see fig.19) records my perception of the subtleties and natural weathering processes that occur in the environment. It also explores tactile and corporeal relationships with the work. Marks and indentations on the paper were made by impressing soil and crushed rock into the surface and taking a burnished impression from a linoleum block carved with text. English artist and researcher Paul Coldwell observed that a hand-drawn mark on a print has a scale in direct relationship to ourselves as physical beings: "The mark traces the movement of the wrist, the articulation of the forearm… The surface is the membrane that records this history... (and) the original artefact allows the viewer to excavate, revealing sequence, strategies and levels of decision making."[76]

At this stage of my research the process of making art works centred around repetitive physical acts, including pounding, rubbing, scouring, burnishing, carving, tearing, cutting and printing. I engaged physically with the materials of site just as I engaged physically with the act of climbing. These are acts of intensified intimacy with the materiality of place. I collected rocks, soil and limestone as part of my bodily engagement with the landscape. My use of natural materials also forged a link with the history of earlier indigenous inhabitants of Mt Arapiles when the urge to create was fulfilled with whatever materials were at hand, when fingers were dipped into pigment to mark the surface of the rock, for example. I worked with the dirt, the marks and the scars on the printed paper. The works were both added to and erased as burnished text, marks, creases, holes and other traces of handling became pictorial elements. In the process of making, the work was handled and rehandled to show signs of wear and physical engagement. I explore this element of tactility in my art practice in more detail in Chapter five.

[76] Paul Coldwell, "Interrogating the Surface," in *Second Impact International Printmaking Conference* (University of Art and Design, Helsinki, Finland: 2001), 3.

My investigation into how climbers know and experience the landscape of Mt Arapiles through documented conversations and recorded field surveys has provided evidence that landscapes are constructed in social engagement. Places such as Mt Arapiles are imbued with memories, residues and the echoes of events and conversations that have occurred there and have become part of its cultural history. Through my exploration of both the physicality of materials found on site and cultural issues, I discovered how the utilisation of organic materials records the particularities of my activities at Mt Arapiles. In the following chapter I discuss the significance of the use of text in my art practice and its importance in mediating the pictorial representation of Mt Arapiles.

Chapter three

The language of climbing and its particular landscape

> *The trek to my favourite climb is along a narrow, uneven, well-trodden path that winds its way past the bluffs where the shrill cry of a nesting pair of peregrine falcons can often be heard warning would-be climbers to stay clear. This thin line in the earth is flanked by tussocks of kangaroo and wallaby grass and in the heat of the day my eyes are often cast downward in an attempt to avoid snakes and blue tongue lizards, rather than gazing upwards at the sheer majesty of the polished quartzite. The track climbs past Castle Crag, Pharos Gully, and Pinnacle Face until finally it arrives at Watchtower Face, a polished canvas of rock that hosts some of the most celebrated multi pitch climbs at Mt Arapiles. It is here that the three pitch, three star, grade 16 climb named 'Brolga' awaits. The guide book description is encouraging, 'The climbing is graceful, thought provoking and quite run-out.'*
>
> — *Extract from author's diary*

How language creates place

In this chapter I discuss the discourse through which climbing landscapes are constructed and interpreted and how Mt Arapiles has acquired greater significance and recognition through a dense microhistory of acts of naming and repetitive use of specific areas for climbing. I aim to establish the importance of how a climbing landscape is perceived through the use of a specific language. The language of climbing associated with Mt Arapiles informs both my studio practice and my engagement with a specific place. It is this climbing language and the related stories, descriptions, notations and conversations that I directly reference in my prints. I also explore how language constructs landscapes, and in turn how language influences our subjective experience of it in my creative works. As pioneering Tasmanian rock climber Robert McMahon suggests, "A climb is something which has taken place on a piece of rock and changed utterly, and forever, the nature of the rock. After a climb has been put up, the rock is a different thing."[77] I often approach climbs at Mt Arapiles having read or discussed certain features of the rock before attempting to lead a climb. Rock climbing discourses mediate my interpretation and engagement with specific natural features

[77] Robert McMahon and Gerry Narkowicz, *South Esk a Chronicle of Discovery* (Tasmania: Climb Tasmania Incorporated, 2003), 26.

on the rock. In reading the description of the climb *Brolga* referred to at the beginning of this chapter, I read 'graceful' as a movement that requires balance rather than brute strength and 'thought provoking' alludes to moments of concentrated focus rather than desperate moves. The term 'run-out' conjures images of being mentally challenged, as placement of protection from a fall may be spaced at further intervals than I would normally be comfortable with. The name of the climb was chosen by the first ascensionist[78] in 1975 who described the climb as "a line as long, graceful and elegant as a trumpeting brolga."[79]

Rock climbing has its own vocabulary, laden with meaning and bound by established rules. It is a language shaped by a specific climbing culture and upheld by individuals in the climbing fraternity. How do I as a climber, know and experience landscape through the verbal and written word? How can language create landscapes and in turn influence our subjective experience of it? Australian academic George Seddon stated:

> The way we use words tells us a good deal about the way we relate to landscape… The language of landscape, like all language, is loaded. The words we use both reveal and influence our perceptions of the environment, reflect our objectives and interests and affect our actions.[80]

A description of the climb *Jens Roof,* located in an area at Mt Arapiles known as the Organ Pipes reads, "Fun overhang offering airy jugging. Scramble to terrace then veer R and up to hanging chimney. Up face (a little run-out) just L of chimney to roof. Veer L through roof to bolt at lip, then up headwall to rap anchor (30m to terrace). 35m 18"[81]. The words reveal an insight into the language and culture of climbing, a language that has evolved and adapted with each generation to describe the situations climbers encounter and the tools they use to climb with. 'Airy jugging,' refers to large hand holds that are located on an overhang that leave the climber exposed to the air, well away from the rock. 'Rap anchor,' refers to a fixed anchor in the rock which the climber uses to rappel or descend to the ground, by threading the rope through the anchor and using a belay device. Some of the words could be considered 'neologisms,' newly created words or expressions. This is especially true of terminology coined in the last twenty years during the rapid rise in the popularity of sport climbing[82] and bouldering[83] in Australia. Using words to heighten or 'gain vision' in the

[78] The first person to climb a route is called the first ascensionist.
[79] Keith Lockwood, *Arapiles, a Million Mountains* (Natimuk: Skink Press, 2008), 145.
[80] Seddon, 27.
[81] Simon Mentz and Glenn Tempest, eds., *Arapiles Selected Climbs*, (Australia: Open Spaces Publishing, 2008), 107.
[82] Sport climbing is a style of rock climbing practised indoor and outdoor, on artificial surfaces or rock. It originated outdoors where climbing routes are well protected with pre-placed bolt-anchors fixed to the rock.

landscape is discussed in detail in Robert Macfarlane's book *Landmarks.* He states, "There are experiences of landscape that will always resist articulation, and of which words offer only a remote echo… but we are and always have been name-callers, christeners. Words are grained into our landscapes, and landscapes grained into our words."[84]

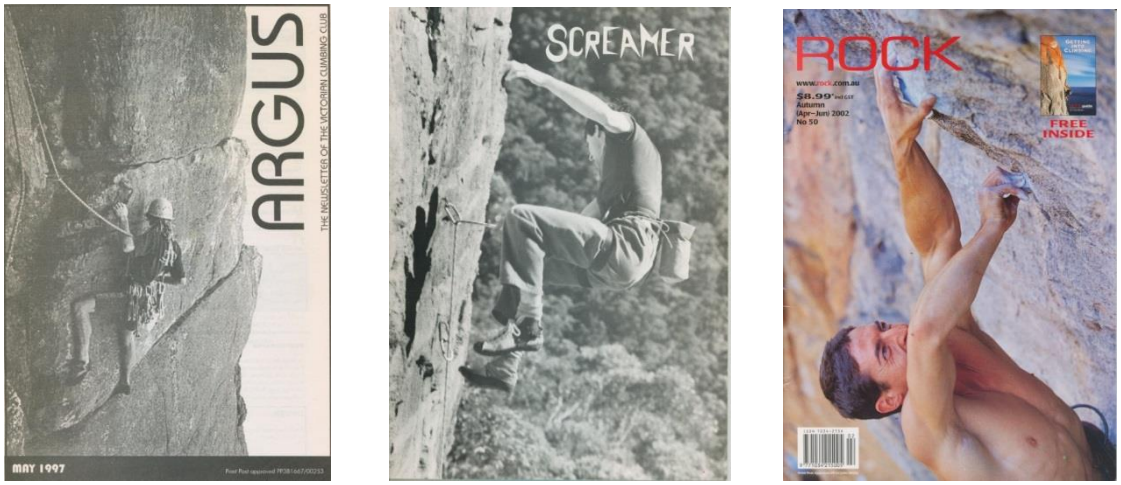


Figure 20. Front cover of climbing magazines *Argus,* 1997, *Screamer*, 1998 and *Rock*, 2002.

The development of a perception of a climbing landscape is clearly evident in a variety of sources, conversations, guide books and climbing magazines. These include the Australian publications *Vertical Life, Thrutch*, (Australia's only national magazine*) Screamer, Rock,* (see fig. 20), *Wild, Crux,* and *Argus* (the official journal of the Victorian Climbing Club (VCC)) and online forums and information sites such as *Chockstone*, where climbers are guided in how to interact and interpret rock features as a climber. Our culture today is dominated by electronic media, where data is produced, stored and transmitted in instantaneous and immaterial modes. But printed climbing guides with their descriptive commentary and diagrams still require climbers to read and memorise aspects of climbs before setting off to complete single or multi-pitch climbs.[85] As stated in Chapter two, my research has shown that climbers select which routes to climb based on oral and written descriptions. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan asserts that even more importantly, "the way in which individual words and descriptions impart emotion and personality, places higher visibility to specific places."[86] This is particularly true when routes described in climbing guides as fun, engaging,

[83]Bouldering is the practice of climbing indoors or outdoors on large boulders (artificially made or rock) without the use of ropes for protection from falling.
[84] Robert Macfarlane, *Landmarks* (UK: Hamish Hamilton, 2015), 10.
[85] Multi-pitch climbing is the ascent of climbing routes with one or more stops at a belay station. Each section of climbing between stops at the belay stations is called a pitch.
[86] Tuan, "Language and the Marking of Place: A Narrative Descriptive Approach," 685.

intriguing, superb and brilliant are highly sought after whereas routes described as ridiculous, bizarre and contrived are frequented far less.

Since the early 1960s, journals, books and climbing associations in Australia have been developed to disseminate information about styles of climbing and to guide participants. To climb well requires discipline and to follow rules and while some rules are unwritten - such as climbing with your knees is considered poor technique - participants are bound by conformity governed by established climbers. American climber Lito Tejda-Flores explains that it is climbers themselves who determine the rules that govern their activity on the rock. In his seminal 1967 essay, entitled 'Games Climbers Play' he stated, "No matter what their origin a set of rules must be consecrated by usage and general acceptance."[87] Equally importantly, he stressed that rules are never fixed, and must be constantly re-negotiated by climbers as a community.

English born Australian pioneer climber John Ewbank suggests that through the act of climbing and documenting routes, climbers develop a sense of ownership to the land and enforce their personal values and beliefs. "This is why they are constantly fighting about each other's behaviour: You used two bolts, while I used only one! Oh, I put chalk on it – but I didn't leave a piton! Climbers are obsessed with an experience they wish to share, but which they do not wish to be altered or lessened."[88] The choices climbers make alter their interaction with the landscape. Artists, like climbers, offer a variation on what has gone before, enacting or reacting to cultural codes of representation, with individual interpretation and aesthetics. Climbers idealise an unmediated environmental experience yet the increasing use of equipment and adherence to rules can sometimes mitigate risk and also the experience of climbing. Similarly the conventions associated with printmaking, such as editioning, mounting and framing influences the way images are understood and perceived by the viewer. The rules of climbing, as in printmaking, were not invented by one person. They are an inherited and refined set of historical precedents and are, as Lito Tejda-Flores suggests, open to re-interpretation.

Many of our pioneering Australian climbers were first influenced by stories and climbing guides from the United Kingdom. Pioneering Australian climber Steve Craddock writes that the North Whales climbing guide books that his father brought out to Australia in the 1960s were handed around and studied with reverence.[89] Similarly, Simon Schama suggests that our idea of landscape is "a tradition

[87] Lito Teja-da-Flores, "Games Climbers Play," *Ascent* May, (1967): 4.
[88] John Ewbank, "Ironmongers of the Dreamtime," in *Escalade Festival* (Mount Victoria, Blue Mountains: 1993).
[89] Steve Craddock, "Barwon and Beyond – Arapiles Climbing," http://www.stevecraddock.id.au/Arapiles.html. (accessed January 5, 2016)

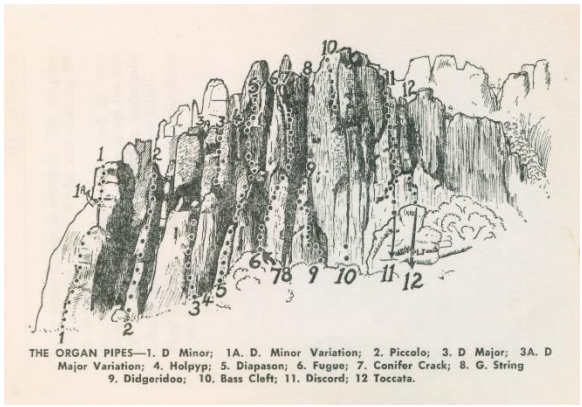
built from a rich deposit of myths, memories, and obsessions."[90] Another Australian climber who spoke of the influences of climbing literature and its impact on the way Australian climbers viewed and engaged with the environment was Peter Jackson. He comments, "We were engrossed by the writing of British climbers that saw value in the development of cliffs throughout the UK… in 1962 through to 1966 we stored anecdotes from dozens of books. We talked about them over and over again"[91] Pioneer Australian climber Chris Baxter also stated, "My initial impetus into climbing came largely from a background of bushwalking and reading mountaineering books."[92] Many Australian climbers acknowledge the importance of stories which fuelled their enthusiasm and attitudes towards climbing, particularly at Mt Arapiles. My creative works draw on the language of climbing that incites an intimate engagement with the landscape of Mt Arapiles.

Climbing discourse

At the forefront of climbing discourse are climbing guides. These are integral to the representation of rock climbing landscapes. They are designed to inform climbers where routes can be found, who climbed these routes and their grade of difficulty. They usually include maps, drawings or photographs of a given climbing area and written descriptions of individual routes interpreting the use of specific natural features on the rock. Technical details on how to actually climb specific routes are normally avoided unless strenuous techniques such as layback or jamming are necessary. Naming the route is left to the first ascensionist – the first person to climb the route. But as people's relationship with Mt Arapiles changed so too did the language associated with it.

Keith Lockwood is a pioneer climber of Mt Arapiles. In my conversation with him in 2015, he explained that many of the rock features named by climbers in the 1960s already had names known by the local community. The rock formation now known as the 'Organ Pipes' was previously referred to as 'Cathedral Rocks'. 'Declaration Crag' was once known as 'Taylors Rocks'. What was thought to be a blank canvas with no previous association was unknowingly renamed by climbers who were unfamiliar with the previous local naming of areas on the Mount. The area at Mt Arapiles known today as the 'Organ Pipes' was named for the tall, fluted rock columns that resemble an organ. It then became a tradition that all climbs in that area were given musical terms as names (see fig. 21 and 22). A list of routes include: *Cadenza, D Minor, Crescendo, Piccolo, CS Concerto, D Major* and *Libretto.*

[90] Schama, 14.
[91] Peter Jackson, e-mail to author, November 29, 2014.
[92] John Ewbank, "Chris Baxter," *Thrutch* 1973, 16.



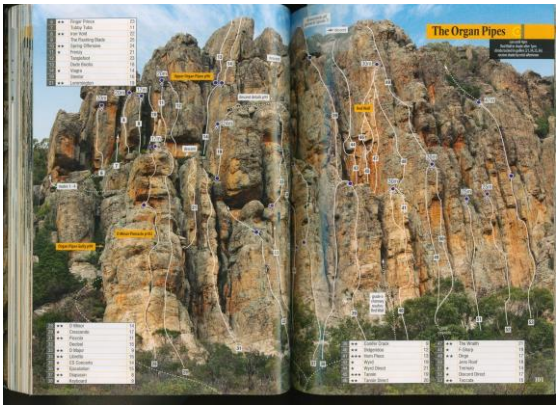


Figure 21. Peter Jackson, *Organ Pipes*, 1965, 'V.C.C. Rock Climbing Guide to Mt Arapiles.'

Figure 22. *Organ Pipes*, 2008, 'Arapiles Selected Climbs.'

The first ascensionist also documented the difficulty of a climb using a grading system. The numeric grade indicates the climb's technical difficulty. Grades can also provide a measure for comparison of performance and skill among climbers and can reinforce the competitive element of climbing. In 1965 the first Mt Arapiles rock climbing guide (the first guide of its kind in Australia) described 108 routes and published the following guide for assessing the degree of difficulty in climbing a rock face. It was based on the British system of grading and British terms were used:

Moderately Difficult	M.D.
Difficult	D.
Hard Difficult	H.D.
Mild Very Difficult	M.V.D.
Very Difficult	V.D.
Hard Very Difficult	H.V.D.
Mild Severe	M.S.
Severe	S.
Hard Severe	H.S.
Mild Very Severe	M.V.S.
Very Severe	V.S.
Hard Very Severe	H.V.S.[93]

'Extremely Severe' was omitted from the publication because no such levels of climbing had yet been documented in Australian climbing. The 'extreme' category caused some concern amongst climbers as England's climbing terminology became less definable in the Australian context. In 1973 Chris Baxter in an interview with Ewbank conceded that "there are some dramatic differences in

[93]Michael Stone and Ian Speedie, eds., *VCC Rock Climbing Guide to Mt Arapiles* (Victoria: Hart Printing Press, 1965), 2-3.

gradings in Britain between areas particularly between the grades on limestone and gritstone outcrops… the outcrop gradings, in general, tend to be harsher."[94] Given that few Australian climbers had experience climbing in Britain they could only guess at the type of rock terrain that was encountered and classified as 'extreme.' Ewbank writes, "So there existed this strange situation where climbers in Australia were putting up climbs and not being able to grade them because the frame of reference for doing so was actually 12,000 miles away!"[95] Then Ewbank in *Argus,* April 1967, suggested that Australia adopt a numeric grading system that has no end. (Now known as the Ewbank System)[96]. "All we need is numbers. We start at one and keep going"[97]

The grading of climbs has been and most likely, always will be a highly controversial topic. But in the early 1960s when climbing at Mt Arapiles was as its infancy clarification was desperately needed. Claims abound of climbers over-grading easy routes and down grading hard routes, resulting in climbers not knowing the true difficulty of the climb they planned to undertake. In *Argus,* December 1965, editor and climber Christopher Baxter made this claim:

> It is hoped that many discrepancies in grading will be cleared up with the appearance of the "Mt. Arapiles Guide", but it will take more than this to rectify the situation… the co-operation of the entire Victorian Climbing public will be necessary to improve a situation rapidly approaching the ridiculous... As I see it the grades should essentially mean what they say. A 'mild severe' should be no stroll, a 'severe' should be exactly what it says SEVERE to all but the Joe Browns[98], 'hard severe' should describe a climb of REAL DIFFICULTY for even the best of us, whilst anything above this grade should be very hard, verging on mildly desperate for GOOD CLIMBERS.[99]

To the novice these definitions may seem unclear. Yet these descriptions and the accompanied terminology reflect an entrenched perception of a climbing landscape as something that must be classified, quantified and mapped to the benefit and safety of all those who venture to climb.

In 1969 the new Ewbank grading system first suggested by John Ewbank as an open ended, numeric system of grading climbs was published in the *VCC Rock Climbing Guide to Mt Arapiles*, Volume 2.

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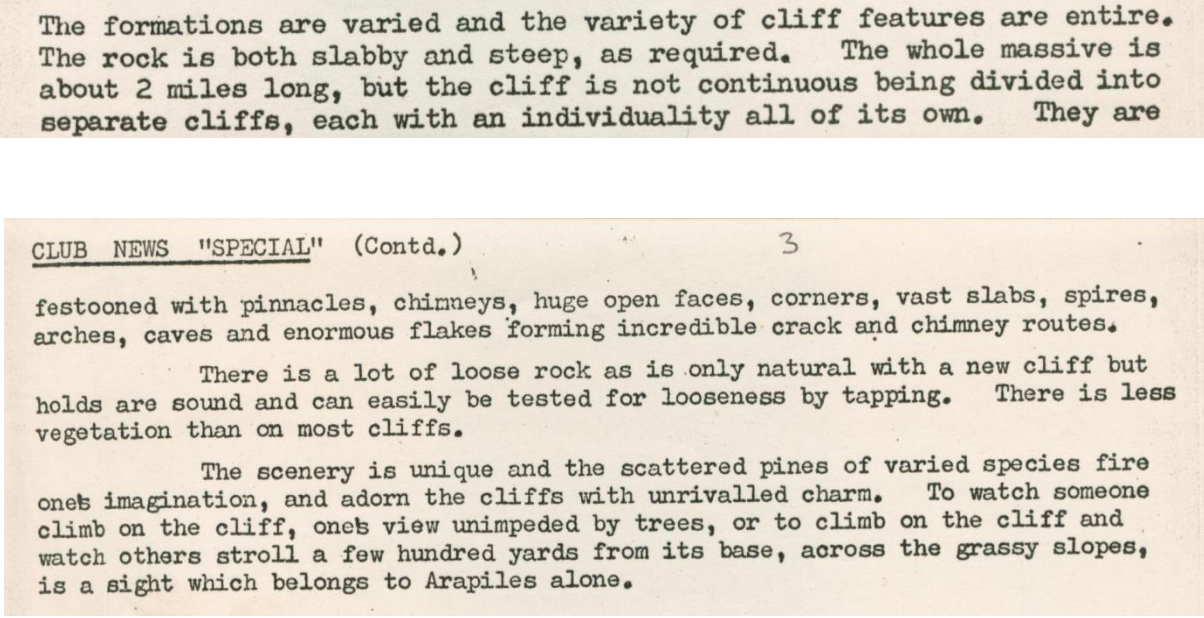
[94] John Ewbank, "Chris Baxter," *Thrutch* 1973, 18 & 22.
[95] Ewbank, "Ironmongers of the Dreamtime."
[96] John Ewbank immigrated to Australia from England at age fifteen in 1963. He pioneered hundreds of new climbing routes in Australia and also established Australia's first rock climbing magazine *Thrutch.* He is most well-known for developing an entirely new system for grading climbs. This approach to grading, known as the Ewbank System, became ubiquitous throughout Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.
[97] *Argus* (April 1967), 2.
[98] Joe Brown is regarded as an outstanding pioneering English rock climber of the 1950s and early 1960s. As well as creating pioneering routes, he helped create new types of "protection" to improve safety on climbs.
[99] *Argus* (Dec 1965), 1.

The influence of the European idea of climbing and the role of guidebooks, was a crucial element in the imagining of Mt Arapiles as a climbing landscape. From the late 1880s and during the 1920s and 1930s, regular articles and images in the media offered audiences new ways of conceptualizing mountains, the men and women who climbed on them and their contribution to making Australian culture. The role of *Argus*, in particular, helped define the changing landscape of Mt Arapiles. *Argus* was hand typed, photocopied and usually circulated by mail each month to its members. Its content were letters to the editor and drew on reports from bi-monthly informal VCC meetings to deliver to the climbing fraternity the latest rock climbing news. Discussions about equipment, climbing travels abroad, grading, safety, access to new cliffs, ethics involved in climbing and of course, frequent updates of new climbing routes in Australia were published. Heated discussions were also prevalent with debates about first ascents, the grading system, the use of bolts and styles of climbing.

Preserving adventure and protecting nature resonated strongly. Thought-provoking questions were also put forward: when is a climb a climb? What is a boulder problem and when does it become a short climb? When is a first ascent a first ascent? This enquiring dialogue which still continues today in the current version of *Argus,* provides evidence of the importance of establishing a common perception of the climbing landscape. It affirms and reaffirms what climbers know and experience and will experience in the landscape through the oral and written word. It demonstrates how language can create landscapes that suit a specific purpose and in turn influence our subjective experience of it. This sentiment is echoed by George Seddon when he writes, "Linguistic awareness is essential to self –awareness; if it is well developed we can modify the way we see the environment and act in and on it."[100]

When Mt Arapiles was first visited by climbers Steve and Bob Craddock, Peter Jackson, Doug Angus and Greg Lovejoy in 1963 as a possible new climbing site, their first impressions were recorded as "It's all rotten, nowhere to belay, too far from Melbourne, only 300 feet of muck."[101] But after establishing a number of successful climbing routes their perception of the cliffs changed radically and news spread rapidly through the 'Arapiles Special' edition of *The Victorian Climbing Club Circular* in November 1963 (which later became known as *Argus*). Steve Craddock describes the Mount from a climber's perspective, in this extract (see fig. 23):

[100] Seddon, 16.
[101] Mentz and Tempest, 26.



The formations are varied and the variety of cliff features are entire. The rock is both slabby and steep, as required. The whole massive is about 2 miles long, but the cliff is not continuous being divided into separate cliffs, each with an individuality all of its own. They are

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festooned with pinnacles, chimneys, huge open faces, corners, vast slabs, spires, arches, caves and enormous flakes forming incredible crack and chimney routes.

There is a lot of loose rock as is only natural with a new cliff but holds are sound and can easily be tested for looseness by tapping. There is less vegetation than on most cliffs.

The scenery is unique and the scattered pines of varied species fire one's imagination, and adorn the cliffs with unrivalled charm. To watch someone climb on the cliff, one's view unimpeded by trees, or to climb on the cliff and watch others stroll a few hundred yards from its base, across the grassy slopes, is a sight which belongs to Arapiles alone.

Figure 23. Extract from *VCC Circular Arapiles Special (Argus)*, November 1963.

His favourable description was intended to encourage climbers to make the then arduous five hour drive from Melbourne and to be incited to explore new territory. References to great vertical chimneys and enormous red roofs, two hundred feet long and entirely overhanging was a call out to climbers seeking untouched cliffs just waiting to be climbed, named and graded for posterity. He concludes the article by stating there is "an incredible amount of worthy rock on the flanks of this great cliff."[102]

Mt Arapiles was now officially endorsed to the community as a worthy place to climb and the Victorian Climbing Club confirmed its perception in writing to a willing and eager audience seeking new climbing frontiers. This interpretation of the landscape that focuses solely on the concept of climbing routes, is critical in the understanding of shifts in perception of Mt Arapiles that are critical to my research. It demonstrates how a specific cultural language can shape the experience of a climbing community. Climbing descriptions represent the intimate language of place. My creative works draw on this specificity by referencing climbing discourse as a response to the sociable intimacy of climbing.

Transformative narratives

Terminology used in climbing expands every year. The names given to climbs and the terms used to describe the act of climbing provide an insight into the history and culture of climbing. Naming is

[102] *Argus* (Nov 1963), 3.

another way climbers take ownership and possession of places they wish to climb. Names also describe the intimate relationships climbers have with rock. The simple act of naming climbs links a whole world of prior experience, and as George Seddon states, "ties the unknown to the known."[103] Since 1963 there have been many successive publications by climbers to document their relationships with Mt Arapiles. Climbers' codified language appears in climbing guides and internet sites using a variety of technical and slang terms to define rock features, placement of equipment and methods and styles of climbing. Words which are easily defined in the climbing fraternity need no explanation, no glossary of terms were included in the original climbing guides or since.

The term 'guidebook speak' refers to the idiosyncratic language of climbing guides and their repetitive use of terms such as 'bold', 'delicate', 'thoughtful' and 'exciting' in describing climbs. Peter Jackson, an honorary life member of the VCC describes guide books as treasures for a host of reasons, apart from providing the information as to where the route lies on the cliff. ''Our search for new cliffs and places to find climbs was as exciting as the climbs… the role of those books was of fundamental importance to us."[104] This reaffirming of the purpose of landscape through the written word continues today with modern marketing of Mt Arapiles as a world class climbing destination. Pamphlets describing Mount Arapiles–Tooan State Park published by Parks Victoria refer to 'rock climbing' at the top of the list of 'things to do'. "Welcome to one of Australia's best rock climbing areas"[105] is the opening sentence under the title 'Visitor Guide'.

As a climber it's clear that one place, even one climb can elicit many interpretations. New ascents typically undergo a series of re-evaluations within climbing discourses. The following three texts describe 'Thunder Crack,' a route at Mt Arapiles. In 1965 the first Mt Arapiles Climbing guide describes the route as follows: "Grade: A3, Mild Severe. It is an awkward climb and requires a variety of techniques in the artificial section, wooden wedges and bolts being used as well as a wide variety of pitons. The last 30' are climbed free in an exciting finish, but the leader will find the rope drag a very real problem."[106] In the 1994 guide *A Rock Climbers' guide to Arapiles/Djurite,* the Ewbank grading system is used and the climb is identified as a two star[107] grade 21. The description reads: "The black R leaning crack is really sensational; however the start is greasy and gnarly… Aid was

[103] Seddon, 24.
[104] Peter Jackson, conversation with the author, Nov 2014.
[105] Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park Visitor Guide, Park notes, June 2014.
[106] Stone and Speedie, 67.
[107] A three-star grading system is used in Australian climbing guides to denote the quality of a climb. Three stars indicates the climb is a classic. A 'classic' is defined as an excellent climbing route with a significant climbing history. Two stars is defined as very good climbing. One star- worthwhile.

progressively whittled during early '70s."[108] Most recently in the 2008 *Arapiles Selected Climbs* guide book the route was downgraded to 20 but given three stars, indicating excellent climbing and a significant climbing history. It reads: "Exhilarating climbing up a sizzling line… a confident and stylish approach brings with it sensational bridging, jamming and face climbing."[109] From its initial representation as 'awkward,' Thunder Crack was described as 'exhilarating' over forty years later. Descriptions of climbs were interpreted and reinterpreted in the light of changing circumstances and perceptions. These discourses were informed by ideals and values associated with nature, individualism, achievement and competition.

During my research I was less concerned with individual climbing achievements and competition, than I was with how climbing stories reveal an ever-shifting engagement with Mt Arapiles over time. Imbedded in the stories recorded and documented during my research are insights about the relationship of individuals to groups and nature to culture. These conversations often have the power to call places into being. Yi-Fu Tuan notes "Outsiders say 'nature,' because the environment seems barely touched. Insiders see… an environment that is familiar to them, not because they have materially transformed it but because they have named it. It is their place – their world – through the casting of a linguistic net."[110]

There are currently approximately over six hundred and fifty terms specific to climbing, and the existence of a language specific to climbing testifies to the long relationship, allegiance, and intimacy that climbers and mountaineers have with the land. To be claimed as a climbing landscape, Mt Arapiles had to be written into language and memory. Climbers created an account of Mt Arapiles as a 'climbing Mecca'. The earliest record of this term was found in a 1969 article in The Wimmera Mail-Times. Promoting the proximity of the township of Horsham to Mt Arapiles the article stated, "Horsham promotion Committee believes that Horsham should become the mecca for rock-climbers from all parts of the world."[111] Reflecting upon his first trip to Mt Arapiles in 1963, Pioneer climber Greg Lovejoy wrote, "I left Arapiles… with the feeling that we had found a great cliff with huge potential. I did not, however, envisage the mecca for climbing that it was to become."[112] Today the term is frequently used on websites and travel forums when describing Mt Arapiles. In a 2014 issue of the Australian magazine *Outback,* writer Ken Eastwood wrote, "Like a Mecca for worshippers of cliffs, there's one place in Australia where every rock climber has to travel to at least once in their

[108] Shepherd, 111.
[109] Mentz and Tempest, 172.
[110] Tuan, "Language and the Marking of Place: A Narrative Descriptive Approach," 686.
[111] "Arapiles a Magnet for Climbers," *The Wimmera Mail-Times* 1969, 8.
[112] Lockwood, 138.

life… Mt Arapiles."[113] By naming features to navigate their way around the Mount, or to commemorate first assents and associated stories, climbers began to create their own connection with place which in turn contributes to my reading of the landscape. Keith Lockwood named a climb 'Radish' after his horse, which used to enjoy grazing at the base of the first pitch. The climb 'Yo-Yo' was so named because the first ascensionists had to return a number of times before they eventually succeeded completing the climb. Sometimes the name of the climb aptly describes the condition of the climbing route. For example. 'No Wall at All' is described as "a pitiful route."[114] 'Skydiver', as, "the last move will probable see a few plummets."[115] 'Cobwebs' – "More than cobwebs need to be scraped from the eyes to find the holds on this."[116] The names and terms climbers use to describe climbs present us with a glimpse of the landscape through their eyes and a different mode of perception. It is this intimate language of place that my creative works draw on.

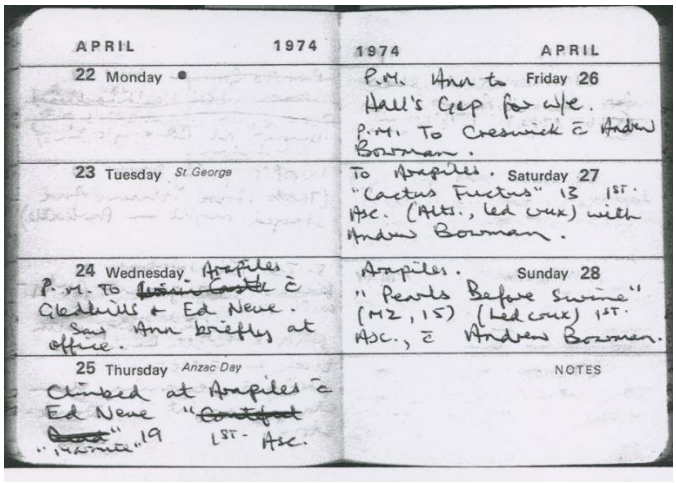


Figure 24. Chris Baxter, *Diary,* 1974. Collection of Sue Baxter.

Of all the words used to describe climbing at Mt Arapiles, the handwritten ones are the rarest. So it was with great anticipation that I accepted an invitation from Chris Baxter's widow, Sue Baxter to view and document her husband's numerous notes and letters on the subject of Mt Arapiles. Chris Baxter was the founder and editor of the publications *Wild* and *Rock* and was an avid diarist and letter writer (see fig. 24). He documented his local experience of Mt Arapiles and his first explorations of locating climbs and executing them over a period of forty-five years. Many of his first descriptions were written with a pen or pencil in small diaries made to fit neatly in a back pocket and were much like the first Mt Arapiles climbing guides. My direct engagement with climbers through

[113] Ken Eastwood, "Climbing Mecca," *Outback* 2014, 135.
[114] Kim Carrigan, ed., *Mt Arapiles a Rockclimbers' Handbook* (Mellbourne: Impact Graphics Pty. Ltd., 1983), 21.
[115] Ibid, 27.
[116] Ibid, 29.

recording and documenting my conversations and interviews with them has formulated my ideas about what provokes or evokes connections with place, and, in particular, Mt Arapiles. I physically transcribe these stories, cutting them into linoleum blocks, writing the text on walls and re-constructing them into artworks. By incorporating text in my art work of a specific linguistic and cultural context, can the experience of 'reading' the work reflect back the way landscape is read and continues to be read by climbers?

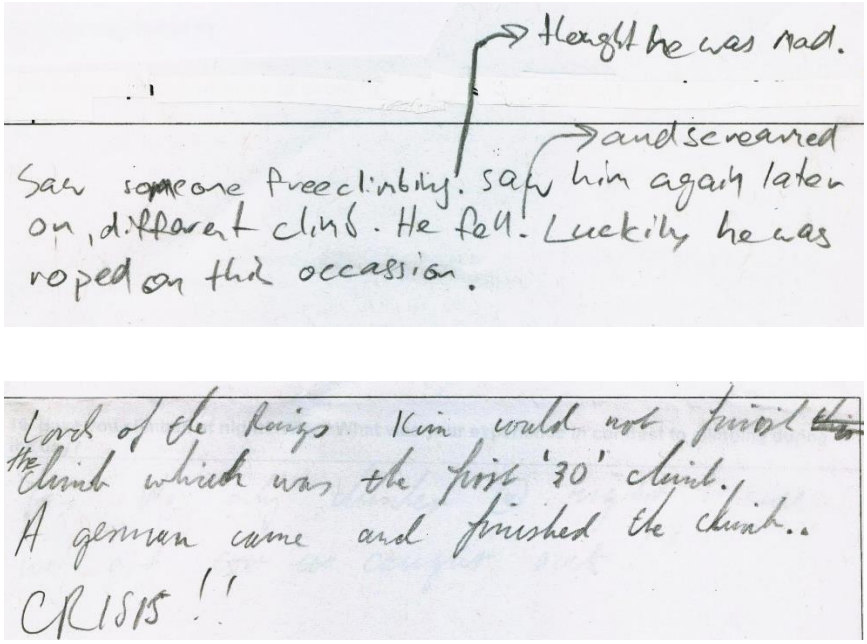


Figure 25. Examples of hand written responses to climbing surveys, 2013.

I sought hand written responses as I am interested in the rhythmic action of writing and the traces left by the movement of the hand as it traverses the paper (see fig. 25). The paper, like the rock, becomes a site for a record of passage and erasure. In making my work, the corporeal action of writing, like climbing becomes an act of accumulation, repetition and ordering of knowledge. Perhaps what becomes more evident particularly in my works *Searching for D Minor* (2012) (see fig. 27, page 57) and *Direct Start ★★ 5m Grade 8* (2016) (see fig. 48, page 94) is the rhythmic, bodily-engaged action of writing rather than the forming of legible words. Prints of hand-written text, like the chalk marks left on the rock by the climber, can add to or, partly or wholly conceal what is already known and alter perception in a continual and unpredictable process.

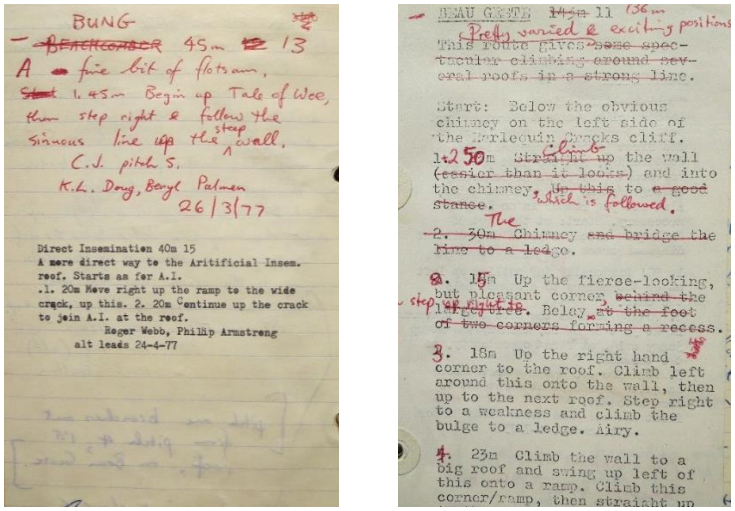


Figure 26. Keith Lockwood, *Route Descriptions,* c 1977. Collection of Keith Lockwood.

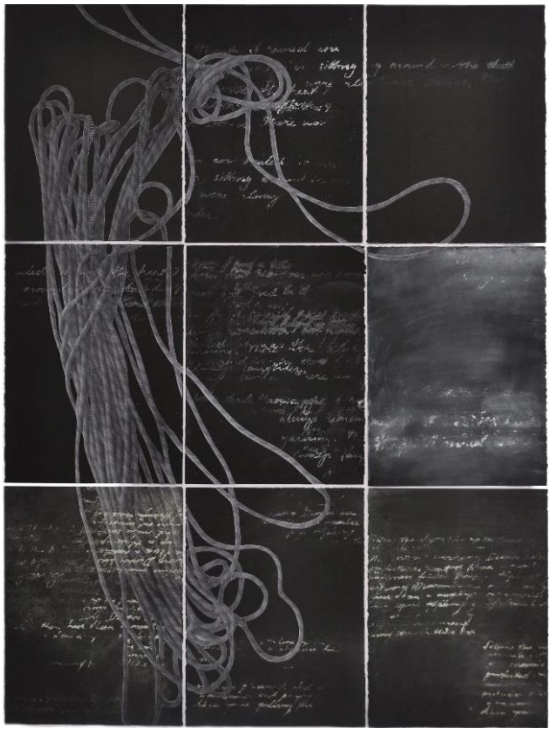
Traces of chalk from your hands can guide a novice to the best available hand holds. It can also mislead a climber into thinking that the chalked holds indicate the only way to complete a climb when other alternatives are available. Similarly written and oral descriptions of climbs can encourage or deter climbers from engaging with certain climbing routes.

Handwriting, rather than typed text comes closest to expressing the immediate experience of engaging with rock. Typed text does not leave the same mark as its handwritten counterpart (see fig. 26). When you draft a text on a computer screen, it can be changed leaving no visible record of editing. Argentinian-born Canadian writer, Alberto Manguel suggests: "Electronic space is frontierless… thanks to our word processors, there is no archive of our notes, hesitations, developments and drafts… we no longer record the evolution of our intellectual creations."[117] Text on a computer screen leaves no physical evidence of the reader's engagement with it. Text on a screen is unlike the book that betrays its age in repetitively touched and worn surfaces.

Selected responses which I have incorporated into my work from my surveys and from my discovery of primary sources, show signs of corrections, and a going-over or a going-back to erase and reassess the written recollection. Arrows, inserts, and capitalisations are all used to reassert and clarify the original meaning. Words crossed out or corrected, thoughts scribbled in the margin, and later additions provide a visual and tactile record of the changes. These additions are reminiscent of false starts in a climb where the path is not clear. The climber retreats and starts again, trying different holds, adding different parts, until the climb, like the work, opens up again with new possibilities. The rock face and a printed surface are sites where ideas are revised, stitched together, and

[117] Alberto Manguel, *The Library at Night* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), 225-226.

reworked. By copying selected handwritten texts into my work I not only replicate the meaning of the words but the very act of writing. I trace the text onto linoleum blocks, carve out the text and print the blocks numerous times. Through the act of reading, selecting, tracing, duplicating, carving and printing the original thoughts of the writer are sometimes rendered illegible in the final work. This suggests lack of clarity but can also suggest invisibility and lost histories.



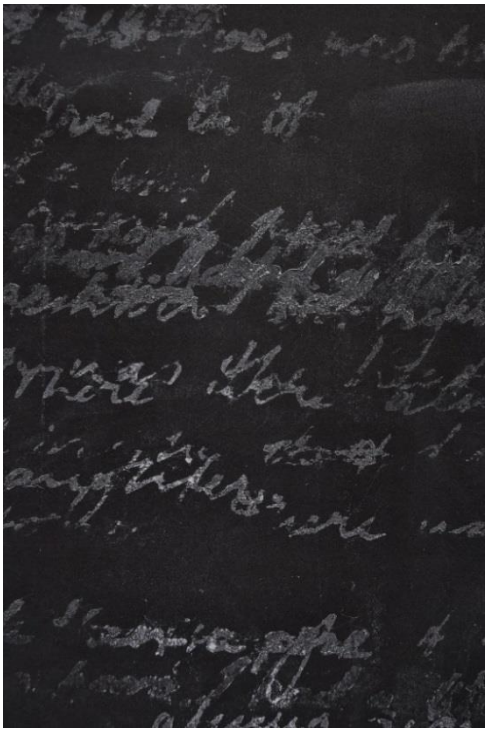


Figure 27. Bridget Hillebrand, *Searching for D Minor,* 2012, linocut and chine collé, printed with climber's chalk and crushed limestone, unique state, 115.5 x 86cm.

Figure 28. Bridget Hillebrand, *Searching for D Minor,* (detail) 2012, Linocut and chine collé, printed with climber's chalk and crushed limestone, unique state, 115.5cm x 86cm.

In 2011, I began experimenting with printing techniques using quartzite[118] and limestone[119] sourced from Mt Arapiles to engage with materials that record a specific place. Developing a printing medium from crushed rock was a major discovery. Working with the raw material of rock found on site at Mt Arapiles connects my intimate engagement with climbing to my art practice. I touch the rock, the rock touches me and eventually the viewer too is touched by the substance of rock in my art work. After pounding the quartzite and limestone rocks into smaller pieces with a mallet, I ground them into finer grains with a mortar and pestle. At first I tried mixing the crushed rock

[118] Mount Arapiles is primarily composed of quartzite, a metamorphic rock that was originally sandstone. The distinct red/orange tinge of the rock is due to trace amounts of iron oxide and various other impurities.
[119] Limestone caves exist on the western flank of Mt Arapiles. I source remnants of limestone used in my creative work from existing limestone tracks and roads that surround Mt Arapiles.

directly with the ink but found the colour and texture of the rock was immediately compromised. I then developed a method of applying glue to the surface of my linoleum block with a brayer, the glued blocks were then printed onto paper through pressure before applying the crushed and sieved rock on top of the glued paper surface. The prints were then covered and weighted and given time to dry before removing the excess rock residue by gently tapping the paper. Sometimes this process was repeated many time to achieve a suitable layer resilient yet receptive to touch. In my work, *Searching for D Minor* (see fig. 27) an image of a climbing rope is layered with text from my ongoing conversations with climbers. The text was transcribed and printed with crushed rock and climbing chalk. The rock residue, (seen here as indiscernible text, see fig. 28) is easily dislodged from the printed surface and prompted me to consider the use of materials that are fragile and convey the passage of time.

Climbing guides focus a climbers attention on what must be seen. The climb *D Minor* is recognised as a classic, two star and two pitch climb and hence many new climbers to Arapiles seek its location. The title of the work, *Searching for D Minor*, makes reference to a climber's desire to seek out the known and the familiar in an environment perceived as a 'climbing Mecca'. The grid format references mapping and the documenting of climbs within a set location.

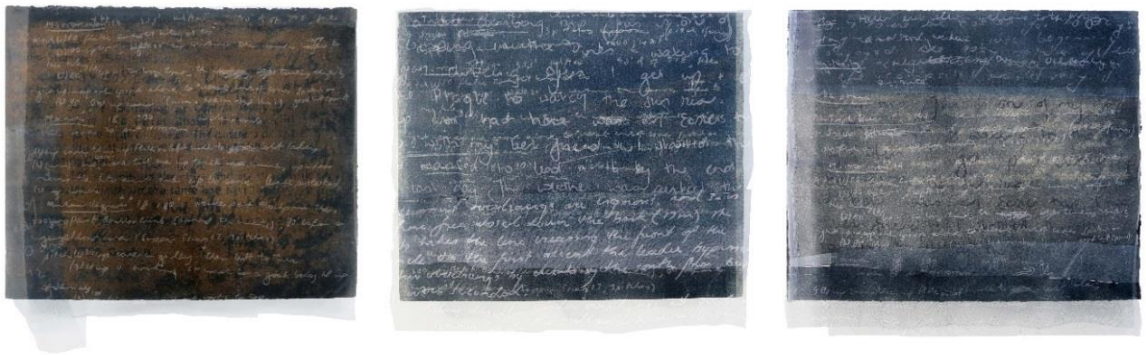


Figure 29. Bridget Hillebrand, *Rites of Passage*, 2014, linocut on silk and paper printed with crushed quartzite and limestone, 30 x 113cm.

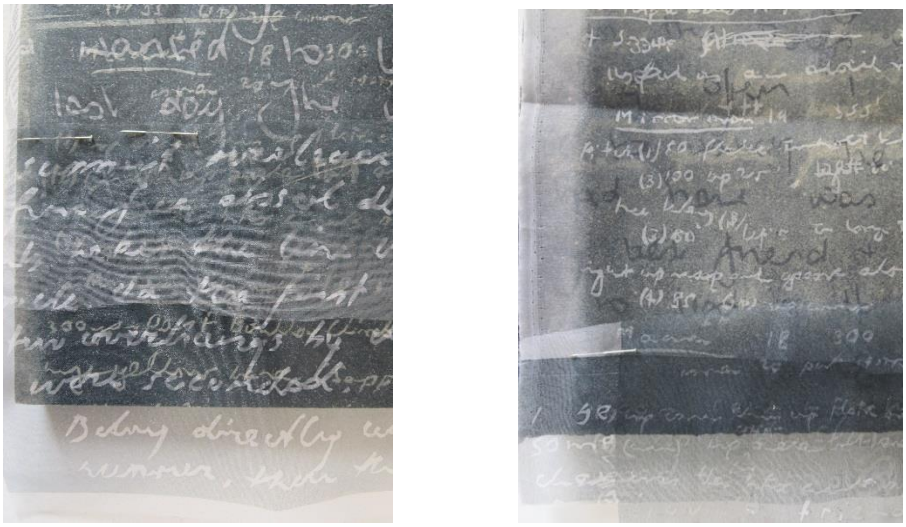


Figure 30. Bridget Hillebrand, *Rites of Passage*, (detail) 2014, linocut on silk and paper printed with crushed quartzite and limestone, 30 x 113cm.

Similarly my work titled, *Rites of Passage* (2014) explores how climbers continue to share a common understanding of a particular reading of the landscape. The rectilinear pages that comprised this work are presented along a wall. Detailed textural elements of the work can be viewed individually or as a whole (see fig. 29 and 30). It is printed with crushed rock and overlayed with text printed on silk. As the viewer moves, the transparent layers cause the text to shift in and out of focus. The meanings of many of the words and sentences such as, “free abseil down the rock” and ‘belay directly under overhang,” offer clues and memory aids to stories recalled by climbers camped at Mt Arapiles.

The accumulation of recorded ascents in climbing publications and the spatial focus of climbers’ actions provides a mapping process through which climbers navigate their path on the rock. It is through establishing climbing routes (also known as climbing lines) on the rock and repeatedly using them, that people establish proprietary right over territory and place. The multiple images of climbing lines in my work *Night Climbs* (see fig. 31 and 32) represent an inscription of regular and repeated climbing activity. These images draw on maps of climbing routes (see fig. 22, page 48) from Mt Arapiles climbing guides and suggest the movement of climbers as they navigate their way up a route in the static haze of dim light. The linocut prints are installed in a four metre high column, inviting the viewer to gaze upwards. The works are supported on small wooden blocks which echo the dimensions and pages of a guide book. Looking up and down, standing back to look at the work as a whole and moving forward to examine and focus on each piece individually is an interactive experience, moving from micro and macro and reflecting a climber’s engagement with rock during a climb.

Figure 31. Bridget Hillebrand, *Beta & Night Climbs,* 2013, linocut and mixed media, dimensions variable. MADA Gallery, Monash University, Melbourne (installation view).

Figure 32. Bridget Hillebrand, *Night Climbs,* (detail) 2013.

Through the embodied activity of scaling cliffs, rock climbers engage in close observations of the subtle nuances of the rock surface and broader sweeping observations of a cliff face. My research explores the corporeal actions of climbers and their focus on specific cliffs at Mt Arapiles and the selection and documentation of climbs. Over the years writers have included and deleted climbs from subsequent climbing guides. Editors play a significant and dominant role in determining which climbs are published and which are not. This has altered the face of the landscape of Mt Arapiles and climber's access and use of specific features of the rock.

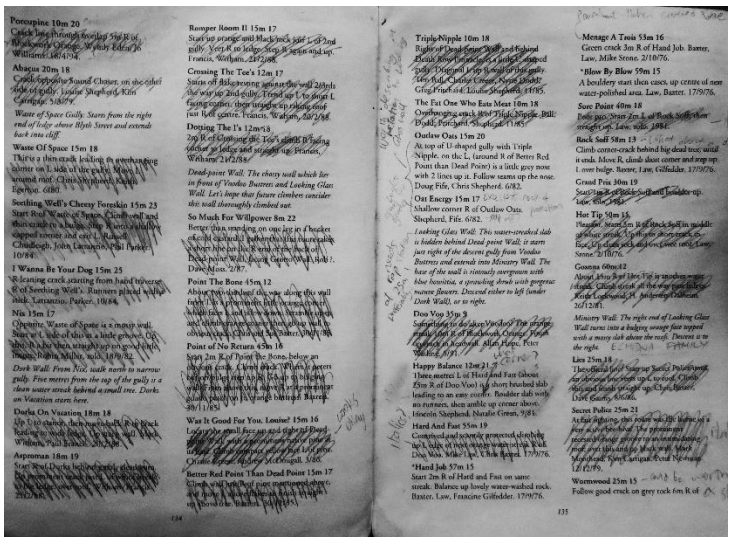


Figure 33. Simon Mentz, pencil corrections to *A Rock Climbers Guide to Arapiles/ Djurite.*

My research has shown that in the process of selecting climbs for the 2008 climbing guide *Arapiles Selected Climbs,* Editor Simon Mentz crossed out climbs from an earlier guide by Louise Shepherd that would not be included in the new edition (see fig.33). Simon Mentz explains:

> The criteria for how we choose one climb over another is based not only on our own personal opinions but those of our friends, most of whom have lived, climbed and instructed at Arapiles for many years. In some cases we have disregarded routes not just because they offer inferior climbing but because they might be too isolated, contrived or perhaps they infringed on better routes nearby.[120]

This publishing of selected climbs can be compared to Roland Barthes' analysis of travel guides that function as 'agents of blindness'[121] which focus our attention on a limited range of landscape features that must be seen. Barthes argues that specific descriptions can overpower and even mask events of history and human engagement by providing an illusion of cultural stability. Similarly,

[120] Mentz and Tempest, 8.
[121] Roland Barthes, "The Blue Guide," in *Mythologies* (New York The Noonday Press 1972), 76.

climbing guides can function as 'agents of blindness.' Each time a new climbing guide is published, selected climbs are removed from view, they become unseen and mask events of previous human engagement. Drawing on these ideas I sometimes use illegible text in my artworks, rendering it invisible, to provide an illusion of the stable meaning that language implies.

A process of masking also occurs in the pictorial representation of climbing routes. For example, the image of climbing routes on the Organ Pipes from the 1965 climbing guide (see fig. 21, page 48) depicts two climbs, *Organ Grinder* and *Bass Clef,* that are not included in the 2008 guide (see fig. 22, page 48). Editors Simon Mentz and Glenn Tempest acknowledge the absence of *Organ Grinder* in their 1999 guide and write that the new route *Viagra* is "an amalgamation of three long-forgotten routes."[122] The climbing route *Jens Roof* is listed in the same guide and the editors acknowledge that "most of the original climbing to the roof was done as (the previously named climb) *Bass Clef*."[123] Climbing routes are re-climbed and unknowingly renamed when documented accounts are removed from publications and/or physical traces have been erased due to an increase of bush or lichen growth at the site of the original climb. In a similar vein Robert Macfarlane writes, "It is not on the whole that natural phenomena and entities themselves are disappearing; rather… that once they go unnamed they go to some degree unseen."[124] In not naming features we are unlikely to make strong connections to place. I include the names of climbs and the names of rock features in the printed text of my artworks to connect my work to the specific place of Mt Arapiles.

Descriptions of access to climbs can also unwittingly deter would be visitors. A passage from the 1994 Mt Arapiles climbing guide reads, "The base of the wall is riotously overgrown with blue Howittia."[125] Another reads, "At last sighting this route was the home of a very active bee-hive!"[126] In the 1982 issue of *Argus*, Iain Sedgman suggests that it may not be descriptions that impact how frequently a climb is visited, but its location away from more popular climbs. When referring to the forgotten climb, *Alychne* he wrote, "The route described as mossy in the Araps [sic] guide is the last in the book for the Organ Pipes but perhaps the reason why it is seldom done is not the moss (which would disappear with usage) but the location of the route at a separate level to the majority of Organ Pipe classics."[127]

[122] Mentz and Tempest, 97.
[123] Ibid, 107.
[124] Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, 24.
[125] Shepherd, 135.
[126] Ibid, 135.
[127] Iain Sedgman, "Arapiles - the Organ Pipes - the Forgotten Climb Alychne," *Argus* 1982, 5.

Figure 34. Bridget Hillebrand, *Beta,* (detail) 2013.

This process of writing, rewriting, removing and incorporating new climbing descriptions into climbing guides links my reading of the landscape and hence my perception of Mt Arapiles to my printmaking practice. With repeated printing of linoleum blocks, text can be progressively obliterated and made illegible, just as published climbs become lost or unseen when then are overwritten by new routes. In my works *Searching for D Minor* and *Rites of Passage* the clarity and legibility of the text is undermined by the materiality of the chosen print mediums - crushed rock and chalk. Every climb on earth has been given a name, a description and a grade of difficulty and Mt Arapiles is no exception.

My research has shown that climbing discourses mediate the exploration and the textual and pictorial representation of the landscape. Words and images have the power to render the formerly invisible nuances of a rock face, visible and real, with the promise of an unexplored climbing route. Rock climbing guidebooks record a rock climber's conversion of space into place where cliffs are perceived as climbs. It is this conversion of the landscape into text that I allude to in my prints. Pioneer English rock climber Harold Drasdo[128] writes, "It might be claimed that cliffs and mountains are facades without shape or dimension until they are floodlit by human effort… the climber's touch brings the cliff to life. The more it is worked over, the more aspects are revealed… Climbs interpret mountain faces.[129]

'Beta' is a climbing term, which means, step by step instructions on how to successfully complete a climbing route. The series of works entitled *Beta* (2013) (see fig.31, page 60) draws inspiration from the memory of a climber's passage that is encoded onto rock. Pages of Braille were burnished with graphite, taking an impression from a linoleum block carved with text (see fig. 34). Graphite is a crystalline form of carbon, a natural material which has the propensity to leave marks on the hand when touched. I chose to use graphite because I was interested in how easily graphite imprints the hand when reading braille through touch. The text is illegible, rendered invisible to provide an illusion of writing that cannot be read. The pages were installed in a column alongside *Night Climbs* in *Community and Context* in 2013, a group exhibition at MADA Gallery, Monash University in Melbourne. Touch is the pivotal sense utilized by climbers in learning about a climb. Climbers feel their way up a route via tactile navigation often leaving a trace of their journey on the rock. Robert

[128] Harold Drasdo was an English rock climber and writer. He climbed in the late 1940s and 1950s with leading northern rock climbers including Joe Brown. His highly regarded autobiography *The Ordinary Route* published in 1997, drew on the history of climbing in the United Kingdom in the 1950s -1970s, the importance of the experience of nature and the role of risk.
[129] Harold Drasdo, "Climbing as Art," in *The Games Climbers Play*, ed. Ken Wilson (U.K.: Baton Wicks, 1978), 457-458.

McMahon when describing a particular climbing area in Tasmania wrote “Every syllable of the rock’s poetry has been read like Braille, through the finger-tips of a climber.”[130]

In 2014 I exhibited *Beta* and *Night Climbs* in *Common Ground*, a solo exhibition at The Goat Gallery in Natimuk Victoria, alongside a number of my other works discussed in this exegesis. Natimuk is the closest township to Mt Arapiles and many visitors including local climbers recognized the connection of my work to the practice of climbing. While I was in attendance at the gallery a number of visitors were inspired to recall their first encounters of climbing at Mt Arapiles prompting evolving dialogues of the work and its setting. Others talked of their personal responses to the landscape of Mt Arapiles and were intrigued by the works made from crushed rock sourced from the Mount. The exhibition demonstrated that works seen in proximity to a site engaged a variety of responses from viewers that were very different from how the works were perceived by an audience with little or no knowledge of climbing or the place Mt Arapiles.

In this chapter I have explored how the oral and written descriptions, stories and conversations relating to climbing at Mt Arapiles are critical to the construction of the landscape of Mt Arapiles and to my creative studio practice. The more I studied the writings and conversations of climbers, the more I discovered connection, not separation as the basic theme. Rather than being about solitary quests, the stories testify to the bonds between the individual, the group and the landscape. I have made specific reference to handwritten descriptions and my interest in the physical and rhythmic action of writing as opposed to typed text. In the next chapter I consider how the performative actions of climbing and printmaking might alter my perceptions of Mt Arapiles and enrich my subsequent representations of Mt Arapiles in the studio.

[130] Robert McMahon, "Rock: A Tasmanian Exegesis," in *Julian Cooper in Tasmania: A Fractured Lands*cape (Tasmania: Landscape Art Research Queenstown, 2012), 31.

Chapter four

Climbing: the pursuit of experience

> *Gently and cautiously I transferred my weight to my right foot. I reached up with my left hand and was just able to feel the edge of a hold, it wasn't smooth and rounded as I first thought, but a shallow pocket that provided a positive hold. I found a solid lip of rock for my other foot and as I pulled up, I felt the weight of the rope beneath me and called for 'slack'. I looked up at the rock face rising smoothly and vertically above me... I put my hand behind my back into my chalk bag, still staring. I carefully placed a wire into a small crack and watched a lizard effortlessly slink past. Before I started to move again I felt the familiar feeling that came when I was about to do something difficult and I stared even more intently at the small pocket holes ahead of me and yet at the same time I was aware of the texture of the warm rock underneath my fingertips. I stored away the memory of how it felt.*
>
> — *Extract from author's diary*

Touch

As a rock climber, my bodily engagement with the rock and my sense of touch is fundamental to my experience of place. In this chapter I consider how the performative and embodied actions of climbing and printmaking might enact, construct and alter my perceptions of the site Mt Arapiles and enrich my subsequent investigations of making representations of the landscape in the studio. The practice of climbing and the repetitive practice of touching rock are inscribed on the body in cuts and abrasions, flexed muscles and callouses. The surface of the rock is felt and remembered. Cultural historian Constance Classen writes, "The skin may be dried by the sun and roughened by the wind; it bears the scars and bruises of its scrapes and bumps and the imprint of what has pressed into its soft surface."[131] Similarly the repetitive acts of cutting and printing linoleum blocks and crushing and pounding rocks as a printing medium are embodied actions which are repeated and physically felt and remembered.

I experience the landscape of Mt Arapiles through kinaesthetic and corporeal knowledge. Australian philosopher Jeff Malpas states "To experience a landscape is to be active within it, since it is by

[131] Constance Classen, *The Book of Touch* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2005), 33.

means of such activity that landscape affects and influences us – the nature of the place determines what is possible within that place."[132] In the direct experience of climbing my sense of touch replaces sight as the primary mode of gathering knowledge about Mt Arapiles. Touch increases my knowledge of climbing at Mt Arapiles. This is particularly evident when looking at features of a climbing route from the ground up. Holds that are perceived as smooth and rounded may feel differently when touched. "It is not consciousness which touches or feels, but the hand"[133] argued Merleau-Ponty. It is mainly the touch of my hand that informs me whether or not a climb is possible. Unlike my feet, enclosed in rubber shoes, my hands have an unmediated relationship with the rock.

British archaeologist Christopher Tilley points out that "when we consider landscape we are almost always thinking about it primarily in terms of visual construct… Landscapes are not just visionscapes but also soundscapes, touchscapes, smellscapes… "[134] Climbers rely on an embodied experience as a principal means of understanding a climb, while a cognitive apprehension of the landscape and knowledge about what route to climb is obtained from climbing guides. My surveys have shown that the majority of climbers rely on corporeal knowledge rather than cognitive apprehension obtained from climbing guides or verbal descriptions to gain knowledge of *how* to climb. Australian climber Malcolm Matheson writes, "Sometimes you just can't read the rock. Sometimes the cruxes can be quite baffling… A combination of holds is sometimes all that works, often requiring body tension between feet and sidepulls or underclings and at times, in conjunction with unstable barndoor type positions."[135]

Our relationship to our world is not based on cognition or intellect alone, but is also grounded in our awareness as bodies: bodies that move and feel sensations. Knowing the world through physical experience links my climbing, my art practice and my participation in the physicality of being in the world. I know the environment of Mt Arapiles through touch, smell, moving and seeing. I am aware of my surroundings and this experience forms my engagement with place. My whole body is actively involved in creating my experience and understanding of being in the world. The climber's body alters the surface of the rock, climbing shoes polish surfaces smooth and hands deposit chalk on natural features, even the movement of rope can leave a permanent mark on the rock over time. Just as there is evidence of the hand on the rock in climbing so too is there evidence of the hand on the printed image. The surface of my prints are tactile, the printed surface is folded, layered, glued, stitched, sanded and reprinted. The ink is evident on the surface of the paper. I make folds, marks

[132] Jeff Malpas, *The Place of Landscape*: Concepts, Contexts, Studies (USA: 2011), 14.
[133] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962), 316.
[134] Christopher Tilley, *Metaphor and Material Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 93.
[135] Lockwood, 136.

and abrasions visible on the print just as marks on the rock show evidence of human passage. There is an analogous relationship between printing processes and climbing, they have similar qualities and this is why I have chosen printmaking as my language of exploration. Jeff Malpas states, "our involvement with landscape, and so with the places that are found within it, is fundamental to the way we find ourselves in the world. In our engagement with landscape through art we also, therefore, engage with our own mode of being in the world."[136]

Classen reflects on the importance on how we learn how to touch and states "Our hands and bodies learn to 'speak' a certain language of touch, a language shaped by culture and inflected by individuals."[137] This is certainly and particularly true of climbers who have learnt numerous specific methods of touching rock with their bodies, hands and feet, using methods defined by specific climbing terminology such as, one finger, two finger, fist jam, heel hook, crimping, jamming, palming, layback, bridging, smearing, pulling down, sideways or by climbing up on rock features such as slopers, underclings, pinches, pockets, buckets and jugs, climbers move smoothly across the rock face. (Refer to glossary of climbing terms in Appendix 1).

Just as a climber's physical responses are reliant on responding and interpreting the rock features available, my investigations as an artist are in response to an engagement with the materials and conditions of making. As a rock climber, the performative action of climbing also offers me a unique perspective of place. I view cliffs at close proximity and become aware of subtle changes in rock features and remember the feeling of certain hand and foot holds. Early representations of Mt Arapiles and the surrounding plains made by early explorers generally portrayed the Mount from a distance. Writer Rebecca Solnit remarks that from the eighteenth century, nature was imagined as scenery, "and scenery is what is seen at a certain distance, but climbing puts one face-to-face with the rock, with a wholly different kind of engagement."[138] I have an intimate knowledge of Mt Arapiles gained by close physical engagement with the rock, and this knowledge is unobtainable through a distant gaze. Similarly Merleau-Ponty suggested the possibility of a "tactile perception of space",[139] that is, perception that involves the perceiving subject in a bodily engagement with a situation rather than as a detached observer.

Climbing a rock is characterised by being in transit and making marks in the environment. It is about repetition, interconnection and rhythm. Traces of chalk from your hands can guide other climbers to

[136] Jeff Malpas, ed., "Place and the Problem of Landscape," in *The Place of Landscape: Concepts, Contexts, Studies* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2011), 19.
[137] Classen, 13.
[138] Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (UK: Verso, 2002), 134.
[139] Merleau-Ponty, 253.

the best available holds and crevices. Worn surfaces and the absence of lichens can also indicate the passage of previous climbers. Climbing is a dance, a solo performance. Mind and body need to synchronise and focus. Harold Drasdo writes, “no-one who has seen something of the range of style and attack displayed by those who lead the hardest rock-climbs could doubt for a minute that (climbers)… exist on the same plane as the greatest performers in the world of dance.”[140] As a climber, I become immersed in precision of movement, thoughts are focused on the next hold, a shift in weight, in a calm almost meditative state. I am sometimes reminded of my fragility, that the consequences of a split second of indecision that could lead to a disastrous fall. When repeating a favourite climb I notice and remember subtle changes in the curvature of the rock, recall the correct placement of a hand, notice the emergence of a rock fern, observe the spider that has scuttled into a finger hold I want to use. I shift my weight to accommodate a heel hook. Each position, each movement, is carefully calculated and performed for optimum grace and efficient use of energy. Dr James Weiner invites us to accept that “the traces of people’s actions left on the earth and in the environment generally also leave traces in people’s consciousness.”[141] Evidence of a climber’s actions on the on the surface of the rock such as chalk, bolts, pitons, abseil slings, rap anchors and initials painted at the base of climbs[142] also affects our perception and engagement with the landscape of Mt Arapiles.

Thinking about an experiential engagement with landscape is particularly evident in the work of English artist Dan Shipsides. In his art project *Touchstone Test Piece* (2008) he worked alongside a blind man referred to as John, researching John’s experience of climbing and his relationship to the landscape through touch. In the process of gathering data on John’s experience of landscape, Shipsides attached micro cameras to John’s fingers, backpack and feet, to record ‘fingertip’ footage of his climbing. The work entitled *Echo Vall*ey (2008) is a six screen thirty-two minute, video work which presents John climbing *Little Bootie* (Grade S / 4)[143] in Spain. The video presents close-up footage of John’s fingers and feet seeking out holds. Wider footage from cameras on his backpack give a sense of his body’s height, balance and movement.

Shipsides, whose art practice uses climbing to think creatively about the experience of landscape, visualises a tactile relationship between the body and its environment in this project. He states, “The approach is based on the idea that, whilst sight is crucial to making it easier, climbing isn't primarily

[140] Drasdo, 460.
[141] James F. Weiner, "The Work of Inscription in Foi Poetry," in *Inscribed Landscapes: Marking and Making Place,* eds., Bruno David and Meredith Wilson (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2002), 270.
[142] Initials painted on the rock at the base of climbs are used to identify a specific climbing route. With the advent of detailed photographic climbing guides this practice is no longer used.
[143] Grade S/ 4 refers to a single pitch climb at grade 4 level of difficulty.

about sight - It's as much about movement and physicality."[144] The significance of the touch of the hand in my own creative work is discussed in greater detail in Chapter five.

Inscribing the body

I know and experience Mt Arapiles through climbing discourse and my bodily engagement as a climber. The practice of climbing inscribes itself upon the body as the body, in turn, inscribes itself on the landscape. Dr Penelope Rossiter from University of Western Sydney, Australia refers to this act of inscription as an act of 'mutual defacing.' She writes,

> In the meeting of the bodies, the removals, scratchings, rubbings, mutual roughing-up, the climbing body becomes part of the memory of the earth. At the same time, the rock is body – memoried too. At a certain, undefinable point, when enough rock has been memoried in the growth of muscles, the reformation of tendons… a climbing body emerges.[145]

My experience as a 'climbing body' is mapped in a tactile navigation, of a body moving through an environment. In mapping the rock with my body I learn about the landscape and, as Yi-Fu Tuan in his writings on experiential perspectives suggests, this experience "implies the ability to learn from what one has undergone."[146] He goes on to state "The word 'experience' shares a common root (*per*) with 'experiment,' 'expert,' and 'perilous.' To experience in the active sense requires that one venture forth into the unfamiliar and experiment with the elusive and uncertain."[147] Reading climbing guides provides a cognitive understanding of climbing, however it is through the act of climbing itself that my body becomes more attuned and receptive to the techniques of climbing. Matheson writes, "The harder routes often require a combination of hold and body tension techniques at a high intensity or sustainedness while sometimes on insecure sloping footholds where body position, smooth movement and transfer of weight is necessary to prevent a foot 'blowing off' the hold."[148] Through an altered distribution of body weight while climbing, a previously disregarded hand hold becomes visible and apparent, a foot hold finally sticks and the route is completed.

The repetitive performance of climbing improves skills and encourages improvisation. I liken this to my art practice where trialling and experimenting presents greater diversity and possibilities. The success of the art work can occur instantly or over a prolonged period, and this is similar to the way climbers engage with a familiar climb. Persistence and patience can result in surprise, particularly if

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[144] Dan Shipsides, "Leap of Faith," in *Summit* 2008, 53.
[145] Penelope Rossiter., "Rock Climbing: On Humans, Nature, and Other Nonhumans " in *Space and Culture* (London: SAGE Publications 2007), 299.
[146] Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, 9.
[147] Ibid, 9.
[148] Lockwood, 136.

the artist – or the climber – allows the work to be open to mistakes and accidents. When developing my work, *Book of Chalk* (see fig. 45, page 91) I trialled a variety of substrates. After experimenting and trialling a variety of glues and mediums, I discovered the correct consistency of crushed chalk, limestone and medium to produce a surface suitable to be handled and touched. Engaging with the materials of a specific site reflects my intimate knowledge as a climber of the rock's surface, and construction of an artwork that necessitates tactile experience to engage with it provides a unique and new mode of engagement with an artwork.

Rock climbing is a physically and mentally demanding sport, one that tests a climber's strength, endurance, agility and balance and mental control. Fear and risk can be increased or lessened by a number of factors such as type of equipment used, the climber's psychological or physical state, weather conditions or time of day. My creative research process is also powered by taking risks and chances within the formal conventions of printmaking. I move fragments of plates, print and reprint, delete and crop. I search out uninvited marks to see how they will add or distract from existing elements. All works on paper are ephemeral and works that are touched could deteriorate. I make my works with this in mind, I make my works to be touched. In the process of making the work and in the physical engagement of viewing and touching, the works could fall apart, or surface elements could wear away. Improvisation and ephemerality are terms that I have applied to both climbing and working with print media in this research project.

Re-viewing film and performance

A rock climb begins with a call from the belayer, "on belay, climb when ready". The response, "climbing", is often heard echoing through the crags at Mt Arapiles. These sounds enlarge a climber's spatial awareness to include areas that cannot be seen and conveys a strong sense of distance. Yu-Fu Tuan notes that, "sounds greatly enrich the human feeling for space." and "dramatizes spatial experience"[149] This is clearly evident in an area at Mt Arapiles known as Echo Crag, where climbers' voices echo from the walls of the Mount. My work *Echo Wall* (2011) explores the engagement of the voice with a visual image. There is a direct physical relationship between sound and touch. We hear sound when tiny bones in our ears touch together in response to vibrations in the air. In *The Soundscape,* (1994) Canadian composer Murray Schafer wrote about this

[149] Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, 14 -16.

tactility of sound: “Hearing and touch meet where the lower frequencies of available sound pass over to tactile vibrations (at about 20 hertz). Hearing is a way of touching at a distance. ”[150]

On entering the darkened space of the creative work *Echo Wall*, three images of Mt Arapiles appear as reflected shadows along a wall (see fig. 36). Hand drawn images of the Mount were laser etched onto glass petri dishes which are partially filled with water (see fig. 35). Three mirrors reflect these shadowy images on the wall. In response to sound or the spoken word, an echo reverberates in the enclosed room, evoking spatial impressions or illusions of distance and space. Small metal arms activated by sound agitate the water in the petri dishes, and the reflected images on the wall vibrate in response. Depending on the volume of the sound, the vibrations can also be felt in the body of the viewer. The viewer not only sees the image, but also feels the sound in their bodies. The spectator’s voice determines the clarity of the image reflected on the wall. The quivering images on the wall are a physical representation of the silence shattered by the echoed words. Just as the echo and repetition of the spoken word can alter our perception of space so too can words blur or shift our focus of the landscape. It is my engagement with Mt Arapiles that repeats and reiterates and reaffirms what was experienced and what can be experienced.

While sound can contribute to spatial awareness, watching an activity without sound can sometimes feel calm, rather like watching a distant event through binoculars. *Top Roping Maximus* (2013) is a fifteen minute silent video work that tracks my slightly slowed-down movement as I climb *Maximus* at Mt Arapiles. In the process of researching my own experience of climbing through touch, I recorded myself climbing, including close-up footage of my hands and feet seeking out holds, as well as footage of my shadow cast on the rock (see fig. 37 and 38). As the camera is linked to my head movements, it provides images of the ever present rope and gives a sense of my body’s distance from the ground, balance and movement. The black and white video tracks my physical engagement while climbing *Maximus* from the ground up and presents a disembodied experience of climbing rock. The process of searching for holds becomes evident as the head-mounted camera moves from my hands and feet to the rock ledges above and below and the surrounding terrain.

[150] Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books 1994), 11.

Figure 35. Bridget Hillebrand, *Echo Wall,* (detail) 2011, interactive mixed media installation, dimensions variable.

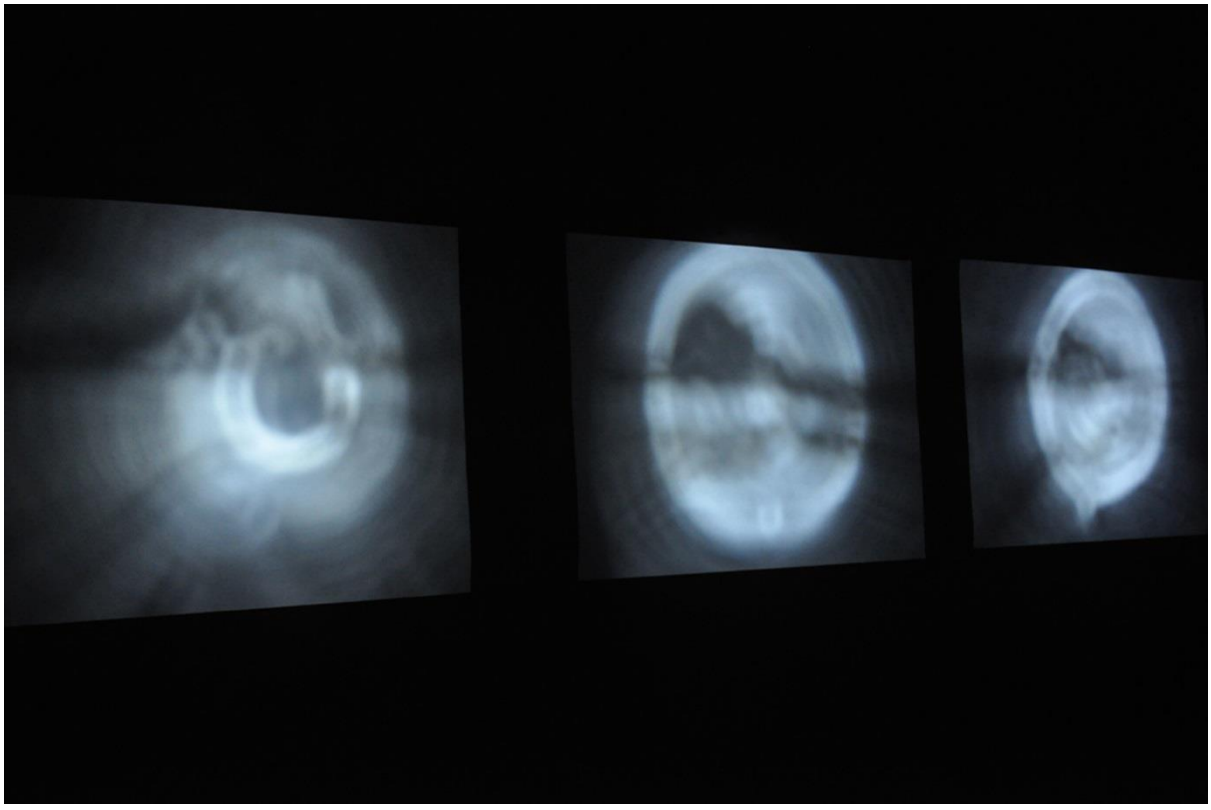


Figure 36. Bridget Hillebrand, *Echo Wall,* (detail) 2011, interactive mixed media installation, dimensions variable.

Figure 37. Bridget Hillebrand, Still from *Top Roping Maximus*, 2013, HD Video, 15min 33 sec.

Figure 38. Bridget Hillebrand, *Top Roping Maximus*, 2013, HD Video and *Traverse,* 2013, mixed media, dimensions variable. Monash University, Melbourne (installation view).

On viewing the video Australian artist Jeff Faulkner wrote, “We see… the climber’s hands, the deliberation, searching for sureness, methodical, palpably and mindfully engaged; perhaps unfolding the body’s accumulated wisdom of climbs. The importance of the sense of touch is unequivocally on display.”[151] I am not surveying with my eyes alone but I am engaging with the rock by the lived and moving body and my tacit knowledge of climbing. I know how to move on rock through bodily knowledge accumulated through personal contact, regular interaction and practice intrinsic to climbing. Barthes claims that, “to read a country is first of all to perceive it in terms of the body and of memory, in terms of the body’s memory.”[152] The landscape of Mt Arapiles is read as text via the body’s memory and knowledge of climbing.

In reference to works on film Laura U. Marks, a media theorist stated, “It makes sense to talk of touch participating in what we think of as primarily a visual experience, if we understand this experience to be one of the lived body.”[153] She coined the term ‘Haptic Visuality’ to redefine notions of perception which she defines as an understanding of the embodied experience in relation to filmic material. She argues that haptic images encourage a bodily relation between the viewer and the video image. She writes, “Haptic images invite the viewer to dissolve his or her subjectivity in the close and bodily contact with the image… By interacting up close with an image, close enough that figure and ground commingle, the viewer gives up her own sense of separateness from the image.”[154] When describing the film, *In the Present* (1997) by Phyllis Baldino she notes, “The speed with which the images fade in and out and the brevity with which each shot remains in focus frustrate optical knowledge and, instead, invite haptic speculation.”[155] *Top Roping Maximus* invites this haptic speculation where close focus on hands and forearms and intermittent glimpses of the distant landscape beyond the rock face is disconcerting and perhaps experienced by the viewer as vertigo.

[151] Jeff Faulkner, "Top Roping 'Maximus" (unpublished review, Melbourne, 2014), 1.
[152] Roland Barthes, *Incidents* trans., Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press 1992), 8.
[153] Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 13.
[154] Ibid, 13.
[155] Ibid, 10.

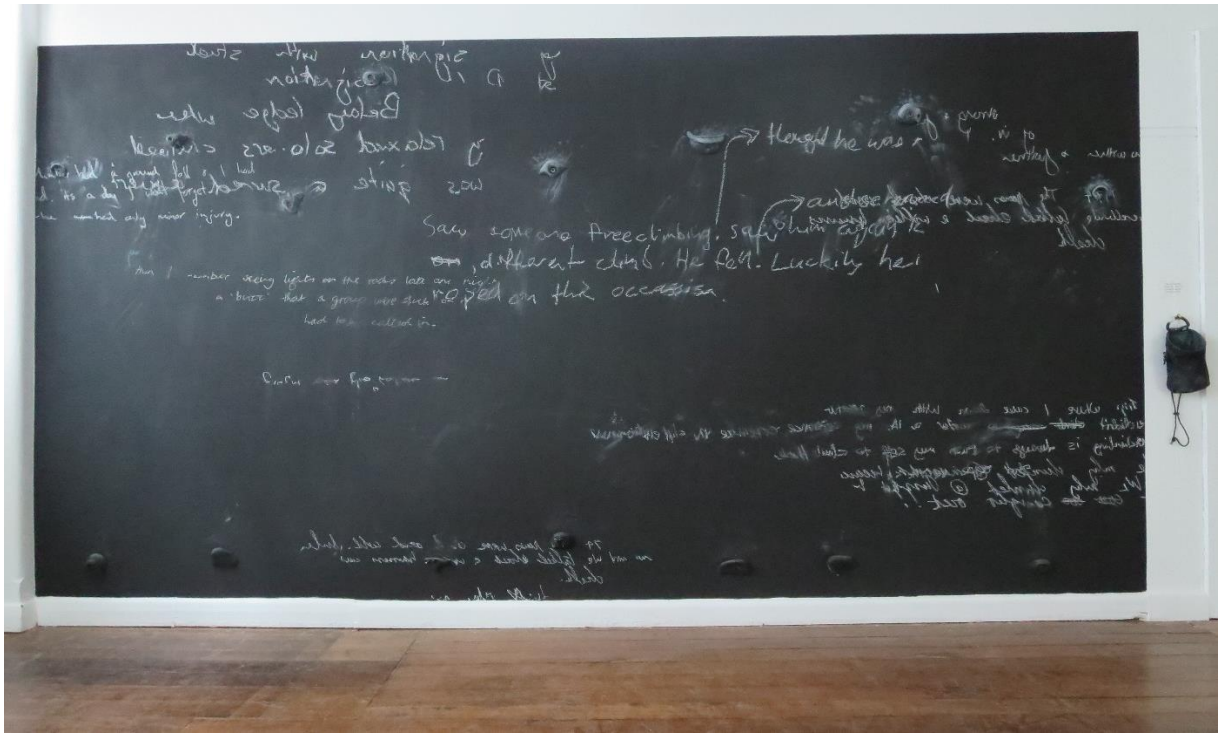
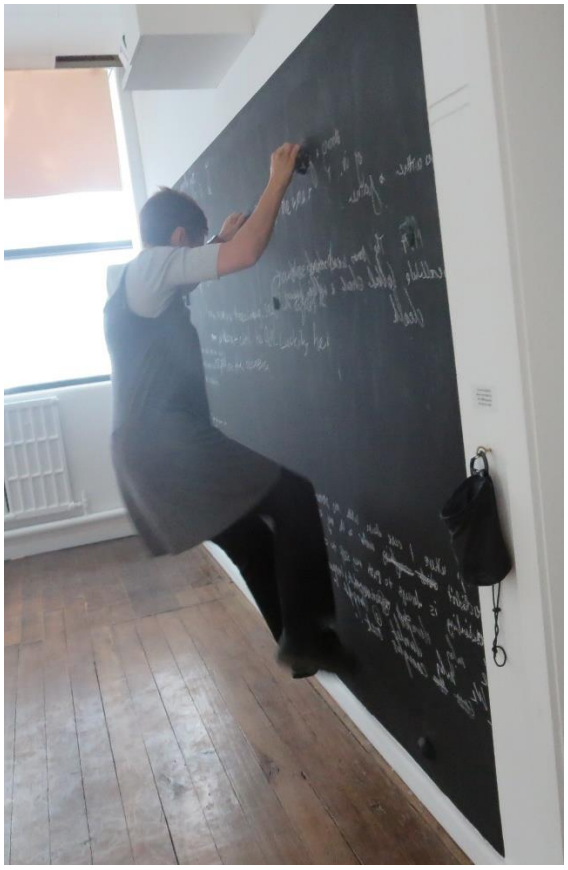


Figure 39. Bridget Hillebrand, *Traverse,* 2013, mixed media, dimensions variable.



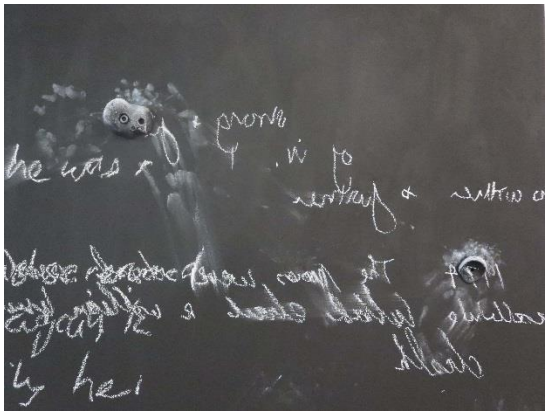


Figure 40. Bridget Hillebrand, *Traverse,* 2013, mixed media.
Figure 41. Bridget Hillebrand, *Traverse,* (detail) 2013, mixed media.

In my work *Traverse* (2014) a black wall with climbing holds depicts traced handwritten responses from climbers in white chalk (see fig. 39). These handwritten transcriptions signal that rock climbing discourse mediates the use and interpretation of specific climbing activities, and that by physically traversing the landscape the body is also engaged in physically reading the landscape. Attached to the wall on one side is a climbing chalk bag. An accompanying sign reads, "You are invited to place your hands in the chalk bag and traverse the wall." The viewer becomes a climber, leaving the floor and using the holds to traverse the wall, leaving white chalk marks from their hands that trace their movement (see fig. 40), just as climbers leave evidence of their passage over a climbing terrain. Layering and changes occur over time and the imprint of these changes are inscribed onto a blackened surface. The viewer, now a climber, moves across a textured surface in a one-on-one relationship, an individuated engagement with the wall.

Over the time of its installation the work recorded the passage of the bodies that moved across it by means of accumulated marks, handprints, smudged text and scuff marks (see fig. 41). If the viewer repeated the climb, the memory of their passage became inscribed not only onto the wall but also into the active body through the memory of the physical sensation of transferring weight, clinging to holds and flexing muscles. In the act of climbing, it is the body that becomes a matrix of and for inscription. *Traverse* demonstrates the corporeality of the inscription process on both the surface and the body.

English artist Dan Shipsides also explores a mediation of landscape via physical engagement, as discussed earlier. While my work is not based on simulating an existing climbing route, Shipsides' art work often involves the re-creation of a particular climbing route, in a gallery space. In his installation *Gecko Roof,* (2000), for example, a structure was made from scaffolding and plywood, and climbing holds were attached to the plywood to emulate the Balls Head, Sydney climbing route *Clocks*. The structure emulates the difficult overhang section of the route. Local climbers were invited to navigate the route, their climbs were documented and the footage was shown on a monitor adjacent to the structure. In a methodology that is similar to my own work, Shipsides describes how "residues of climbers (sic) chalk gives clues to the position of usable holds and physical movements over a rock face."[156] He also refers to the communality of the climbing experience.

> The chalk marks on the surface of the landscape not only mark routes but also histories of ascents and of negotiation of landscape. Climbing organisations also grade climbs according to

[156] Dan Shipsides, "Gecko Roof" http://www.danshipsides.com/DshipsidesWeb/gecko.html (accessed November 20, 2014).

> their perceived level of difficulty. This alludes to a community that not only discusses and shapes movement, but also witnesses the activity.[157]

Gecko Roof and *Traverse* both investigate the mobile rather than static gaze, and both works reference movement and touch. British artist Dr Niamh O'Malley suggests that, "Shipsides' proposed participant is representative of the moving viewer rather than the 'contemplative beholder'."[158] Shipsides also notes:

> The work engages climbers and non-climbers alike. Everyone to varying levels engages in mental projection of the looking at the route and contemplating the things that climbers think when viewing a route – Can I get up it? What sequence of moves? Am I strong, fit or agile enough? Would I have the commitment? What are the risks?[159]

Viewers who travelled across my work *Traverse* might ask themselves the same questions.

In this chapter I have discussed how tactile navigation, kinaesthetic and corporeal knowledge informs a climbers perception of place. Knowledge is made corporeal via the sense of touch, hapticity. I have explored how climbers and their environment inscribe each other, and in the next chapter I discuss how art works that are ephemeral and tactile might present an alternative model to more conventional representations of landscape.

[157] Ibid.
[158] Niamh O'Malley, "Repositioning the Landscape Viewer; Investigating Models of Appreciation and Visual Representation" (University of Ulster, 2003), 7.
[159] Shipsides.

Chapter five

The tactile print

> As generations pass over the earth's surface each person adds a layer, a trace of their presence, however immeasurable or invisible to the naked eye… Each person's mark is so personal and yet so anonymous. Easily eroded or totally or partially covered by successive layers these indiscernible traces amount to nothing until the collective combination of thousands of footsteps wear out a carpet or wears down a step… Some surfaces are so receptive they absorb and hold a small amount of substance so that after years or generations have passed the accumulation of marks or fingerprints create a grime. Together the abraded surface and the stain become evidence of being, a sign of existence.[160]

Haptic aesthetics and the significance of touch

Australian artist Christine Marks' description of touch and layering as evidence of human passage echoes my own experience of climbing rock and observing the traces of the presences of each climber before me. Worn surfaces on a rock face and the absence of lichens can indicate the passage of previous climbers. As a rock climber my physical engagement with the landscape of Mt Arapiles over many years contributes to a unique insight to the way the surface of the rock is affected by the passage of time, wind, weather and human touch. I have seen evidence of human activities on the rock over time - on worn paths, climbs and eroded gullies. I have experienced the devastation of drought and felt the cooling welcome relief of rain. The placement of rocky outcrops against the Wimmera fields and vast skies are clearly embedded in my visual memory.

As a climber however, the process of becoming familiar with a place is realised through touch more than any other sense. To touch and feel the texture of the rock with one's own hand to repeat moves and sequences and to become familiar with climbs is a process of mapping: a haptic aspect of mapping the land. The word 'haptic' relates "to the sense of touch, in particular relating to the perception and manipulation of objects using the senses of touch and proprioception."[161] The theorised term 'the haptic' is an emerging focus within aesthetic discourse that I will briefly outline

[160] Christine Marks, "Shifted," in *Chris Marks in Accordance with My Book of Rules* (Newstead, Vic: Newstead Press, 2007), 3.
[161] Origin: late 19th century: from Greek haptikos 'able to touch or grasp', from haptein 'fasten.' http://oxforddictionaries.com.

to locate my use of the word 'haptic', with my particular interest in developing images that engage the viewer's touch.

In *The Senses of Touch*, Mark Patterson gives a detailed historical overview of debates within academic discourse on the nature of touch and its role in our perception of space and the material world. His description of the haptic senses engaged while walking can also be applied to climbing. He states,

> Walking… involves not simply a correlation between vision and touch but also combined somatic senses, the modalities of proprioception (the body's position felt as muscular tension), kinaesthesia (the sense of the movement of body and limbs) and the vestibular sense (a sense of balance derived from information in the inner ear).[162]

In the chapter "How the World Touches Us"[163], Patterson addresses art historian Alois Riegl's distinction between the haptic and the optic within aesthetic discourse and. his application of the haptic to a historical evaluation of artefacts. Riegl adopted the German word 'haptisch' in his analysis of Greek and late Roman art to distinguish between the haptic and the optic production and perception of art. Laura Marks also references Riegl's work when she differentiates between haptic and optical ways of seeing and writes:

> Haptic *perception* is usually defined as the combination of tactile, kinaesthetic, and proprioceptive functions, the way we experience touch both on the surface of and inside our bodies.' In haptic *visuality*, the eyes themselves function like organs of touch. Haptic visuality, a term contrasted to optical visuality, draws from other forms of sense experience, primarily touch and kinaesthetic. Because haptic visuality draws upon other sense, the viewer's body is more obviously involved in the process of seeing than is the case with optical visuality.[164]

In Marks definition the differences between haptic and optic are associated with the hands and eyes. The haptic entails manual closeness while optic implies visual distance. As discussed previously in Chapter four, Marks explains that 'haptic visuality' encourages the viewer to engage with video phenomenologically, where the viewer feels the moving images of the video with their own body. In referencing Riegl, Marks discusses the use of the term 'optical visuality' in relation to historical major arts such as sculpture and suggests the minor arts such as textile art, embroidery and weaving invite the haptic gaze. Ruth Pelzer-Montada, in her 2008 essay, *The Attraction of print: Notes on the surface of the (art) print* suggests, "To these (minor arts) we might productively add printmaking, for it is this kind of 'caressing' or 'step-by-step' look that the printed surface, more often than not also

[162] Mark Patterson, *The Senses of Touch* (UK: Berg Publishers 2007), 4.
[163] Ibid, 79-102.
[164] Laura U. Marks, "Video Haptics and Erotics," in *Screen* (UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 332.

attracts."[165] In researching how my works operate within Pelzer-Montada's distinction between haptic and optic visuality I have discovered that my work *Direct Start ★★ 5m Grade 8* (2016) also attracts the haptic gaze, by this definition, with its layered textured surface of ink and crushed chalk. When describing printed works Pelzer-Montada suggests that "the simple attachment of the pliable paper to the wall – rather than as a framed and sealed object – turns the piece more into textile… (and) thus serves to imbue the image and the viewer with a sense of vulnerability (and) impermanence."[166] My creative practice might offer an alternative, haptic presentation of artwork as a physical landscape, where touch is presented as a response to and engagement with the culture of that landscape.

Australian artist Tim Mosely's current research interests lie in exploring the dynamics of a viewer's tactile engagement with the materiality of artworks, and the development of a critical terminology to evaluate artist books. He makes reference to the distinction between the haptic and optical as argued by French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and their description of 'smooth' and 'striated space'. They state:

> It seems to us that the Smooth is both the object of a close vision par excellence and the element of a haptic space (which may be as much visual or auditory as tactile). The Striated, on the contrary, relates to a more distant vision, and a more optical space - although the eye in turn is not the only organ to have this capacity.[167]

Deleuze and Guattari describe 'smooth space' as a space that must be navigated at close range and with a haptic perception of the immediate environment, as when navigating across snow or sand, while 'striated space' corresponds to the more distant vision of the optical. Mosely provides this definition:

> Smooth space describes any relationship that is formed through haptic perception; through an intimate knowing of place, an increasing awareness and sensitivity to the complexity of place and by responding to place. Simply put, the more a person relies on their haptic perception of place, the smoother is their experience of it. Conversely, the more a person relies on optic perceptions of a place, the more striated is their experience.[168]

For Marks, as for Deleuze and Guattari, the smooth and the striated are in constant transition, occupying a range of relations depending on the place, be it material, conceptual, virtual or other.

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[165] Ruth Pelzer-Montada, "The Attraction of Print: Notes on the Surface of the (Art) Print," in *Art Journal* 67, no. 2 (2008), 83.
[166] Ruth Pelzer-Montada, "Sensing Print: Reflections on the Materiality of the Contemporary Print," IMPACT 6 Multidisciplinary Printmaking Conference Proceedings. (Bristol: Impact Press, 2012), 58.
[167] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "1440: The Smooth and the Striated," in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 493.
[168] Tim Mosely, "The Haptic Touch of Books by Artists" (PhD diss., Griffith University 2014), 26.

Figure 42. Tim Mosely, *The Book of Tears-One,* 2014, relief prints on awagami kozo, rainforest plywood, 35 x 32cm (open).

Mosely maintains that the printed artist book is an ideal medium for haptic practice. His work, *The Book of Tears - One* (see fig. 42), challenges the viewer to explore and tear relief printed pages with un-gloved hands. Like Mosely I am also interested in the tactile nature of relief printing in this research project because I employ relief prints to explore hapticity as a mode of engagement in my artworks. I have explored this notion of the tactility of relief printing to a variety of constructed art works, while Mosely focuses on our experience of the book. Dr George Petelin from Griffith University, Queensland writes,

> "Mosely prints books that transport us on a journey over surfaces… (he) challenges our established reading habits: pages can fold out instead of in, provide surprising juxtapositions through alternating in size, invite crumpling, searching for folds, and the discovery of cryptic textual messages."[169]

The haptic plays a central role not only in the way Mosely's books are read but also in his method of gathering material and content for his books. Reflecting on the use of salvaged luan plywood for a series of untitled relief prints made between 2012 and 2014 he writes, "These sheets of plywood allowed me to restore an intimate haptic touch with the rainforest."[170] Luan plywood according to Mosely, is manufactured from rainforest timbers often illegally and unethically logged within the Asia-Pacific rim. By making prints directly from the wooden luan plywood sheets Mosely suggests that materials and surfaces evoke memories of their origins. Rock references geological origins, durability and permanence. Wood evokes memory of its existence as a tree. They are both materials

[169] Tim Mosely and George Petelin, "From the Deep," in *Re/Membering Touch*(Griffith University: Silverwattle Bookfoundry & Queensland College of Art, 2014), 2.
[170] Ibid, 3.

that reflect the passage of time as measured in the patina and wear of their surfaces. Professor Charles Talbot from Trinity University in America suggests that the contact between the matrix and the paper gives a print the status of a relic. He states, “Since the print had pressed against the form-giving object, some invisible quantity of that former presence might be thought to remain attached to the impression.”[171]

My research has explored whether tactile sensibility can replace or enhance distanced optical visual imagery in embracing enhanced materiality, nearness and intimacy. Laura Marks suggests, “The goal of haptic and sensuous criticism is to enhance our human capacities, rather than entirely replacing critical distance with haptic intimacy. I suggest we embrace and cultivate all our perceptual and cognitive and feeling capacities, keeping in mind the meanings that motivate them.”[172]

Traces of disintegration

A sign on the Gallery wall of the Bodleian library in Oxford in the late nineteenth century reads, “Touch what you like with the eyes, but do not see with the fingers.”[173] Traditionally, the only people who touched fine art prints such as relief prints and engravings were those who made them, particularly the artist and the master printer. Today gallery patrons are assisted in viewing art works by contemporary methods of gallery display that discourage and reduce the likelihood of works being touched. Printed exhibits are displayed in glass cases and frames to conserve cultural materials. Galleries often present prints mounted under glass, in low lighting to avoid colour fading and paper discolouration. Collectors store prints in boxes and cabinets. White gloves are provided to patrons when handling artist books.

Works on paper have always been considered fragile due to the detrimental effects of light, humidity, heat and pollution. Classen suggests that through the long historical practice of placing museum pieces out of physical reach, “the sensing body was gradually taught to direct itself exclusively through the faculty of vision in the modern museum.”[174] Today the tactile experience of touching art, particularly printed art works, is still almost entirely banned in the art world. My research questions this privileging of vision above other senses and whether the inevitable processes

[171] Charles Talbot, "Prints and the Definitive Image,” in *Print and Culture in the Renaissance: Essays on the Advent of Printing in Europe,* eds., Gerald P. Tyson and Sylvia S. Wagonheim (Delaware: University of Delaware Press 1986), 201.
[172] Laura U. Marks, "Haptic Visuality: Touching with the Eyes," in *The Finnish Art Review* 2004, 82.
[173] Charles Dickens, Jr, *Dickens's Dictionary of the Thames: From Its Source to the Nore* (London: Charles Dickens, 1880), 153.
[174] Constance Classen, *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (USA: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 146.

of aging, weathering and wear of printed images could be considered as positive elements in the design of the work as opposed to the negative implications of signs of age and traces of use. Finish Architect Juhani Pallasmaa in his essay *Hapticity and Time* makes a similar comparison to the way in which architecture is primarily experienced visually. He writes, "the architectural artefact often exists in a timeless space, an artificial condition separated from the reality of time… whereas matter, weathering, and decay strengthen the experience of time, causality, and reality."[175]

Figure 43. Bridget Hillebrand, *Traverse I*, (detail) 2013, linocut printed with crushed rock, 25.5 x 465cm. Glen Eira City Gallery, Melbourne (installation view).

In my work *Traverse 1* (2013), printed pages of text and braille are presented horizontally along the wall. An accompanying sign invites the viewer to traverse the work through touch. The pages are printed with layers of crushed quartzite and limestone. The braille was translated from written text provided by climbers surveyed, including descriptions of their memories of engaging with climbs at Mt Arapiles and embossed onto the surface of the paper. Physically touching the surface of the embossed and punctured paper and feeling crushed rock creates an embodied experience (see fig.43). Through my research on how climbers engage with the landscape as a form of embodiment (discussed in Chapter four), I discussed how bodily capabilities are actively involved in creating our

[175] Juhani Pallasmaa, "Hapticity and Time," in *The Architectural Review* 2000, 79.

experience of and understanding of the world around us. By engaging their haptic senses the viewer is provoked to think about the way in which they use their senses to understand and position themselves in the world. Classen writes, "Our environments, whether natural or built, tattoo our skin with tactile impressions… we learn how to value these impressions and how to use them to make sense of ourselves and the world."[176]

When *Traverse 1* was exhibited in *Entry Exit Points* a group exhibition at Glen Eira City Council Gallery in 2014 and again in Hangzhou, China during the Impact 9 International Printmaking Conference in 2015, viewers engaged with the work in different ways. Some viewers sought to read the text before touching the work. Some delicately touched the surface with their fingers, others ran their flat palm firmly against the surface. A common response after touching the work was to look at their hands to confirm the residue imprinted on the skin. With each passing touch, rock residue fell to the ground leaving a trail directly below the work and indicating a passage of erosion. Through touch the work erodes, just as it accumulates marks. The printed text visualised and felt by the viewer is the product of gradual abrasion. *Traverse 1* challenges conventions of the archive and the conservation of prints through the active engagement of touch.

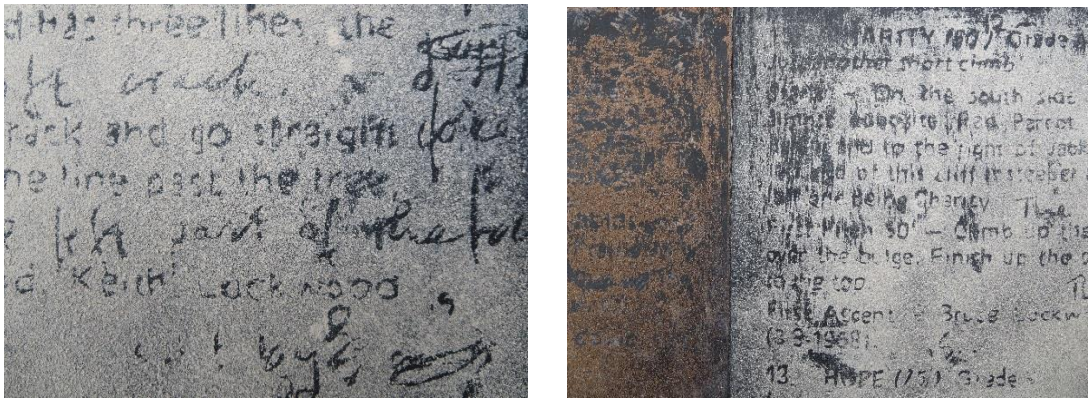

Figure 44. Bridget Hillebrand, *Traverse I*, (detail) 2013, linocut printed with crushed rock.

Text as image is an integral part of my printed works (see fig. 44). Fragments of writing are sourced and printed from my collections of interviews with climbers, letters, diaries, and climbing guides. These personal stories, reflections and thoughts reveal a concept of place as seen, described and experienced intimately and are particularly relevant to Mt Arapiles where communities of climber's camp at the base of the Mount for prolonged periods of time. The selected texts are copied onto linoleum blocks, taking care to transcribe the sometimes subtle handwritten corrections that reflect

[176] Classen, *The Book of Touch*, 28.

individual styles and expressions of writing, and are then carved and printed using the substance of rock that climbers once touched.

Working with the raw material of rock found on site at Mt Arapiles connects my intimate engagement with climbing to my art practice. Earlier my works were printed using conventional inks onto sheets of paper of varying weights and transparencies now I crushed rocks and embedded my prints with pigments from a specific place. Bodily capabilities are actively involved in creating our experience and understanding of the world around us. I physically crush rock and create surface textures to create an embodied experience and understanding of the landscape. Works that can be touched, engage the viewer through handling and provoke them to think about the way they use their senses to understand and position themselves in the world. Classen suggests that when we distance ourselves from the contact with our environment we not only lose our tactile experience of its surfaces, but also other sensations that may be perceived. She writes,

> "Perhaps the tactually unengaging nature of much of the modern material world is a product of our arms-length relationship to the environment. In the modern Western city only children (and gardeners) usually have much full bodily contact with the ground."[177]

This research explores the possibilities of a contemporary art practice that disrupts and challenges our contemporary absorption with screen and digital culture and disengagement with the physical world. One way to explore this disengagement with the physical world is to research how touch contributes to our embodied knowledge of the landscape as we engage more and more with technologies that disconnect us from the ground. As a climber I am constantly touching the natural materials of soil and rock. Classen's comments remind me that the tactile experience of engagement with natural surfaces may be an increasingly foreign and isolated experience for a majority of the population. Can the use of crushed rock as a printing pigment, allow for an intimate haptic touch with the rocky escarpments of Mt Arapiles just as Mosely's plywood has for the rainforest? Just as a climber carefully observes the face of the rock with the intent to navigate its surface using a variety of senses, touch engages the viewer to scrutinise the surface of the work, to enter into an individual dialogue through touch and vision, to come close and to focus on the different elements of the print, the marks, the colours and the textures. Does a tactile surface therefore engage the viewer to interact more closely with an image? Touch brings us into a close and intimate contact with an art work as we touch we are also touched physically and emotionally. The viewer travels intensely, not merely extensively, over the body of the work. This perhaps provides a new way of looking at the landscape of Mt Arapiles.

[177] Ibid, 29.

Artist books, in particular, offer a way to combine concepts of place and materiality that invites touch. The project's exploration of the haptic was further extended in the production of artist books. Through the repetitive act of touching, books in general become worn, pages become creased and the evidence of the hand is revealed by marks and stains on the surface of the paper. Architect and poet Alex Selenitsch writes,

> Typically, an artist's book is a work that becomes evident as you hold it, open it up, go back and forth and then close it again. Often there is a controlled narrative built into the physicality of the book, so that size, weight, texture, stiffness and binding are foregrounded. Nearly always, a tangible experience of the book is necessary to absorb it totally.[178]

I would add that artist books challenge notions of the archive and museum standards of conservation when they are handled to the point where they show signs of age and wear rather than being presented behind glass in a seemingly timeless state. In 2014, I exhibited the artist books, *Book of Chalk* (2014) and *Book of Stone* (2014) in *Artist's Books (reprised)* at the George Paton Gallery, Melbourne University and again in Hangzhou, China during the Impact 9 International Printmaking Conference in 2015. The George Paton Gallery was constructed to resemble a reading room and trestle tables and bookshelves displayed artist books for viewing, handling and reading. An extensive collection of both contemporary and archival artist books were presented. Some books were marked 'handle with white gloves', others (including my artist books) were available for direct tactile experience. Valuable books on loan from the University of Melbourne archives were enclosed in vitrines.

The pages of my artist books, *Book of Chalk* (see fig. 45) and *Book of Stone* (see fig. 46), are printed with soft chalk, crushed limestone and quartzite (collected from the site of Mt Arapiles). Steel plates were inserted in the front and back cover slips to convey the weight of rock when handled. When repeatedly touched the text is easily smudged and edges of the paper become worn. The chalk and rock imprints onto the viewer's hand, which is then imprinted onto the surface again in a cycle of touch and being touched. The viewer's touch of the work is a creative act. The viewer becomes the writer, with each touch the text is altered, readable passages become unreadable, another layer is added, suggesting a new reading. Just as the authors of climbing guides alter each subsequent guide via their corporeal and haptic knowledge of a climb, the viewer alters the legibility of the text through their haptic engagement with the book.

[178] Alex Selenitsch, *Australian Artists Books* (Australia: National Gallery of Australia Publishing, 2008), 10.

Although they are the same size, the two books feel different when touched. As the hand moves over the pages of *Book of Stone* the crushed limestone and quartzite has the propensity to be smoothed through constant touching yet feel granular on a textured and pitted surface. In contrast, *Book of Chalk* feels soft to the touch as the hand glides smoothly over each page. The pages of these artist books, like the face of a rock, carry a history of deterioration and wear on the surface. The substance of rock, which would once have been worn away by time and weather had it remained at Mt Arapiles, is now touched and retouched in my artist book and eroded by the viewer's hand. When closed, the books are the same size as the first Mt Arapiles climbing guides which were made to fit neatly in a back pocket.

The concertina format engages the viewer to look through the book either page after page, or as a long undulating series of folds, representing peaks, corners, and arêtes. The books evoke a number of related narratives regarding language and the haptics of place. The text references the collective memory of climbing routes at Mt Arapiles and also creates a personal dialogue with the viewer through touch. Interactions with the work will vary and the surface itself will change over time, discolour, and wear away. Words will be revealed and concealed in an ongoing process of discovery. Much like climbs when revisited many years later, familiar hand holds may have worn away, or the surface of the rock may have developed a black patina from the constant friction of climbing boots. Perhaps what becomes more evident in these works is the materiality of the surface. As the viewer's touch removes evidence of the text, the remaining words become lost in translation running through your fingertips half felt half remembered.

Figure 45. (Top and middle left) Bridget Hillebrand, *Book of Chalk*, 2014, linocut printed with limestone and chalk, 14.5 x 10cm (closed) 14.5 x 145cm (open).

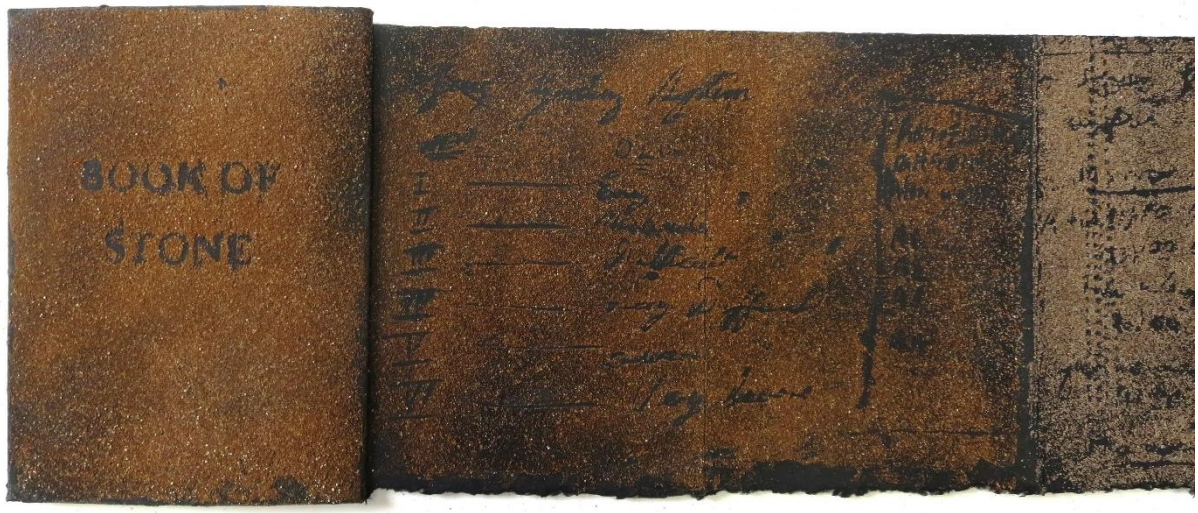

Figure 46. (Directly above and middle right) Bridget Hillebrand, *Book of Stone*, 2014, linocut printed with crushed quartzite, 14.5 x 10cm (closed) 14.5 x 145cm (open). George Paton Gallery, Melbourne University.

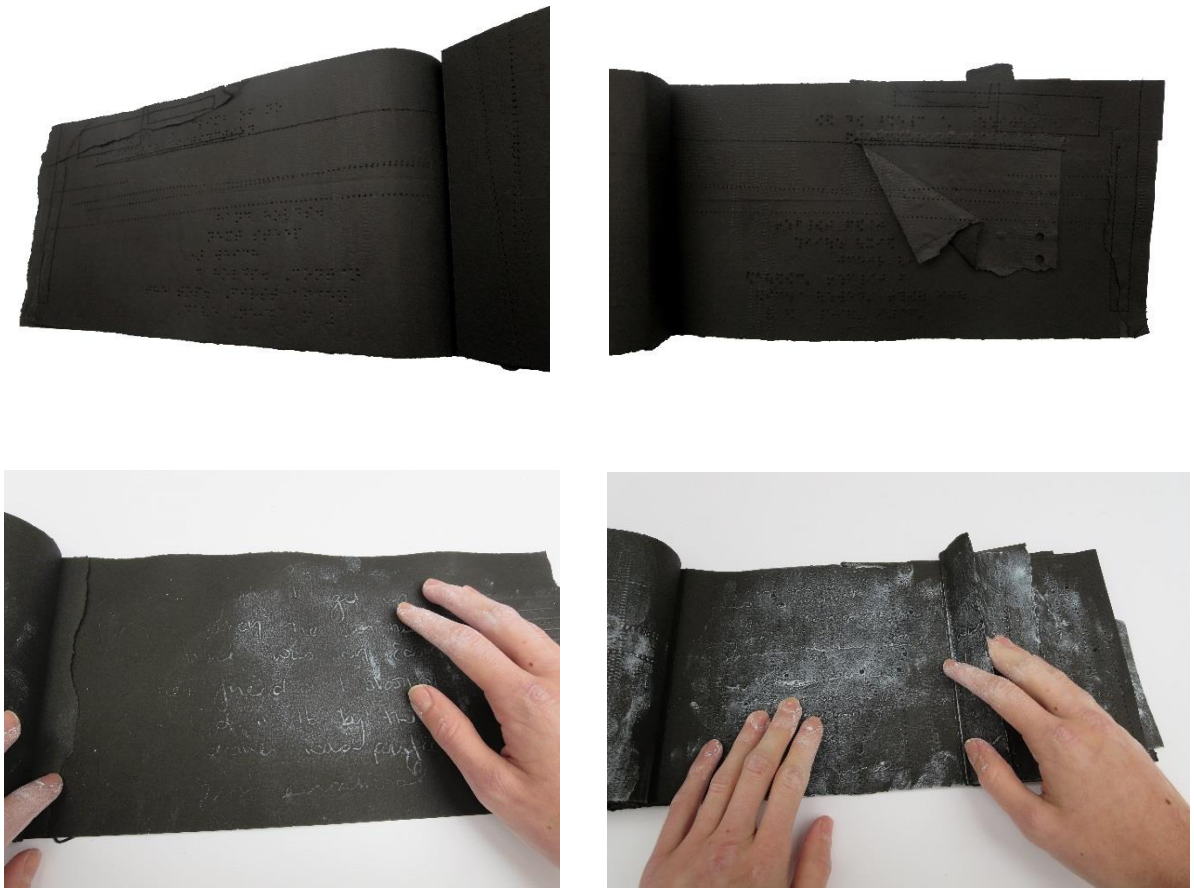

Figure 47. Bridget Hillebrand, *Site Unseen,* 2015, hand-stitched artist book, blind embossing and chalk, 17 x 39cm (closed).

In my hand-stitched artist book *Site Unseen* (2015) and concertina style artist book *Site Unseen II* (2016), braille and text, printed as blind embossing on black paper, are hidden within the folded layers of the work. To read the content of the work, the viewer must dip their hand into a climbing chalk bag that rests alongside the book and move their hands across the surface of the pages (see fig.47). It is only through repetitive touching with chalked hands that words become visible and sentences can be read. The words also become hidden, through successive deposits of climbing chalk. It is the bodily movement of the reader and not just a visual interaction with language that this engagement requires. Just as chalk marks on the rock can guide a novice to the best available holds, traces of white chalk on the surface of the pages provide evidence of the reader's passage. The imprint of the viewer's hand memorialises a moment of contact, initiating a play of presence and absence.

The descriptions of climbing routes in *Site Unseen II* were transcribed from climbing guides, personal letters and diaries provided by climbers who were interviewed during my research. The repeated marks and indentations on the paper were made by impressing rocks, from the site of Mt Arapiles,

into the surface. The text and the marks suggests connection: the connections between climbers, between climbers and rock, between climbers and their world and between the viewer and touch. The rich black printed paper provides a strong contrast to the soft white chalk. As the viewer touches the work, sentences emerge: “Daunting overhang, originally climbed without pre-inspection from abseil.” and “tenuous line with three bolts.” These descriptions reflect a language and terminology unique to climbing. They also reveal climbing events recalled by climbers who have inscribed the landscape of Mt Arapiles with their own personal stories. The process of touching and rubbing the surface of the paper with chalk provides for a unique haptic engagement with the artwork.

Touchscapes

A climber experiences alternative ways of seeing and experiencing the landscape through touch, similarly alternative ways of experiencing a place are suggested to a viewer through my works, exploring touch and the bodily engagement of the viewer. New ways of activating the gallery wall space to challenge pictorial conventions, particularly traditional picturesque conventions which relies on framing device to organize spatial arrangements is evident in my work *Direct Start ★★ 5m Grade 8* (2016) which was exhibited in *Out of the Matrix*, a group exhibition curated by Australian artist Richard Harding at RMIT Gallery in Melbourne, in 2016. *Direct Start ★★ 5m Grade 8* (see fig. 48) is made with variously sized, irregularly shaped panels installed in a corner of the gallery.

The panels are positioned at various heights suggesting rock climbing features such as ledges and small platforms. I utilised my knowledge as a climber to calculate the position of each panel, assessing how one hold leads to another, and where one panel’s placement suggests the positioning of the next. Step by step the work, like the climb, is revealed. The title of the work references the practice of naming and grading climbs. The term ‘direct start’ used in climbing guides, denotes that a climb can ascend from the ground up in a straight line, rather than traversing the wall from one side to the other to incorporate multiple features or holds. The title also includes a star rating (indicating the perceived quality of a climb), the length of the climb and the grade. As the eye moves from the panels to the wall, the boundaries of distinctive pictorial space are challenged. Architectural features such as skirting boards, door frame and ceiling beams come into play with the work.

Figure 48. Bridget Hillebrand, *Direct Start ★★ 5m Grade 8*. 2016, linocut and frottage, dimensions variable. RMIT Gallery, Melbourne (Installation view).

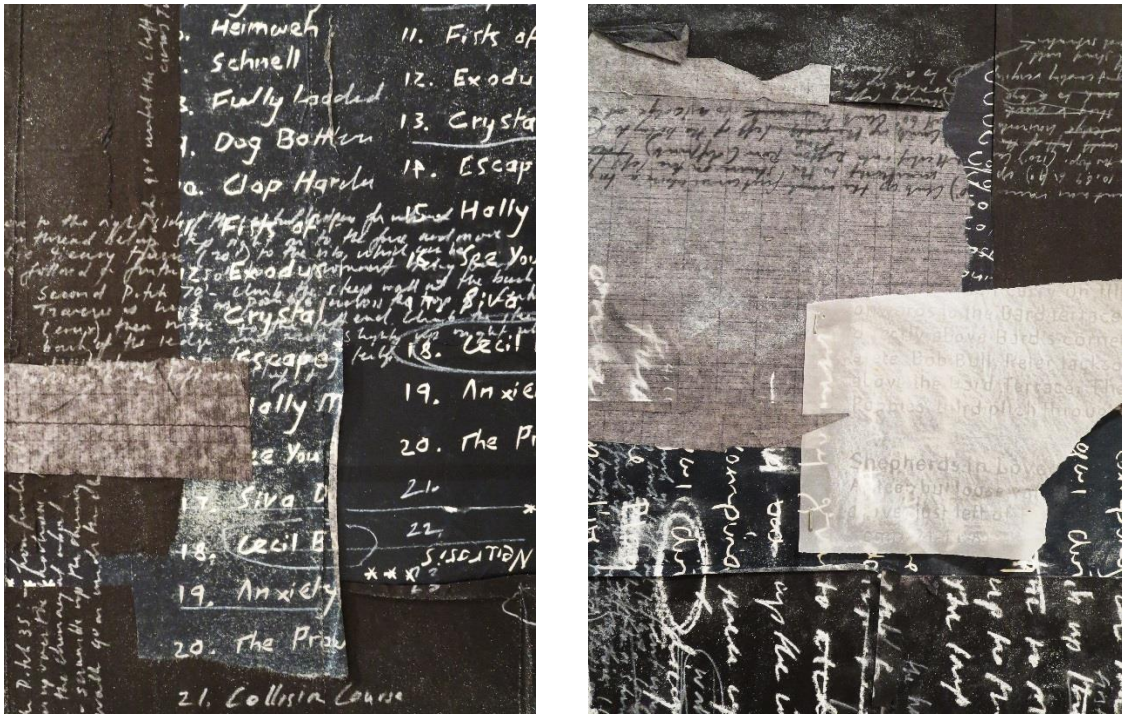

Figure 49. Bridget Hillebrand, *Direct Start ★★ 5m Grade 8*, (detail) 2016, linocut and frottage. RMIT Gallery, Melbourne.

The bodily experience when viewing this work is like that of a climber surveying rock formations, ledges and platforms from the ground up. Viewers move from side to side, step back and move in towards the work and look up and down to experience the work like a climb, from a variety of angles. Just as a climber looks for potential hand and foot holds and assesses the climb as a whole, each position provides a new reading of the shape and texture of individual panels and the work as a whole. Text in this work is used as a form of inscription – as various descriptions of climbs have been inscribed onto the landscape of Mt Arapiles they are in turn inscribed onto the climber through touch. Similarly, the viewer inscribes my work through touch and in turn is inscribed by the chalk residue printed on the works.

Panels layered and wrapped with printed text on paper, canvas, calico and organza, reveal descriptions of climbs and hand written notes. Different materials have different tactile qualities and I use materials to trigger different memories and association and to offer contrast and resonances. Climber's camp in tents made from calico and canvas. The printed organza acts as a veil hiding and revealing layers of printed text. Transparent papers torn and taped together reference the changing visibility of climbs. The texts were sourced from my conversations with climbers, their journals and climbing guides. By incorporating climbing discourse I directly address my work to a particular historical and cultural framework. The text, sourced from my conversations with climbers' links my

reading of the landscape and hence my perception of Mt Arapiles to my printmaking practice. Thin transparent layers of paper were laid on top of linoleum blocks carved with text, the paper was rubbed with white chalk, transferring embossed white text onto the paper. I then stitched, glued and taped together various printed papers to form multiple layers of text (see fig. 49), mirroring how descriptions of climbs are altered and rewritten over time. The inked linen and paper fragments were torn, folded around corners and sanded and weathered to mimic the effects of time and touch and to suggest an intimacy and fragility that contrasts with the durability of the robust structured panels.

With repeated printing of linoleum blocks, some of the text was progressively obliterated and made illegible, just as published climbs become lost or unseen when then are overwritten by new routes. However, semi-legible fragments sometimes arise, as your eyes wander over the surface: "steeply up left past a bolt," "climb the steep flake and… pull over the bulge." These descriptions anchor the images within a field of narrative particular to Mt Arapiles. Climbing phrases simultaneously emerge from and recede into chalked surfaces that can be touched and retouched and alter with each subsequent viewing. Much like the surface of the rock that changes over time with each passing climber's bodily inscription, where holds become worn or chipped or coated with climbers chalk, a new reading of the wall is sometimes needed to complete the climb. Similarly the viewer with each subsequent visit may find a new reading of the work. Not all the panels can be touched or easily read due to their positioning on the wall. The viewer can only touch what is within the reach of an outstretched hand. The legibility of the text and therefore the climb becomes clearer with close contact, just as a climber can read and utilise a hold more easily if they are close to the rock.

On entering the exhibition *Touchscapes* climbing ropes are seen hanging from the ceiling to the floor. The worn and textured ropes provide evidence of their engagement with touching the landscape of Mt Arapiles. The sheath of the ropes are cut in places having rubbed against the lip of a sharp rock. Bulging of the outer sheath is also evident, caused by the strain of multiple climbing falls. Other marks and stains show where the ropes have touched rock, dirt and the chalked hands of a climber. Visitors push pass the ropes, experiencing the brush of course rope against the skin. Patterson writes, "The feeling of cutaneous touch when an object brushes our skin is simultaneously an awareness of the materiality of the object and an awareness of the spatial limits and sensations of our lived body."[179] The touch of the ropes creates a tactile and haptic connection that encourages a fully embodied engagement with the exhibition, signalling that the meaning of the works lie in exploring the dynamics of a viewer's tactile engagement with the materiality of the artworks.

[179] Patterson, 3.

In the process of making artworks in a variety of forms, whether in an artist book, printed object, or an installation, I utilised and re-used the printed block as a substrate. This repeated use of certain printing blocks created a variety of outcomes. Just as a climber has an imprinted set of skills and enacts them differently in each climb, my images are born of long acquaintance with the print medium and repeated trialling. Reconfiguring and reprinting the blocks onto printed surfaces in different ways echoes the way I absorb information when I climb at Mt Arapiles, where I switch my attention from small details to panoramic views, and then fuse an accretion of views and impressions to form a personal response.

In this chapter I have addressed how the material qualities and installation of my work evoke the corporeal and haptic engagement of a climber in the landscape of Mt Arapiles. My research explores how a creative practice might offer an alternative, haptic presentation of artwork as physical landscape. This research presents touch as a response to an engagement with the specific culture of a particular landscape.

Conclusion

I came to this research with a particular interest in how the concept of place, seen and experienced intimately as a climber, could enhance my perception of the landscape of Mt Arapiles and inform my approach to making printed artworks. A deeper awareness of my embodied engagement as a climber was developed as the research progressed, which then led to a reconsideration of the processes of my creative practice. The coupling of my close and particular knowledge of the landscape as a climber and my engagement with the landscape of the printed image, presented the possibility of a visual intimacy unobtainable via the distant gaze of a detached observer.

Mt Arapiles is a site which represents a broad array of human interaction with place. My research has revealed that Indigenous people, European explorers, missionaries, pastoralists, international and domestic travellers all looked at the landscape of Mt Arapiles and experienced it differently. In creating works in response to my experience as a climber I examined how I and other climbers know and experience the landscape of Mt Arapiles. Through a variety of sources, including guide books and climbing magazines as well as gathering first-hand accounts of a climber's engagement with rock informed by interviews and questionnaires, I established how a landscape is perceived and mediated through the use of a specific language. This area of my research led me to reflect on the significance of language - oral, written and visual - and its importance in mediating the intimate representation of Mt Arapiles which gives structure and meaning to the land.

In the early stages of my research I focussed on the historical narrative of Mt Arapiles. My early creative work featured elements of the landscape viewed from a rock from a climber's perspective, and was directly inspired by our early explorers' descriptions of the landscape. Later in my research, text became an integral part of the works. Fragments of writing were sourced from my collection of interviews with climbers, letters, climbing guides and magazines, and these fragments were incorporated into printed works. My direct engagement with these climbers while recording and documenting conversations and interviews helped formulate ideas about what provoked or evoked connections with place and, in particular, with Mt Arapiles. This creative process placed climbing discourse in a new context. By drawing on a variety of primary sources, my work addressed a particular historical framework and located climbing relationships as an integral part of artworks experienced by touch.

My creative works drew on this culturally constructed language of place and reflected my intimate knowledge of the rock's surface as a climber. In a creative visual language drawn from the dust and

ground minerals of Mt Arapiles, a conversion of the landscape into the text of the imagery was discovered. The development of innovative printing techniques utilising the raw materials of quartzite and limestone sourced from Mt Arapiles presented possibilities of a physical engagement with the materials of site to make creative artworks as an empathetic response to the sociable intimacy and physicality of climbing.

The construction of artworks that invited and necessitated the engagement of sensory and tactile experience to read or engage with it, provides a unique and new mode of engagement with an artwork. My research explored how a creative practice might offer an alternative, haptic presentation of artwork as physical landscape and explored the possibility of contemporary art practice that disrupts and challenges our contemporary absorption with screen and digital culture and disengagement with the physical world.

The presentation of printed works without traditional framing devices and the utilisation of spaces beyond a conventional viewing field reflected physical and spatial elements that climbers encountered at Mt Arapiles. The final works present an encounter with place and space, realigning the perceptual field to that of the unique bodily experience of the climber. It does not privilege a single perspective and engages a number of focal points. It is also a space of place, a specific landscape that is seen from the inside, as opposed to being viewed simply as a vista. The research has stimulated my interest to further challenge and explore the corporeal and spatial aspects of my work, to increase the kinaesthetic nature of my creative research and to further explore an interactive engagement between viewer and artwork. Through my research I am excited by the potential further expansion of the notion of the haptic in the language of visual art and I hope to incorporate dynamic engagement with the materiality of the work in my future practice. Making works on the site of Mt Arapiles has also stimulated ideas for future performative works at the site of Mt Arapiles rather than exhibiting works in a gallery setting.

In this research project I have consolidated and clarified a number of issues related to both my studio practice and my continued interest in the landscape of Mt Arapiles. Researching the historical, contemporary and contextual framework of the histories of representation of Mt Arapiles has revealed the ever expanding parameters of representing place. Touch and the haptic have increased my knowledge of climbing at Mt Arapiles and this kinaesthetic and corporeal knowledge contributed directly to the production of creative works. The performative and engaged actions of both climbing and printmaking - both systems of embodied knowledge which enact, construct and alter perceptions of Mt Arapiles - have enriched my creative representations of this climbing landscape.

My material skills have developed through a variety of forms including print, artist books, audio, video, art objects and installations. All my works reflect my interest in the experiential aspects of climbing the landscape of Mt Arapiles.

The nature of my journey throughout my research has been an interaction between what is experienced and what is intimately felt in the landscape of Mt Arapiles. Through an investigation of rock climbing, printmaking and studio practice my research explores the ephemeral and tactile nature of art works as a viable alternative to traditional presentations of landscape.

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Appendix 1: Glossary of climbing terms

Abseil	Also known as rappel. The process by which a climber can descend a cliff by sliding down a rope using a belay/rappel device.
Abseil sling	Nylon webbing attached to an abseil device.
Anchor	A device or method for attaching a climber, a rope, or a load to the climbing surface.
Barn door	An off-balance move that pulls the climber away from the rock, like a door opening on its hinges.
Belay	A belay is used to protect a roped climber from falling, by passing the rope through, or around, a belay device.
Belay device	A mechanical device used to control a rope during belaying.
Beta	Step by step instructions on how to successfully complete a climbing route.
Bolt	A point of protection permanently drilled into the rock.
Bouldering	The practice of climbing on large boulders without the protection of ropes.
Bridging	A method of climbing a corner of a rock by spreading the legs wide apart and relying on friction or very small holds for ascent.
Bucket	A large handhold.
Chalk	Also known as magnesium carbonate is used by climbers to absorb sweat for better grip.
Chalk bag	A fabric sack that holds chalk. It is usually attached to a belt around the climber's waist.
Chimney	A rock feature with vertical sides mostly parallel, large enough to fit a climber's body.
Classic	An excellent climbing route with a significant climbing history.
Crimp	A hold which is only big enough to be grasped with the tips of the fingers.
Face climbing	To ascend a vertical rock face using finger, hand and foot holds.
First ascent	The first successful completion of a route.
First ascensionist	The person who climbed the first ascent.
Fist jam	A climbing technique where a clenched fist is placed frontally inside a crack.

Flake	A thin slab of rock detached from the main face.
Heel hook	A technique using the back of the heel to apply pressure to the foothold, allowing the climber to balance or push off to the next hold.
Hold	A rock feature that can be used in the practice of climbing.
Jamming	The act of wedging a body part into a crack.
Jug	A large, easily held hold.
Layback	Climbing a vertical edge by side-pulling the edge with both hands and relying on friction or very small holds for the feet.
Multi-pitch climb	A climbing route with more than one pitch.
On belay	A call from a climber when he is ready to be belayed.
One-finger hold	A climbing hold for one finger.
Overhang	A section of rock that is angled beyond vertical.
Palming	To press your palms against the surface of the rock.
Pinch hold	A handhold that is gripped by pinching.
Pitch	A climb that is the length of one rope.
Piton	A flat or angled metal blade of steel. A piton can be hammered into a thin crack in the rock.
Pocket	Various-sized holes in the rock surface, which a climber uses as a handhold by placing one or more fingers inside the hole.
Protection	Equipment or anchors used for arresting falls.
Rap-anchor	Abbreviation for Rappel anchor. (See abseil and anchor).
Rope drag	The friction and the weight of the rope that the climber feels when pulling a rope through a number of protection points, or over rock prominences.
Route	The path of a particular climb, or a predefined set of moves.
Runout	A lengthy distance between two points of protection.
Second	A climber who follows the lead, or first, climber.
Sideways pull	Hand holds that you pull sideways. Also known as layaways or sidepulls.
Slack	A portion of rope that is not taut.
Sloper	A sloping hold with very little positive surface.

Smearing	To use friction on the sole of the climbing shoe, in the absence of any useful footholds.
Sport climbing	A style of rock climbing practised indoor and outdoor, on artificial surfaces or rock. It originated outdoors where climbing routes are well protected with pre-placed bolt-anchors fixed to the rock.
Star grading/rating	In Australia a three-star grading system is used to denote the quality of a climb. Three stars is excellent. Two stars is very good and one star is worthwhile.
Take	A call from a climber when requesting the belayer to remove slack in the rope.
Top roping	To belay from a fixed anchor point above the climb.
Two-finger hold	A hand hold for two fingers.
Undercling	A hold which is gripped with the palm of the hand facing upwards.

Appendix 2: Rock climbing questionnaire

MONASH University

QUESTIONNAIRE

GROUP 1 – ROCK CLIMBERS

1. Please circle

Male female

2. Please circle your age group

18 – 29 30 – 39 40 – 49 50 – 59 60+

3. How did you first hear about Mt Arapiles? Please circle.

- Word of mouth
- Viewed in a book
- While visiting the area
- Other, please specify.....

4. When did you first visit Mt Arapiles? What were your first impressions and what was the climbing scene like?

5a. Are there any differences/changes you have noticed about the experience or sense of community while climbing at Mt Arapiles over a period of time? If so please explain.

5b. Are there any differences/changes you have noticed in the environment? If so what are they?

MONASH University

6. Can you recall a particular story or event that relates strongly to your experience of climbing at Mt Arapiles?

7. How do you decide what route to climb? Please grade the following from 1 to 5.
1 being the most likely, 5 being the least likely.

( ) Verbal description
( ) Watching someone climb
( ) Discovering a route while climbing
( ) Reading a rock climbing guide
( ) Looking for physical signs on the rock i.e.: chalk, bolts, slings etc.
( ) Other, please specify.....

8. How do you gain knowledge about how to climb at Mt Arapiles? Please grade the following from 1 to 5. 1 being the most likely, 5 being the least likely.

( ) Reading descriptions
( ) Looking at pictures of routes
( ) Personal experience - exploring the landscape first hand
( ) Watching someone climb
( ) Verbal description
( ) Reading grades
( ) Other, please specify……

9. What inspires/motivates you to climb?

MONASH University

10. Have you climbed at night? Why? What was your experience in contrast to climbing during the day?

11. Why do you choose to climb at Mt Arapiles? Please respond in your own words or select from the following.

- Quality of the rock
- Proximity of camping to the rock
- Vegetation and natural surroundings
- Sense of community – camping with friends
- Closest place to climb outdoors
- Other, please specify

Thank you for participating in this Questionnaire.