

Archive to Mine: Inheritance, Hauntology, and Practice

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*A thesis submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master
of Fine Arts.*

Sydney College of the Arts

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

The University of Sydney

2026

Statement

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This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship.

Jack Harman

December 31, 2025

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Acknowledgments

Over the course of this project, I have had the immense privilege of travelling and conducting fieldwork in several locations across the state of New South Wales. Most of the findings have been compiled at my home and in the studio, where I have further developed this research. As such, I would like to respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters, and community, whose knowledges, voices, and protocols have shaped this research. I wish to pay my respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past and present, and to recognise the ongoing significance of this Country as a place of learning, exchange and research-creation.

Taking this into account, I'd like to thank the professional staff at the Scholarship Office for awarding me the Fauvette Loureiro Memorial Scholarship (SCA Student Travel) in support of this travel, which has proved invaluable to the outcomes of this project.

My supervisor, Oliver Smith, has shown great support for my project since its inception. His enthusiasm, reassurance and patience have been a constant source of encouragement throughout this research period. I would like to thank my secondary supervisor, Andrew Lavery, for bouncing ideas back and forth, especially during the early stages of the project.

Oliver Watts has been a valuable sounding board over the duration of this research, providing guidance, resources and advice on some of the theoretical content. I thank Lynette Riley for our conversation early in the project, which helped me understand the pedagogical and practical approaches for this project's engagement with Aboriginal people.

I could not have completed this project without the support of the team at Artbank, who generously accommodated my study and who have worked around my busy schedule.

I have relied on the expertise and guidance of many people during this project, and their willingness to share their knowledge and resources has only strengthened this project. Thanks to everyone I've met during my travels and with whom I have had many informative conversations; your unique contributions have made this project what it is today.

I am thankful for the support of my dear friend Broderick Wann, who dedicated a significant amount of time to helping me edit large sections of the text and set realistic expectations about the scope of the written component.

To my friends at MRC, I'm grateful for the continual prayer and encouragement that keep my spirits high, even when I've been low, offering nourishment and solace in equal measure.

Thanks to my parents, Janene and Robert, who have supported my art-making throughout my life. On this occasion, thanks for allowing me the space to vent.

Finally, I would like to thank my beautiful wife, Lilian, who is my rock, who has walked with me every day of this research project, through times of joy and hardship. She has contributed immensely, lovingly, conversationally, and intelligently, giving more than I deserve and continuing to love me despite my flaws.

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Abstract

Archive to Mine: Inheritance, Hauntology and Practice is a practice-based research project examining the interplay of nonhuman materialities and familial legacies within anthropocentric ecological crisis. Through a photomedia-based inquiry into my great-grandfather Francis ‘Frank’ Reginald Martin’s archive, I trace his reported mining sites across western New South Wales. Frank’s archive acknowledges my personal entanglement in the harms of Western epistemic regimes, and I seek repair and reconciliation with Indigenous communities and country through my practice.

Drawing from theorists Lorraine Code, Val Plumwood and Donna Haraway, I employ ecological thinking and situated knowledge as counter-epistemologies. I examine how the archive’s fallibility exposes the influence of social habitus on representation and use hauntology as a generative lens for engaging with Frank’s presence and absence. Fieldwork across his locations positions land as an interlocutor for his ghost.

My photomedia works span familial and cosmological scales, probing material complexities and relationalities. The first series, *Chronotope*, marks an attempt to materialise Frank’s trace through the agency of sediments collected in situ, harnessed through a soil chromatography methodology. The second series, *Borderlands*, comprises large-scale silver gelatine photographic prints developed using an experimental darkroom technique of colouring negatives using iron-bearing minerals. Informed by Karen Barad’s diffractive methodology, *Borderlands* challenges anthropocentric representationalism by revealing material-discursive entanglements of the more-than-human in photographic processes. Several associative works accompany these series, including mixed-media cast iron sculptures, found railway components, and an analogue slide-based work presenting Mica slices titled *Longue Durée*. I also present a collection of archival objects: *A Parliament of Things*.

The arc of my practice attempts an impossible story: contraposing memory and forgetting, fact and myth, subject and object, and the virtual and the real. In mapping

Frank's spatial and temporal terrain, I produce open-ended, speculative works which reflect a polytemporal phenomenology and the dynamic agency of the more-than-human world.

Introduction: A Framing

Contextual Terrain

This research project begins with the witnessing of ecological crisis due to human activity. Anthropogenic climate change, resource extraction, and colonial structures characterise the landscape of the post-Enlightenment world. Enlightenment ideas of rationality, anthropocentrism and human progress viewed nature and Indigenous culture as objects to be mastered and analysed. White settler-colonialism, positioned as a dominant geophysical force, has given rise to the Anthropocene.¹

Within the Anthropocene, Western epistemic regimes, representationalism and visual practices are culpable in perpetuating otherness and stratification.² The Western gaze, claimed to be objective, implicitly denies one's positionality and embeddedness in Nature and widens the divide between subject and object.³ Such approaches are reductive substitutes for embodied experience, and mark a *rift* between nature and culture.

As a male of settler-colonial descent, I resist the draw to perpetuate the same reductivism in my artistic practice in seeking to respond to this rift. Kathryn Youseff's rift theory highlights ecological and cultural crisis as a catalyst for developing new forms of understanding and relatedness with the multispecies world, moving beyond anthropocentric Western narratives. She describes the rift as a "spatial form and methodological process for understanding the material locatedness of theorizing, against the epistemic smoothness of geology and its homogenization of the elemental."⁴ Thinking through the Anthropocene from my specific material location reveals the implicit material-discursive entanglement of human and natural histories.

¹ Val Plumwood, *Environmental culture the ecological crisis of reason*, Environmental philosophies series, (London ;: Routledge, 2002).

² Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004).

³ Val Plumwood, "Shadow Places and the Politics of Dwelling," *Australian Humanities Review*, no. 44 (2008), <http://doi.org/10.22459/AHR.44.2008>.

⁴ Kathryn Yusoff, *Geologic Life: Inhuman Intimacies and the Geophysics of Race* (Duke University Press, 2024), 77. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478059288>.

Conceptual Methodology

I draw from the voices of feminist and post-humanist theorists who assert that an ecologically sustainable ethos – what Lorraine Code calls “ecological thinking” – must be grounded in positionality and embodiment.⁵ Donna Haraway’s “situated knowledge” posits that knowledge is partial, comes from a particular context, and generates its own politics through intersecting forms of geographical, historical, and social difference.⁶ In contrast to the globalising reach of the Enlightenment, situated knowledge seeks “the more modest goal of a finite flourishing” in the cohabitation of humans and nonhumans, focusing on microcosms and everyday encounters.⁷ Ecological thinking shifts this project from an instrumental, disembodied view to a situated approach.

Susan Best’s concept of “reparative aesthetics” suggests that the artist is uniquely positioned to bear witness to and redress damaging histories through theoretical and artistic practice.⁸ A decolonising stance is inherent within this approach. Recognising the normalising tendencies of Western epistemic regimes and naming positionality allows for non-Western and Indigenous understandings to become visible. A reparative decolonising ethic must practice accountability, intentionality, and solidarity with marginalised voices and perspectives. Integral to my approach is the respectful acknowledgment of Country, Indigenous knowledges and protocols.

To sincerely engage with the complexities of colonisation and environmental degradation, I intended to go “all the way down”: “radically internationalising an anti-reductionist writing of the world” and highlighting the dynamic entanglement of nature and culture, whereby contributing to ongoing reconciliation between non-Indigenous Australians, Country and culture.⁹ My practice-based research utilises

⁵ Lorraine Code, *Ecological thinking: the politics of epistemic location*, Studies in feminist philosophy, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁶ Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist studies* 14, no. 3 (1988), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>.

⁷ Lesley Instone and Affrica Taylor, "Thinking About Inheritance Through the Figure of the Anthropocene, from the Antipodes and in the Presence of Others," *Environmental humanities* 7, no. 1 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3616371>.

⁸ Susan Best, *Reparative Aesthetics: Witnessing in Contemporary Art Photography*, 1 ed. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).

⁹ Val Plumwood, "Journey to the Heart of Stone," in *Culture, Creativity and Environment: New Environmentalist Criticism* (Boston, UNITED STATES: BRILL, 2007), 19.

“experiential, problem-based learning and multiple intelligences in the production of [new] knowledge”.¹⁰ Given the importance of history, biography and the personal, my project is rooted in auto-critical awareness.

Introducing the Archive

“All knowledge is “situated”...and country is an entangled matrix of multispecies situatedness... A further consequence of situated knowledge amongst sentient beings is that knowledge is relational.”¹¹

My positionality lies in the shadow of my great-grandfather, Francis ‘Frank’ Reginald Martin. As a child, I was fascinated by stories of Frank’s mining pursuits around western New South Wales (NSW). According to family members, he was a pioneer, mining magnate and entrepreneur. It is only upon reflecting as an adult that I notice the undercurrent of the Western social imaginary within his narratives.



Figure 1. Jack Harman, Francis Reginald Martin, found print, 2025, digital scan from archival record.

¹⁰ Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, *Practice as research : approaches to creative arts enquiry*, First edition. ed. (London, England: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2019), 1-2.

¹¹ Deborah Bird Rose, "Val Plumwood's Philosophical Animism: Attentive Interactions in the Sentient World," *Environmental humanities* 3, no. 1 (2013): 100, <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3611248>.

Frank kept an archive which has been maintained by his daughters, my grandmother Judy Barnes and great-aunt Frances Pearce. This collection comprises manuscripts, maps, rocks, equipment, newspaper clippings, photographs, financial statements, and land title records. According to Ann Stoler, archives are repositories of “codified beliefs”¹² associated with hegemony and habitus: Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of deeply embedded schemas that confer and reproduce socio-cultural meaning in individual and collective life.¹³ I treat Frank’s archive as both a partial microcosm of Western epistemic regimes, as well as its own field of enquiry.

Following Slavoj Žižek and Jacques Lacan’s linguistic and psychoanalytical frameworks, I consider Frank to be the “master signifier”¹⁴ within his archive: a powerful idea that lends coherence to an otherwise disparate system of information, an anchor to which other signifiers and signifying chains in the symbolic order refer.¹⁵ Master signifiers are inherently devoid of meaning; Frank’s presence in the archive is a void that demands interpretation. Frank’s archive thus became the impetus for my autoethnographic inquiry. Using his archive as a conceptual map, I conducted numerous field trips across NSW engaging in practice-based research.

I situate my practice within ethnographic fieldwork, which involves “the paradoxical activity of participating fully in [actors’] lives, while simultaneously observing it from a distance.”¹⁶ As a mode of enquiry, it has unpredictable outcomes and creates opportunities to recover previously overlooked material. Specifically, I utilise “multispecies ethnography,” applying fieldwork to the intersection of culture and ecology and highlighting the interconnectedness of the more-than-human world.¹⁷ This project pursues a multimodal, protean approach to land by exploring new channels of dialogue between perception, temporality, politics and materiality. In what follows, I address the following questions in my thesis:

¹² Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial archives and the arts of governance,” *Archival Science* 2, no. 1-2 (2002): 97, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435632>.

¹³ Emma Rooksby and Jean Hillier, *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, Second edition. ed., Urban and Regional Planning and Development Series, (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 43-49.

¹⁴ “What is a Master-Signifier,” Lacan Dot Com, updated 29 August 2025, 2004, <https://www.lacan.com/zizek-signifier.htm>.

¹⁵ Slavoj Žižek and Rex Butler, *Interrogating the real*, Bloomsbury Revelations, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 245.

¹⁶ Signe Howell, “Ethnography,” in *The Open Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, ed. Stein Felix (Facsimile of the first edition in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, 2023). <http://doi.org/10.29164/18ethno>.

¹⁷ S. Eben Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich, “The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography,” *Cultural anthropology* 25, no. 4 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01069.x>.

How can the fallibility of the archive reveal how social habitus shapes representation and memory?

How can hauntology as a metaphor offer generative possibilities towards the archive's contextual and spatial terrain?

How can anarchival practices and nonhuman witnesses help materialise the ghost of the archive?

How can an expanded photographic practice unveil perspectives traditionally obscured by Western, anthropocentric representational paradigms?

Overview

This thesis follows a chiasmic structure. I begin with addressing ecological crisis, then narrow my focus to Frank's archive as a microcosm of wider concerns associated with the Anthropocene. Throughout the paper, I shift from a posture of *reflection* to *diffraction*, moving from textual inquiry to praxis - matters of "practice/ doings/ actions"¹⁸ – as I describe my artmaking. I conclude with a return to the matter of ecological crisis with renewed insights and uncertainties.

In Chapter One, titled *Archive*, I provide a genealogical analysis, focusing on four stories from Frank's archive. In tracing what Anne Stoler calls "the pulse of the archive" - the methods and biases through which Frank's history and identity have been constructed over time¹⁹ - I conclude that these stories are more reflective of the Western social imaginary than an accurate retelling of Frank's life. Out of these ambiguities arises an absent presence of Frank's trace in his own archive, where "time is out of joint".²⁰ I discuss the implications of this asynchronicity in terms of Derrida's concept of hauntology.²¹

¹⁸ Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs* 28, no. 3 (2003): 802, <https://doi.org/10.1086/345321>.

¹⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, "Chapter Two. The Pulse of the Archive," in *Along the Archival Grain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

²⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning and the New International*, Routledge classics, (London: Routledge, 2006), 1.

²¹ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*.

Chapter Two, titled *Mine*, moves beyond the limitations of the archive to anarchival practices: disruptive methodologies which interrogate the parameters of the archive to include conventionally excluded materials.²² I conduct fieldwork involving nonhuman witnesses: rocks, soil, and organic matter at the mining sites described in Frank's archive. My series *Chronotope* is the outcome of this fieldwork, constituting an attempt to séance Frank's ghost.

Having focused thus far on Frank's history, in Chapter Three, titled *Borderlands*, I shift my focus to the present. My series *Borderlands* leverages the photographic tradition and apparatus, and enacts diffraction as a conceptual and processual methodology that eschews the limitations of the Western gaze and embraces the ambiguous, nonlinear outcomes generated when matter is entangled in attempts at representation.²³ I conclude with an acknowledgement of the dynamic and ambiguous capacities of the more-than-human world beyond its representations.²⁴

²² Stephanie Springgay, Anise Truman, and Sara MacLean, "Socially Engaged Art, Experimental Pedagogies, and Anarchiving as Research-Creation," *Qualitative Inquiry* 26, no. 7 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419884964>.

²³ Karen Barad, "Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart," *Parallax (Leeds, England)* 20, no. 3 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2014.927623>.

²⁴ "Practice," *New Materialism Almanac*, 2018, <https://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/p/practice.html>.

Chapter I: Archive

“Genealogy is, meticulous and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times.”²⁵

In this chapter, I offer a genealogical reading of my great-grandfather Frank’s personal archive. Through ethnographic research, I reveal how his historical identity has been shaped by contextual factors and aspirations. The result is an elusive spectre of the real Frank, produced by symbolic ordering, myth-making, and retrospective confabulation. I ask: How can the fallibility of the archive reveal how social habitus shapes representation and memory? And consequently: How can hauntology as a metaphor offer generative possibilities towards the archive’s contextual and spatial terrain?

Part I: Archival Form

In analysing Frank’s archive, I draw from several frameworks: Michel Foucault’s genealogical method, Jacques Derrida’s archive fever, and Ann Stoler’s poethical lens of reading along the archival grain. These theories inform my approach to grasp at Frank’s contours through the alluvium of his ontology.

Foucault asserts that history is a strongly contested system of narratives, based on hidden structures and “discursive formations” which determine what counts as accepted knowledge in any context.²⁶ He proposes genealogy as an analytical methodology for unearthing the power dynamics and epistemic parameters that shape history. When applied to the archive - a microcosm of history - a genealogical approach identifies factors that have determined what material is included or excluded.

²⁵ Michel Foucault and Donald F. Bouchard, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice : Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, UNITED STATES: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139.

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1st American ed., Routledge Classics, (London: Routledge, 1969), 41-42.

Derrida further cautions against treating the archive as an inert, cohesive canon, but claims it can “never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience.”²⁷ He describes the archive as a site of struggle and iterative “fever”, where the compulsion to meaningfully capture the past perpetually undermines any possibility of preserving it entirely, given the necessity of losses and omissions in selecting material.²⁸ The archive is thus a process ordered by power, rather than an object.

Similarly, Stoler describes archives as “epistemological experiments rather than sources.”²⁹ However, rather than rejecting them entirely on this basis, she proposes reading Frank’s history ‘along the grain’ of his social habitus rather than merely against it. A mature ethnography, she explains, attends to “the archive’s granular rather than seamless texture, to the rough surface that mettles its hue and shapes its form.”³⁰ This reading offers the past generosity, recognising the relevance of contextual factors while acknowledging the archive’s inherent contingency and tendency to be shaped by power relations. Therefore, the archival choices of my matriline may have been shaped by habitus and resulted in discursive formations, but these choices are nonetheless contextually relevant. They can be considered rocks that guide the flow of the narrative, rather than its propulsive spring.

Layers of custodial interpretation obscure Frank’s archival trace. To know the historical Frank beyond his vacant status as the master signifier requires responsible, critical genealogical practice, but also humility and openness to its contextual granularity. I attempt to adopt this posture in my analysis of the following four stories from Frank’s archive.

²⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Religion and postmodernism, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 14.

²⁸ Derrida, *Archive Fever*.

²⁹ Stoler, "Colonial archives and the arts of governance," 87.

³⁰ Stoler, "Chapter Two. The Pulse of the Archive," 53.

Notes from the Archive

The Tom Thumb

“Projects of this nature, when originating in the minds of young men, are usually termed romantic; and so far from any good being anticipated, even prudence and friendship join in discouraging, if not in opposing them. Thus it was in the present case; so that a little boat of eight feet long, called the Tom Thumb, with crew composed of ourselves and a boy, was the best equipment to be procured for the first outset.”⁵¹



Figure 2. Ralph and Chandos Temple, Flinders and Bass Embarking in the “Tom Thumb”, 1870, digital image, Wikimedia Commons

According my grandmother Judy, whose maiden name is Martin, we are descendants of the boy, William Martin, who accompanied Matthew Flinders and George Bass on their explorations along the east coast of Australia in a small boat named the Tom Thumb. W.G. McDonald, a historian from the Illawarra region, noted in 1975: “Between 1788 and 1796 various ships passed along the coast on the way to and from Sydney, but apparently well out – no one landed, or even made a detailed examination from the

⁵¹ Matthew Flinders, *A voyage to Terra Australis* (London: Printed by W. Bulmer and Co., Cleveland-Row, and published by G. and W. Nicol, bookseleers to His Majesty, Pall-Mall, 1814), xcvi.

sea. Then came the two men and the boy,” whose ambition was to circumnavigate the continent, and explore the ‘unknown’ in the spirit of Romanticism.³²

This spirit would come to haunt the space it mapped, with the colonialists’ journey from sea to land corresponding with the encroachment of Western epistemes on Country. Propelled by the Romantic aestheticisation of the Enlightenment impulse towards discovery and conquest, and leveraging the convenient legal fiction of Terra Nullius, the colonialists perceived the land as “dead and silent matter”³³ inviting mastery and possession.

Bass and Flinders drew on a range of apparatus: maps, nomenclature, and mathematical formulae to “calibrate, obliterate, and symbolise”³⁴ their alleged discovery of Indigenous territories. The world depicted in images became “situated in a mathematically regular spatio-temporal order filled with natural objects that could only be observed from without.”³⁵ Their expeditions are thus prime examples of the Western spatial regime. In the hands of the skilled cartographer Matthew Flinders, visuality was used to demarcate and claim unceded lands for Empire.

In Kurnell, on Gweagal land, there is a memorial plaque for Bass and Flinders and the Boy Martin, testifying to their heroism. Such monuments are crystallisations of the colonial habitus enforcing and reproducing its power. His status in the social imaginary prompted a newspaper article published in 1949 to address the oddness that “nobody had ever claimed” him.³⁶ My grandmother, and likely Frank himself, rose to the occasion, claiming the boy’s identity given their shared surname.

³² W. G. McDonald, *The first-footers : Bass and Flinders in Illawarra, 1796-1797* (Wollongong, N.S.W: Illawarra Historical Society, 1975), 5.

³³ Plumwood, "Journey to the Heart of Stone," 17-18.

³⁴ Terry Smith, "Visual Regimes of Colonization: European and Aboriginal Seeing in Australia," in *Empires of Vision: A Reader*, ed. Martin Jay and Sumathi Ramaswamy (Duke University Press, 2013), 267-68.

³⁵ Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster, Discussions in contemporary culture ; no. 2 (New York, N.Y: New Press, 1999), 9.

³⁶ A. L. Brient, "The "Boy Named Martin"," *Advocate (Burnie, Tas. : 1890 - 1954)* (Burnie, Tas.) 1949.



Figure 3. "Osx" (author), Memorial plaque, Bass and Flinders Point, Cronulla, New South Wales, 2010, digital photograph, Wikimedia

In actuality, there is little evidence in support of my matrilineal link to the Boy Martin. I believe that my grandmother likely chose to include this story in Frank's archive because it is virtuosic, taking us from relative obscurity to being connected to a key colonial figure. The Boy Martin story typifies patterns throughout my family history of the Western paradigm shaping archival choices.

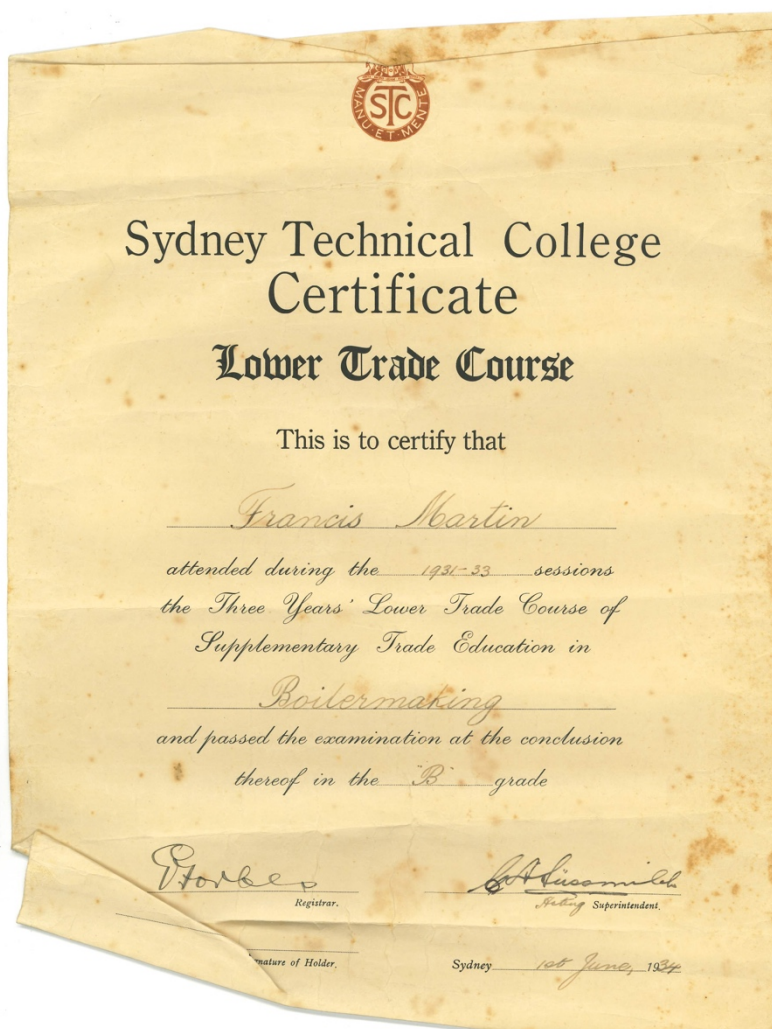


Figure 4. Jack Harman, Boilermaking Certificate, 2025,
digital scan from archival record.

Archival materials and my family’s oral accounts indicate that Frank started his career as a boilermaker during the Great Depression. Between 1931 and 1933, Frank obtained his certificate in ‘oxy-welding’ from the NSW Government Railway and Tramway Institute and the Three Years Lower Trade Course of Supplementary Trade Education in ‘Boilermaking’ from Sydney Technical College. Some time after this, Frank started his first business, Martin and Blake, manufacturing “revolving metal cylinders, as well as other metal equipment, for the ready-mixed concrete industry,”³⁷ operating at one

³⁷ John Edwards, *Keating : the inside story* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1996), 33.

stage in the Namoi River catchment area in Narrabri, on Kamilaroi land. The events following this period are where the oral accounts and documentation diverge.

According to my grandparents, following the outbreak of World War II (WWII) in 1939, Frank was drafted into work with NSW Government Railways, constructing stretches of railway track as part of the war effort to link Australia's inland rail systems as a 'line of defence'.³⁸ It is unclear whether this occurred in Narrabri or Sydney – he had lived in both places – but there is some evidence to suggest he was based in Narrabri, as seen in the comparative images below:

³⁸ John Barnes and Judy Barnes, 2023.



Figure 5. Jack Harman, Photograph of the adjoining block of land, 2024, digital photograph.



North West Concrete
Crushing Plant Used
on the Narrabri to crush
H151 gravel.

Figure 6. Jack Harman, North west concrete crushing plant used on the Narrabri to crush gravel (recto and verso), 2025, digital scan from archival record.



Figure 7. Jack Harman, Photograph of the current residence, 2024, digital photograph.



Figure 8. Jack Harman, Streetview of the Martins' old property in Narrabri, 2025, digital image, Google Maps.



Figure 9. Jack Harman, Triptych of a crushing plant outside what appears to be the property in figure 5, 2025, digital scan from archival records.

I travelled to Narrabri in August 2024 hoping to corroborate signs of Frank, and interviewed Gillian Kahl, Narrabri and District Historical Society researcher. Gillian remarked that the likelihood of a railway line built in Narrabri during WWII was improbable. She directed me instead to sources indicating that the section of the Newell Highway through the Pilliga Scrub was constructed specifically as a wartime defence project between 1941 and 1942, as part of a larger effort to link Australia's inland roads for strategic military purposes.³⁹ To further confound, oral accounts of an inland 'line of defence' could only be substantiated, albeit tenuously, with the reported "Brisbane line:" a controversial wartime plan to concede all of northern Australia in the event of a Japanese invasion, itself a scarcely documented historical anecdote rife with allegation and conjecture.⁴⁰

Based on these findings, I hypothesised two potential accounts of Frank's wartime efforts: firstly, that he did not work with NSW Railways, but rather his company was contracted to lay concrete for roads through the Pilliga Scrub; or that he was indeed working for NSW Government Railways but assembled and transported military equipment based in Sydney,⁴¹ given the dates listed on his vocational certificates from Sydney-based institutions falling within the WWII period.

It appeared that semantic errors had been made, with the 'line of defence' possibly being conflated with a 'railway line', and historical facts being muddled with associative thinking. In tracing the grain of the archive, I found that the fallibility of memory has resulted in an ambiguous representation of Frank's wartime years.

³⁹ "Newell Highway: History and Development," Ozroads, updated 2025-12-28, <https://www.ozroads.com.au/NSW/Highways/Newell/history.htm>.

⁴⁰ Paul Meernaa Caedwalla Hasluck, *Volume II – The Government and the People, 1942–1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1970).

⁴¹ David Paver Mellor, *The Role of Science and Industry*, vol. V, *Australia in the War of 1939–1945. Series 4, Civil*, (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1958), 1, 301-22.

Marlak

According to my family's oral accounts, Frank and his business partner started Martin and Blake - later Marlak Engineering - an engineering firm servicing the construction industry during Australia's post-war period.⁴² The firm was among the first to construct concrete agitators in Australia, as well as other industrial equipment.⁴³ As demands for dwellings increased with the post-war baby boom and immigration, the company grew and found its third stakeholder in Matthew Keating, Prime Minister Paul Keating's father.

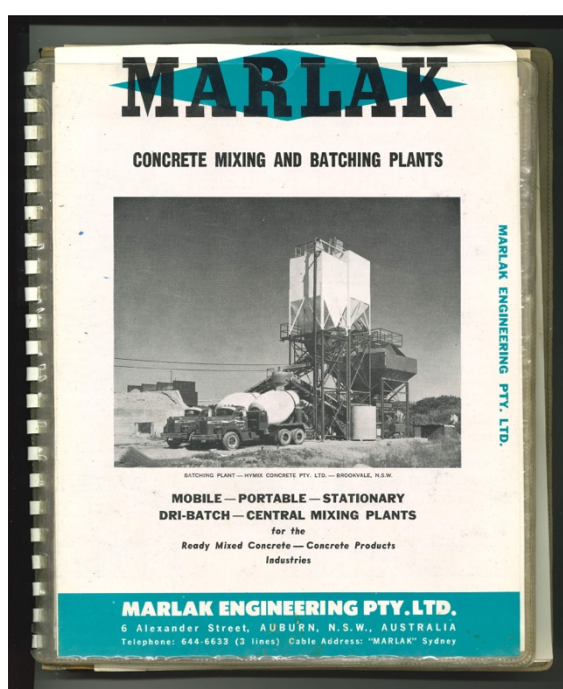


Figure 10. Jack Harman, Marlak advertisement, 2025 digital scan from archival record.

My great-aunt Frances recalled a time when Paul was assisting in Marlak's office. Supposedly, Frank had charged Paul with the task of answering an important phone call from the Snowy Hydro head office. Instead of relaying the message, he completely forgot to notify Frank, and so he sacked him.⁴⁴

⁴² Barnes and Barnes.

⁴³ "After the War," no. Issue 2 - History of the Transit Mixer in Australia. <https://www.cescoaustralia.com/issue-2-after-the-war/>.

⁴⁴ Frances Pearce, 2024.

Marlak delivered several major projects, including work on Dartmouth Dam on Dhudhuroa land, as part of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme. The business had won a contract with the Malaysian Government to construct tin dredges for excavating alluvium, and looked to expand overseas. But according to Paul Keating, Marlak required financial loans to expand, which were declined by commercial banks due to the business's limited capital.⁴⁵ This setback marred the business, and with an ageing executive team, Marlak eventually became unsustainable. In 1973, Martin, Blake and Keating sold the business to John Leard's Australia National Industries (ANI) for \$376,000 in cash and shares.⁴⁶

According to biographer and politician Chris Bowen, having observed the difficulties of his father's business, Paul Keating resented the lending practices of the banking industry at the time.⁴⁷ Referring to the Marlak challenges, he said, "they wouldn't give you any money...There was virtually no way my father and partner could do it. And the bank didn't care...They banked people whose creditworthiness minimised risk to them, people who had wealth already. I saw it as a conspiracy against the common man."⁴⁸ The hardships Marlak experienced were instrumental in Keating's fundamental economic reforms and deregulation agenda. This became the impetus for globalising the Australian economy, making it internationally competitive.⁴⁹

Frank's connection to Paul Keating is spoken of with pride by my family members. The choice to identify themselves with the aspirational portrayal of a successful businessman, and his association with a powerful political figure, illustrates the propagation of cultural capital within the neoliberal social habitus.

⁴⁵ Chris Bowen, *The Money Men : Australia's Twelve Most Notable Treasurers* (Melbourne, AUSTRALIA: Melbourne University Publishing, 2015), 233. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/usyd/detail.action?docID=5684032>.

⁴⁶ Edwards, *Keating : the inside story*, 33.

⁴⁷ Bowen, *The Money Men : Australia's Twelve Most Notable Treasurers*, 238.

⁴⁸ Paul Kelly, "Howard and East Timor," *The Australian* (The Australian) 2009, <https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20090919023220/http://wl.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,26024053-28737,00.html>.

⁴⁹ Fleur Anderson, "Keating catalyst for tax shift close to home," *The Australian Financial Review* (Melbourne) 2015.

Gold Prospecting

Frank's final story is an inherently vague account belying how far his reality appears from his written archives.

Earlier, I stated that one catalyst for this project was my desire to trace Frank's mining activities across western NSW. These were the evocative stories I encountered as a young child about my great-grandfather: an adventurous, enterprising man who built success through his business and mining pursuits.

Upon interviewing my great-aunt Frances, a markedly different narrative appeared. She described her father as "a scoundrel and a lying toad," highlighting numerous deceptions in how he presented himself to his family.⁵⁰ She implied that his integrity had long been considered dubious, though the details venture into the taboo territory of family secrets. It occurred to me that the absence of reliable information may have created fertile ground for speculation, idealisation and selective remembrance.

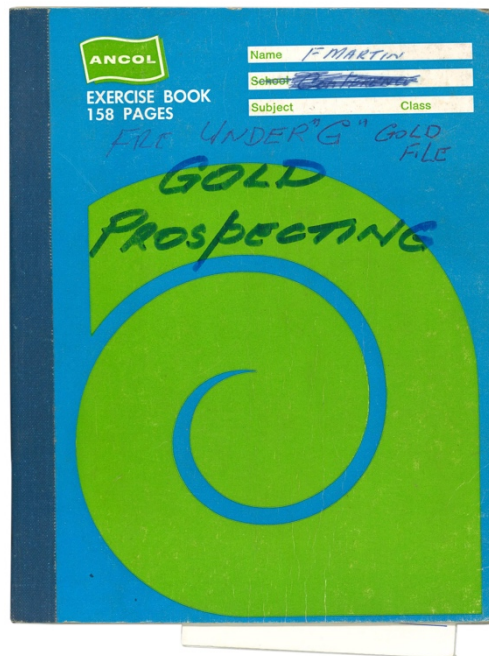


Figure 11. Jack Harman, "Gold Prospecting" (Frank's personal notebook), 2025, digital scan from archival record.

⁵⁰ Pearce.

Frank was a shrewd businessman. He kept a notebook tracking expiry dates on existing mining leases in various areas, and family members attest to the purpose of this being to usurp and buy the leases before the current holders could realise they had lapsed. The testimony of his children and the uncovering of his records paint the picture of a cunning strategist who deliberately constructed the facade of running a mining company, overstated the extent of this enterprise, and kept the truth of his operations well hidden, even to his own family.

Within a Lacanian frame, the absence of certainty generated by Frank's ability to confound has generated a void in the field of meaning, resulting in the instability of signifiers.⁵¹ Family members, bearing the fallibility of memory, have attempted in various ways to bridge the symbolic gap in acts of interpretive overreach. Frank's apparently deliberate obfuscations have resulted in the proliferation of signifiers detached from stable referents. Meaning making becomes distorted and indeterminate.

Francis Reginald Martin was real, or at least that's what his archive told me. On closer inspection, the Frank I thought I knew devolved into a Protean collection of ephemera, as much contingent on my family's memory as on the colonial habitus shaping those memories.

⁵¹ Kirsten Campbell, "The slide in the sign; Lacan's glissement and the registers of meaning," *Angelaki : journal of theoretical humanities* 4, no. 3 (1999), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09697259908572062>.

Part II: An Unstable Ontology

It has become clear that Frank's identity is laden with ambiguous, conflicting and tenuous meanings. With a multiplicity of voices speaking into the archive, it is difficult to trust the evidence. The version of Frank remembered and represented appears to reflect social habitus: the contextual anxieties and aspirations for social mobility, rooted in the postwar imaginations of identity and belonging. Ostensibly, he may appear as a successful mining mogul, but he can also manifest as a figure of compromised, marginal agency. Unbeknownst to Frank, his ghost unwittingly becomes an accomplice in brandishing the power of the colonial bodies politic.

Frank's archival representation is manifested through authorial statements my ancestors have made based on how they situate their own perspectives with respect to Frank's phenomenology. Thus, Frank's narrative world is a reproduction and not an equivalence. Although it bears semblance to reality, it is portrayed through an assemblage of proximate sources. Disparate sources and materials in the archive become a coherent narrative only through symbolic ordering.

According to Sven Spieker, archives "do not record experience so much as its absence; they mark the point where an experience is missing from its proper place, and what is returned to us in an archive may well be something we never possessed in the first place."⁵² In his archive, Frank has morphed from someone who existed and is in principle knowable into something that is constructed by different agents and fundamentally obscured. Whilst Frank is not the sum of all these parts, he is entangled in them. Derrida speaks to this phenomenon in his notion of the "presence-absence of the trace,"⁵³ where that which is present refers indirectly to his absence, and what is absent presents itself discreetly.

In the aftermath of the paradoxically destructive archive fever, what remains of its subject, Frank, is only a spectre of his former self. Nonetheless, Frank persists

⁵² Sven Spieker, *The big archive : art from bureaucracy* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008), 3. <https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262533577/the-big-archive/>.

⁵³ Jacques Derrida and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Of grammatology*, Fortieth Anniversary Edition. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 71.

throughout his archives as a myth, as a collection of affects and relationalities. Can we conjure something new from Frank's absence at the core of the archive?

Hauntology

"And this being-with spectres would also be, not only but also, a politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations."⁵⁴

Hauntology, the spectral presence of the past affecting the present, opens the conditions of impossibility. It involves a poetics of ambience and ambiguity, multivalence, porous boundaries, and indeterminacy. The myths, associative thinking and artefacts of the fallibility of memory give rise to a hauntology wherein Frank is anchored in the objects of his archive; however, these objects give only an obscured view of him. He exists in an intermediary zone, neither physical nor entirely immaterial. His latent presence in the locations described in his archive has also all but disappeared.

In turning to the purported mines and sites that Frank visited, I wish to frame a dialogue with the landscape and the spectre of Frank it sustains. I identify Frank's archival mine sites as "heterotopias"⁵⁵ and "shadow places".⁵⁶ According to Foucault, heterotopias are sites possessing a quality of otherness, functioning as "counter-sites" to subvert social and spatial norms.⁵⁷ These spaces are often temporally unstable, eliding linear time and accumulating memory. Shadow places are what Val Plumwood describes as marginal sites bearing the markings of ecological trauma, and which sustain capitalist and colonial economies. In the following chapter, I describe the fieldwork I conducted in these heterotopias and shadow places, as well as the outcomes of my attempts to séance his ghost through my engagements with his spatial and contextual terrain.

⁵⁴ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, xviii.

⁵⁵ Michel Foucault and Jay Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986), <https://doi.org/10.2307/464648>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/464648>.

⁵⁶ Plumwood, "Shadow Places and the Politics of Dwelling."

⁵⁷ Foucault and Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces," 24.

Chapter 2: Mine

“Place is thicker and more concrete than mere location, and story helps makes it concrete; but it is not enough to say that place is the intersection of multiple narratives... we need to keep our feet on the ground here (literally), and avoid overly dematerialising place concepts: place...in a materially-embodied life has ultimately to locate a piece of ground, a piece of the earth.”⁵⁸

Faced with the inherent ambiguity of the archive, I now shift from textual analysis to relational praxis. I introduce anarchiving as a generative approach which moves beyond Western epistemologies in responding to the archive. I then describe my fieldwork practice: an attempt to reconstruct Frank’s footsteps and attend to his spectral trace by harnessing the materiality of the landscape as an interlocutor for his ghost. I ask: *How can anarchival practices and nonhuman witnesses help materialise the ghost of the archive?* As a response, I produce a series of chromatographic drawings called *Chronotope*.

Fieldwork as Anarchiving

In recognising the limitations, discrepancies and mythmaking at work in Frank’s archive, I propose anarchiving as an alternative methodology. Anarchiving is a present and future-oriented practice which recognises the inherent selectivity and erasure of archivry, seeks to include materials traditionally excluded, and reframes the archive’s fragility from a loss into a generative force.⁵⁹ According to Stephanie Springgay, Sarah Truman and Sara MacLean, anarchival practices are political and collective, disrupting hegemonic narratives and engaging with the embodied experiences of the human and more-than-human. Springgay, Truman and MacLean describe experiential research methods like fieldwork as inherently anarchival, as they attend to the entanglements of a past that is not linear but processual.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Plumwood, "Shadow Places and the Politics of Dwelling," 144.

⁵⁹ Springgay, Truman, and MacLean, "Socially Engaged Art, Experimental Pedagogies, and Anarchiving as Research-Creation."

⁶⁰ In the Deleuzian sense of "Becoming"

To subvert anthropocentric Western epistemologies, I centre the testimony of the “more-than-human.”⁶¹ Michael Richardson argues for the role of “nonhuman witnesses” such as rocks, rivers and oceans in testifying to ecological trauma.⁶² I consider how anarchival, immersive fieldwork that is attentive to the nonhuman witnesses can re-represent Frank’s archive and materialise his trace.

Karen Barad’s agential realism rejects Western binaries like mind/body and subject/object. Instead, she argues that entities are fundamentally entangled. According to Barad, reality is created through a series of material-discursive “intra-actions,” where phenomena do not have pre-defined boundaries but are dynamically co-constituted.⁶³ Within agential realism, “material-discursive”⁶⁴ practices allow for nonhuman witnesses to be included in Frank’s archive. Whether conceived as connections between discrete entities or as interstitial forces co-creating phenomena, material-discursive connections provide the framework through which I attempt to understand more-than-human interlocutors. This field of inquiry is inherently complex and speculative.

My fieldwork is characterised by multispecies ethnography, as described by S. Eben Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich. Multispecies ethnography acknowledges the interconnectedness of culture and nature, and subverts Cartesian and anthropocentric epistemologies by highlighting the entanglement of the more-than-human amongst human research subjects.⁶⁵ In my fieldwork, I embody the “ethnographic moment,” coined by Marilyn Strathern to describe the unexpected and disorienting experience of encountering new material in the field which cannot be incorporated into existing working models.⁶⁶ This moment prompts deeper reflection on the nature of knowing, and the generation of new possibilities.

⁶¹ Plumwood, “Journey to the Heart of Stone,” 19.

⁶² Michael Richardson, *Nonhuman Witnessing: War, Data, and Ecology after the End of the World*, First edition. ed., Thought in the Act Series., (Durham: Duke University Press, 2024).

⁶³ Karen Barad, “The Ontology of Knowing, the Intra-activity of Becoming, and the Ethics of Mattering,” in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Duke University Press, 2006), 379.

⁶⁴ Vivienne Bozalek, Candace R. Kuby, and Karin Murriss, “Material-Discursive,” (Routledge, 2022), 82-83.

⁶⁵ Kirksey and Helmreich, “The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography.”

⁶⁶ Marilyn Strathern, “Introductions: The Compulsion of Relations,” in *Relations: An Anthropological Account* (Duke University Press, 2020), xiv-xv, xvii.

Below, I present the ethnographic material that is the outcome of my immersion in the worlds of more-than-human agents. I have attempted to mediate their testimonies in a series of fieldwork 'drawings' produced using soil chromatography.

Fieldwork: Seancing Frank's Ghost

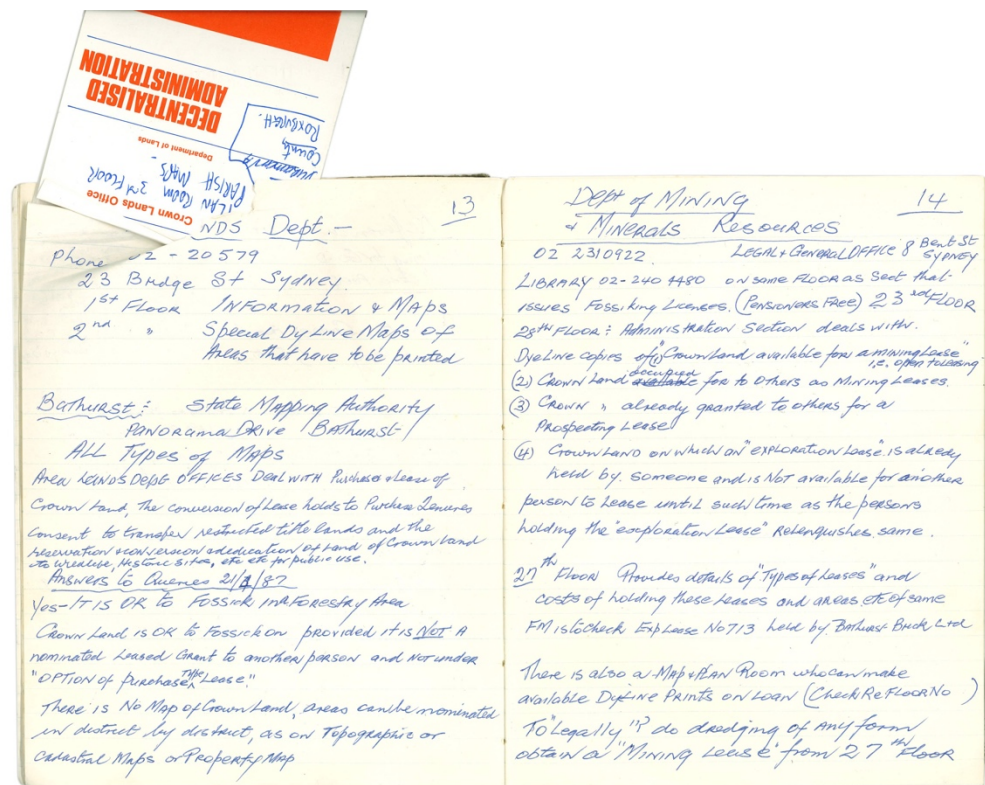


Figure 12. Jack Harman, Ledger (detail), 2024, digital image, digital scan from archival record.

Frank kept a ledger of the locations he was supposedly prospecting, writing detailed notes about sites of particular interest which were catalogued with reference to annotated cadastral maps and land title records.

In the figure below, I have mapped all the 'plausible' locations Frank was likely to have visited. There were several factors complicating the identification of precise locations, including: insufficient information within the archival records; discrepancies between different archival sources; differences between historic and contemporary boundaries and map-making technologies; and accessibility issues due to changed terrain and

environmental factors. I was only able to accurately identify a fraction of the locations, which I confirmed through comparative analysis and in-situ validation. Most of the identified sites are well-informed approximations.

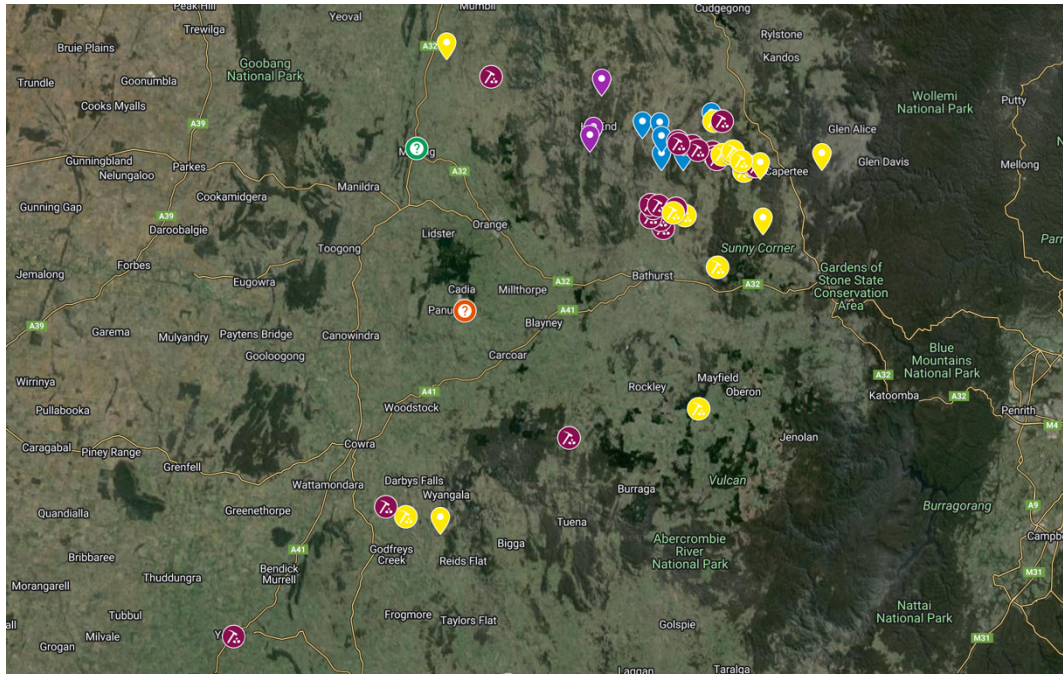


Figure 13. Jack Harman, Sites I identified from Frank's archival records plotted on a map, 2024, digital image, Google Maps.

I consulted Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) about my project aims and protocols for collecting soil on Country. My communications with Toni-Lee Scott from Bathurst LALC early in my fieldwork highlighted the importance of acknowledging Country and extending respect to custodians throughout every stage of my research.⁶⁷ Bathurst LALC reviewed my fieldwork map to ascertain whether any sites were in areas of cultural significance or where additional protocols may be present. No concerns were noted, and given that all sites were on Crown land, Toni advised there were unlikely to be any issues with my taking of soil samples.

⁶⁷ Toni-Lee Scott, 2023-2024.

Field Trip 1

My first field trip occurred in March 2024. Over a weekend, I visited several sites around the Bathurst Region, on Wiradjuri land. These were locations where Frank was known to have mined based on my family's accounts and his written records.⁶⁸ I aimed to conduct initial exploratory research and contextualise Frank's archive in situ. Upon encountering remote, overgrown creek beds, dry undulating terrain and filled-in mine shafts where I had expected to find open-cut mines, it became apparent that his mining claims had been vastly overstated. This finding prompted a re-appraisal of my project, and led me to Megan Cope and Keg de Souza's work.

Megan Cope and Keg de Souza: Soil Stories of Coranderrk

Quandamooka artist Megan Cope and Goan-Australian artist Keg de Souza's collaborative work *Soil Stories of Coranderrk* (2023) significantly shaped my approach. This work was part of the exhibition *The Soils Project* (2023), held at Tarrawarra Museum of Art, exploring the interplay between environmental change and colonisation.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Francis Reginald Martin, *Gold Prospecting, 1975-1990*, "G" Gold File, Franks Archive.

⁶⁹ "The Soils Project," 2024, <https://www.twma.com.au/exhibitions/the-soils-project/>.



Figure 14. Megan Cope and Keg de Souza, *Soil Stories of Coranderrk*, 2023, Installation view #1, *The Soils Project*, TarraWarra Museum of Art.



Figure 15. Megan Cope and Keg de Souza, *Soil Stories of Coranderrk*, 2023, Installation view #2, *The Soils Project*, TarraWarra Museum of Art.

Coranderrk was established in 1863 as a reserve for the Kulin people of south-central Victoria, who were displaced from their homelands by British occupation and subsequent frontier violence. The initial successful self-determination of Aboriginal communities at Coranderrk clashed with colonial policies of control and assimilation. Despite fierce resistance, increasingly restrictive government actions including child removal led to the dismantling of the Coranderrk community. By the 1920s, most residents had been forcibly relocated.⁷⁰

Cope and de Souza collected soil samples from sites in Coranderrk that held cultural and historical significance. Soil chromatography was used to produce the resultant “soil maps.”⁷¹ Cope observes, “these stories of Place that have been held through the soil and are shared through these mappings.”⁷² The mapping of these rhizomatic connections is a dynamic process which reveals new dimensions emerging organically without external interference or direction.

I draw from Cope and de Souza’s site-specific practices and methodology of soil chromatography in my fieldwork drawings. At each subsequent site I visited, I took soil samples and later conducted soil chromatography in the studio. In doing so I attempted to engage in a dialogue with place to materialise Frank’s ghost, drawing on the testimony of nonhuman witnesses and weaving together material and discursive elements.

Field Trip 2

On my second field trip in April 2024, I revisited multiple sites across central west NSW on Wiradjuri land. This time, I followed a more detailed itinerary based on the locations identified in **Figure 13**. I collected a soil sample from each site to perform soil chromatography upon return. Like before, I found that many locations ran along rivers and creek beds, further indicating that Frank was panning and fossicking rather than conducting large-scale mining operations.

⁷⁰ Giordano Nanni and Andrea James, *Coranderrk : we will show the country*, EBL., (Sydney: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2013), 6-32.

⁷¹ Victoria Lynn, "Journeys and Situations," in *Soils* (Van Abbemuseum, 2024), 110.

⁷² "The Soils Project: Soil Stories of Coranderrk," <https://www.megancope.com.au/works/the-soils-project>.

Several locations were inaccessible due to road restrictions and private land enclosures; however, others were very accessible and true to Frank's descriptions. One such location was Trunkey Creek. The pub and creek described in Frank's notes still existed, and as I drove down an unmarked road, surely enough a small bridge emerged, as if straight out of the archive, corresponding with the location where he had fossicked.

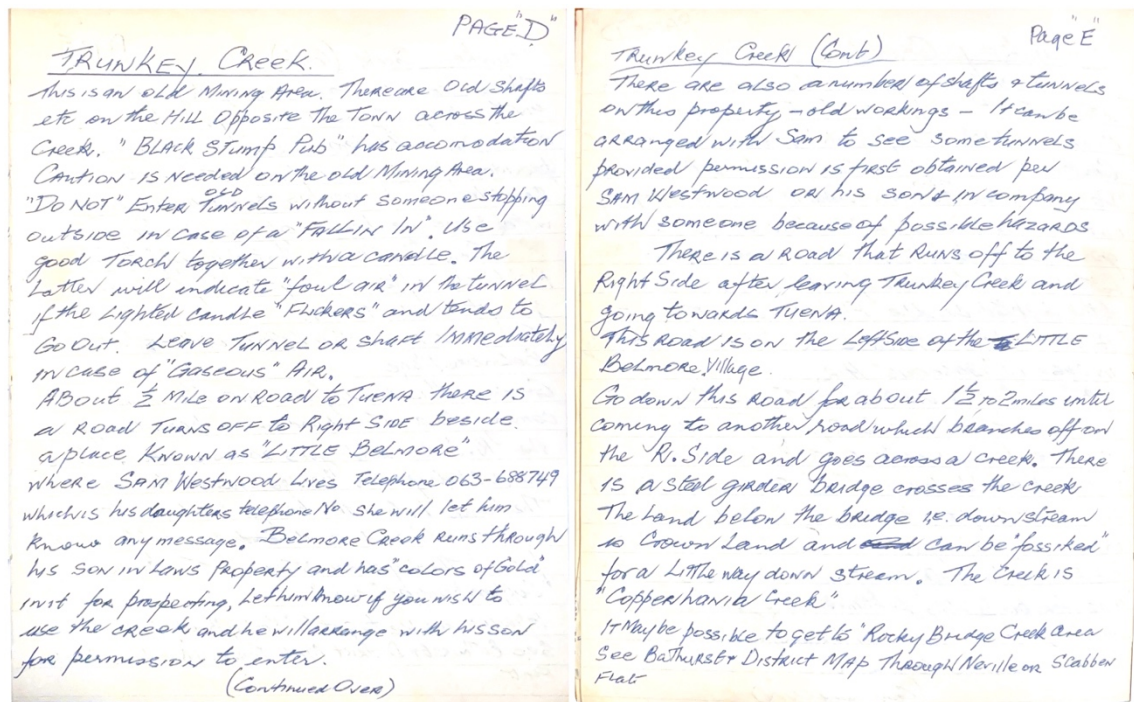


Figure 16. Jack Harman, Trunkey Creek notebook entry, 2025, digital scan from archival record.

Field Trip 3



Figure 17. Jack Harman, Frank fossicking in Lightning Ridge, 2025, digital scan from archival record.

My third field trip in August 2024 led me to Lightning Ridge, on Yuwaalaraay country. A renowned opal mining town, it was an obvious location for Frank to have visited. Photographs from his archive show him fossicking in Lightning Ridge; however, in a desert landscape dotted with thousands of makeshift small-scale mines and abandoned shafts, it was impossible to ascertain exact locations.

I met with Petrina Brown from Lightning Ridge LALC, seeking to clarify the parameters of respectful and culturally sensitive practice on country. Petrina advised that mining had a complex relationship with Aboriginal land rights, with mining claims being managed by the NSW Government since 1992, and there being ongoing negotiations between mining leases and native title claims. Per Petrina's advice, and given the impossibility of locating Frank's exact coordinates in the region, I collected a soil sample from a fossicking heap outside the Lightning Ridge Information Centre.⁷³ This was a site where miners dumped leftover rubble - earth that had already been removed from the land - thus minimising further extraction.

⁷³ Petrina Brown, 2024.

Soil Chromatography Procedure

Chromatography in chemistry refers to the separation of a mixture into its constituent parts by distributing it between a mobile phase and a stationary phase, causing separation based on differential solubility.⁷⁴ Soil quality is tested through analysis of the patterns yielded by the chromatography separation method. The resultant chromatograph is a visual matrix on a membrane (the paper or layer) that measures and reacts to stimuli and concentration of analyte (soil sample) in effluent (liquid) over a vector where the separated substances appear as spots or bands.⁷⁵

Soil chromatography yields an emergent image containing possibilities which become real, and virtualities which become actual. In a pseudoscientific manner, the chromatographic process acts as a mediator, facilitating a tactile exchange between matter and memory, past and present, human and nonhuman. Richardson states that “the testimony of materialities...conjoin with prosthetics of the human technologies that enable perceptions in ways that either exceed human capacity.”⁷⁶ From individual to individual, I explore the possibility that some trace of Frank has been registered onto the chromatographic surface, that he is somehow materialised through haptic exchange and semiosis into the emergent image.

After returning the soil samples to my studio, I applied Pfeiffer’s circular chromatography procedure, a paper-based method for analysing soil quality.⁷⁷ Ten grams of soil were mixed with 100 ml of a 1% NaOH solution in a flask. The mixture was agitated at intervals — initially, then after 15 minutes, 1 hour, and 2 hours — before being left to settle for a further 2 hours. After 4 hours in total, the clear supernatant was collected for use.

A circular filter paper, 150 mm in diameter, was prepared by piercing its centre and inserting a folded wick. The paper was placed on a dish so that its edges rested on the rim while the wick touched the base. The paper underwent a two-step imbibition

⁷⁴ "chromatography," (International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), 2025).

⁷⁵ L. S. Ettre, "Nomenclature for chromatography (IUPAC Recommendations 1993)," *Pure and Applied Chemistry* 65, no. 4 (1993): 819-72, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1351/pac199365040819>, <https://doi.org/10.1351/pac199365040819>.

⁷⁶ Michael Richardson and Magdalena Zolkos, "Witnessing After the Human," *Angelaki* 27, no. 2 (2022/03/04 2022): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2022.2046355>, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2022.2046355>.

⁷⁷ Maria Olga Kokornaczyk et al., "Analysis of soils by means of Pfeiffer's circular chromatography test and comparison to chemical analysis results," *Biological agriculture & horticulture* 33, no. 3 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1080/01448765.2016.1214889>.

process: first, in darkness, it was soaked with 0.6 ml of a 0.5% silver nitrate solution. Once dried, it was exposed to artificial light and treated again with 1.2 ml of the soil extract, applied from the base of the dish.

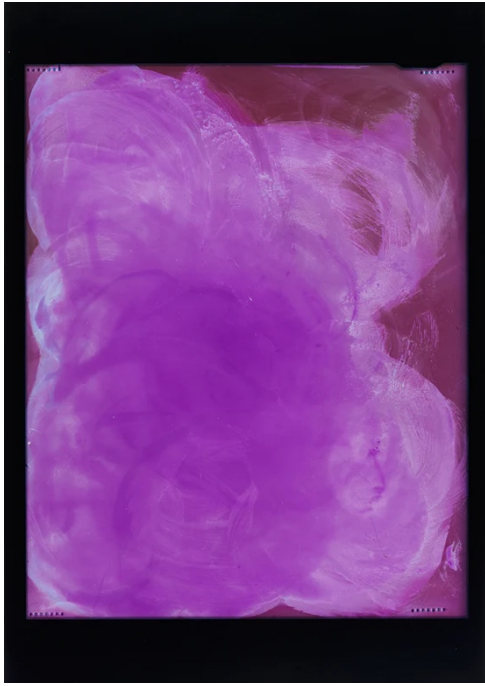
The system was left under light for approximately 12 hours, during which colour and pattern gradually developed across the paper. Finally, the wick was removed. All steps were carried out at room temperature. The outcome of this chromatography process is my fieldwork drawings series, *Chronotope*.

Material-discursive drawing

I end this chapter with a reflection on the potential for fieldwork drawing as a methodology to conjure the agency of the more-than-human through photochemical processes. To contextualise my series *Chronotope*, I discuss Justine Varga's practice and Michael Taussig's reflections on fieldwork drawing, framed within various theoretical approaches to drawing.

Australian artist Justine Varga's work is characterised by camera-less, non-representational photographs made by inscribing bodily materials like sweat and fingerprints onto negatives, which are then developed in a darkroom. Her works have been described as "images that take shape over time. Abstract and nonfigurative, they do not record a likeness - merely a presence."⁷⁸ Varga's work collapses boundaries between the subject and object, the personal and the apersonal, and she considers her photographic methods to be more akin to a tactile drawing practice.

⁷⁸ Isobel Parker Philip, *Against a Degree of Blindness* (Sydney: Threshold Publications, 2015), 2.



*Figure 18. Justine Varga,
Masseuse, 2017, c type
photograph, 175 x 121.8 cm,
ed. of 5.*



*Figure 19. Justine Varga,
Maternal Line, 2017, c type
photograph, 157 x 122 cm,
ed. of 5*



*Figure 20. Justine Varga,
Photogenic Drawing, 2018, c
type photograph, 151.5 x 120
cm.*

My series *Chronotope* is influenced by Varga's conceptual convergence of photography and drawing, and I too call my chromatographic prints drawings, despite their origins from a camera-less photochemical process. In doing so, I aim to push the methodological boundaries of both media, subvert their conventional associations with Cartesianism,⁷⁹ and highlight their conceptual ties with soil chromatography via common underlying material-discursive generative processes.

Michael Taussig describes drawing during fieldwork as a method requiring bodily immersion in the materiality of the field. He considers drawing as an event unfolding out of potentiality, like "drawing water from a well."⁸⁰ Ernst van der Wal expands on this using geological allusions: "to draw is to bring something that exists deep below on a different stratum to the surface."⁸¹ Such language can be applied to the morphogenetic properties of matter undergoing phase transition in the chromatographic process. In chromatography, agency and materiality powerfully coincide through intra-action. The porous membrane of the chromatograph serves as a mediator for nonhuman materialities. It is not a passive and inert record, but acts like a sieve, holding vitality and agency, messy affects and entanglements.

The chromatographic drawing captures a temporal-spatial synthesis, a record of passage from one state to another. Taussig, in paraphrasing John Berger, states: "a photograph stops time, while a drawing encompasses it."⁸² While conventional photographic perspective renders the environment as fixed, drawing is processual and open-ended, inventing as it recalls.

In Mikhail Bakhtin's words, my series *Chronotope* constitute an attempt at "materialising time in space."⁸³ This is reflective of Indigenous epistemologies of space-time, which according to Erin Manning follows "a topological structure in which time is embedded in shifting space, and space becomes time passing."⁸⁴ Thus the

⁷⁹ Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity."

⁸⁰ Michael T. Taussig and ProQuest, *I swear I saw this drawings in fieldwork notebooks, namely my own* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), xii.

⁸¹ Ernst van der Wal, "Drawing true" (paper presented at the Three Bones | Uncertain Entanglements, Three Bones Residency, 2024).

⁸² Michael Taussig, "What Do Drawings Want?," *Culture, theory and critique* 50, no. 2-3 (2009): 265, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14735780903240299>.

⁸³ M. M. Bakhtin, Michael Holquist, and Ebsco Publishing, *The dialogic imagination : four essays*, 1st ed., University of Texas Press Slavic series ; no. 1, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

⁸⁴ Erin Manning, *Relationescapes : movement, art, philosophy*, Technologies of lived abstraction, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2009), 164.

present is continually being recreated, becoming “a palimpsest alive with the resonances it creates.”⁸⁵

In summary, *Chronotope* marks my attempt to séance Frank’s ghost from the heterotopias and shadowplaces containing his trace: hauntological sites of temporal instability and memory. Treating the limitations of the archive as a generative force and harnessing the agency of nonhuman witnesses through multispecies ethnographic fieldwork, I produce photochemical drawings which are open-ended in nature. Rather than presenting an outcome, they are speculative and offer potential for further unfolding and complexity. They are sites of material-discursive generation, where independent agents converge to co-create an emergent reality. Frank hovers in this ambiguous time-space where material-discursive processes are reified; it is fundamentally unknowable whether his trace is present in these works, and what the nonhuman witnesses are testifying to. In attempting to materialise his ghost, further ambiguity and indeterminacy arises, revealing the impact of his hauntology internalised in my practice.

⁸⁵ Manning, *Relationescapes : movement, art, philosophy*, 156.

Chapter 3: Borderlands

“A decentring program could not only give us a more modest sense of our human role, one that cultivates more self-reflection and gratitude for the support and bounty the non-human world provides for us, but also lead to a widening of our sensibilities beyond the conventional boundaries of the human-like, towards inhuman elements of the world.”⁸⁶

My investigations thus far have focused on historical identity and place in the context of Frank’s archive. In this final chapter, I return to the present, broader concern of ecological crisis and the Anthropocene. First, I propose a situated and embodied counter-epistemology utilising diffraction as a conceptual and processual methodology. Then, in discussing my photographic series *Borderlands*, I further expand on the agency of the more-than-human by highlighting their material-discursive entanglement in representational planes. I ask: *How can an expanded photographic practice unveil perspectives traditionally obscured by Western, anthropocentric representational paradigms?*

Unsettling the Western Gaze

Western representationalism and visual practices are inherently linked to extractivism and colonisation. Emerging in the 19th century, photography as a way of “seeing and reproducing the world”⁸⁷ was harnessed among other visual techniques as tools of mastery and conquest. In the colonial context, cartography perpetuated the myth of terra nullius by recording land as vacant, and was used to claim unceded lands for Empire. Similarly, landscape was used as a framing device for negating Indigenous sovereignty, and was predicated on abstraction and reductivism: the “disinterested gaze of the disincarnated Cartesian spectator.”⁸⁸ Representationalism facilitated a Euro-anthropocentric conceptualisation of the world as “placed in the realm of man’s knowing and of his having disposal.”⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Plumwood, "Journey to the Heart of Stone," 20.

⁸⁷ Power Institute, "Contemporary photography: process, practice and place," (2:30 - 3:56, YouTube, 31/10/2023 2023). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWavdKiVqeo>.

⁸⁸ Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," 18.

⁸⁹ Martin Heidegger and Alfred I. Tauber, "The Age of the World Picture," *Main Trends of the Modern World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1997), 82.

Lorraine Code's model of ecological thinking offers a counter-epistemology which highlights the underlying biases, assumptions, and power dynamics embedded in Western epistemic regimes, and in contrast attends to cultural, historical and geographical positionality.⁹⁰ Haraway's related framework of situated knowledge subverts the illusion of objectivity inherent in representationalism, wherein consciousness receives "already processed and objectified fields,"⁹¹ and interrogates the validity of implicit assumptions of the viewer holding "unmarked positions of Man and White."⁹² I follow Haraway's question of "how should one be positioned in order to see"⁹³ and seek to destabilise the "conquering gaze from nowhere"⁹⁴ that has characterised representationalist practices.

Diffraction

Barbara Bolt uses the optical metaphor of diffraction in comparing the glaring nature of Australian light to its softer European counterpart. The former *diffracts*, while the latter *illuminates*. She reformulates the phrase from "shedding light *on* the matter to shedding light *for* the matter,"⁹⁵ asserting that light does not simply reflect, but holds agency in altering the representation of matter; light and matter are intra-active and co-emergent. Her related concept of methexis posits that a work is produced through ontological participation: inquiry into a subject matter necessitates embodied entanglement.⁹⁶ This approach subverts the studied distance of representationalism, and highlights the intra-action of human and nonhuman entities in co-creating outcomes.

I use diffraction as a working methodology for my expanded photographic practice. As referenced by Bolt, diffraction in optics refers to the bending and spreading of light waves as they pass around an obstacle or opening. According to Haraway, diffraction

⁹⁰ Code, *Ecological thinking*.

⁹¹ Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 589.

⁹² Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 581.

⁹³ Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 588.

⁹⁴ Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 581.

⁹⁵ Barbara Bolt, "Shedding Light For The Matter," in *Art Beyond Representation : the Performative Power of the Image* (London [England: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2019), 125.

⁹⁶ Bolt, "Shedding Light For The Matter," 142.

“does not produce ‘the same’ displaced, as reflection and refraction do. Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction.”⁹⁷ Diffraction in my practice refers to both the optical phenomenon and an approach where the disruptive potential of the photographic apparatus is deliberately harnessed.

In what follows, I will discuss my photographic series *Borderlands*, where I highlight the intra-active potential of inorganic materials in diffracting and producing photochemical outcomes. I also explore the dialogical potential of the ‘borderland,’ and propose that such space-time thresholds are integral to diffractive processes of “cutting together-apart.”⁹⁸

Travelogue

Broken Hill, on Wilyakali country, is situated in far west NSW on the edge of the outback. Its rich mineral deposits have cemented its reputation in Australian mining.⁹⁹ Broken Hill is also a borderland, an interstitial zone between Frank’s narrative and large-scale mining operations in Western Australia (WA). My original intention had been to take photographs of open-cut mines in Broken Hill, revealing the ecological trauma enacted by extractive industries. However, as my inquiry into my positionality progressed, I concluded that this plan would be inconsistent with my research ethos. As a socially mobile white settler who has never lived in Broken Hill, such an approach would have been strongly instrumental and reductionistic, and stood to perpetuate the epistemologies I sought to challenge.

As my reluctance to head further west grew, so did my preoccupation with Frank’s archival representation. My family speculated that Frank had spent some time mining in Broken Hill, however evidence and details are sparse. As a symbol of mining within the social imaginary, Broken Hill is a tendril on the periphery of Frank’s narrative - bearing connections which are more associative than etymological. Drawing on the material and political associations between Broken Hill and large-scale mines in WA, I

⁹⁷ D. Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters," in *A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others* (Routledge, 1992), 300.

⁹⁸ Barad, "Diffracting Diffraction," 176.

⁹⁹ R. W. Marjoribanks et al., "The structure and tectonic evolution of the Broken Hill region, Australia," *Precambrian research* 13, no. 2 (1980), [https://doi.org/10.1016/0301-9268\(80\)90005-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0301-9268(80)90005-4).

sought to interweave threads of geopolitics and extractivism from the borderland viewpoint of my familial zone of inquiry.

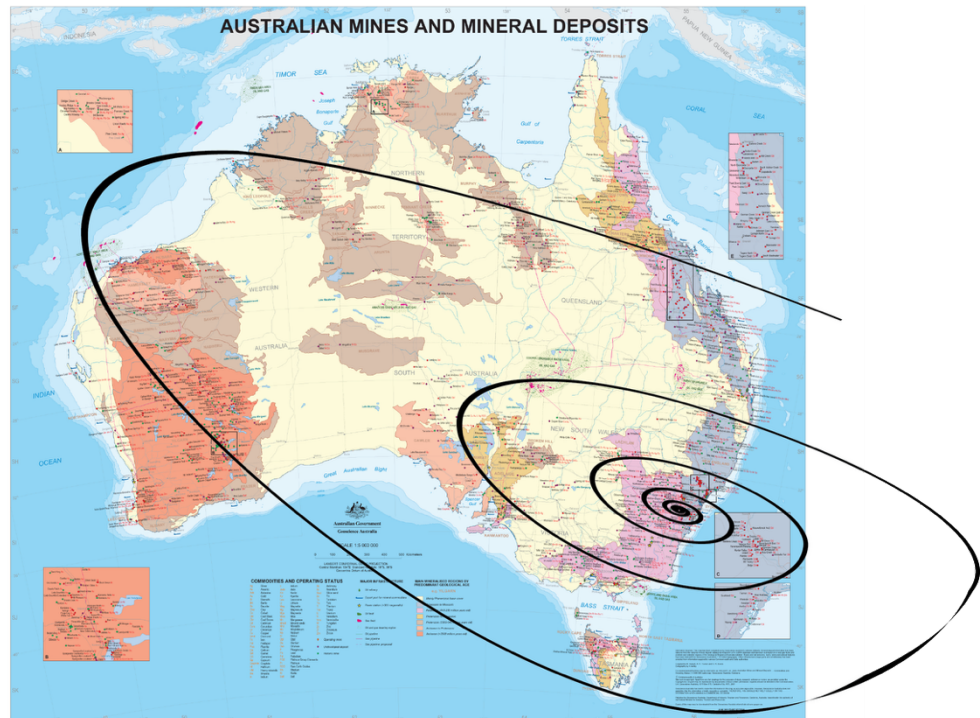


Figure 21. Mike Huleatt, Paul Henson, Gregory Robert Ewers, *Australian Mines and Mineral Deposits: Commodities and Operating Status Map (1:5,000,000 scale map)*, 2005, Geoscience Australia. Jack Harman, overlaid polytemporal spiral vector, 2025, digital image.

I draw from Bruno Latour’s concept of polytemporality in choosing to continue going to Broken Hill despite my reservations - not to pursue my original rationale, but to continue locating Frank’s trace on a polytemporal map.¹⁰⁰ Latour’s conception of time takes the form of a spiral, where “the past is not surpassed but revisited, repeated, surrounded, protected, recombined, reinterpreted and reshuffled. Elements that appear remote if we follow the spiral may turn out to be quite nearby if we compare loops.”¹⁰¹ Marcia Bjornerud suggests that polytemporality as a geological worldview recognises that “our personal and cultural stories have always been embedded in larger, and longer – and still elapsing – Earth stories.”¹⁰² Similarly, Tyson Yunkaporta states that within Indigenous cosmologies, the primordial past “isn’t a ‘long, long ago’

¹⁰⁰ Alexandra Arènes, Bruno Latour, and Jérôme Gaillardet, "Giving depth to the surface: An exercise in the Gaia-graphy of critical zones," *The anthropocene review* 5, no. 2 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053019618782257>.

¹⁰¹ Bruno Latour, *We have never been modern* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 75.

¹⁰² Marcia Bjornerud, *Timefulness : How Thinking Like a Geologist Can Help Save the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

event, because creation is still unfolding now, and will continue to.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, locating Broken Hill as a liminal borderland on a polytemporal map yields multiple coordinates of family, cultural, ideological and ecological significance.

Fieldwork

In August 2024, I completed a two-week residency at Broken Hill Art Exchange. During this time, I created *Borderlands*, a series of photographic experiments visualising the “expressive capacities of material entities.”¹⁰⁴ I photographed locations with iron-oxide bearing minerals around Broken Hill and then overpainted these images using the iron-rich specimens collected from those sites.

Trevor Dart, curator of the Albert Kersten Mining and Minerals Museum (GeoCentre), assisted me in mapping sites around Broken Hill which had high occurrence of iron-bearing minerals containing Hematite (Fe_2O_3), Magnetite (Fe_3O_4) and Goethite ($\alpha\text{-FeOOH}$).¹⁰⁵ The geographic information system (GIS) MinView was used to locate geoscientific data. These locations were characteristically regolith landforms and historically disused industrial mines containing residual extractive by-products.¹⁰⁶

I return to Plumwood’s concept of shadow places: unseen sites of degradation which sustain society and material needs.¹⁰⁷ In attending to mining sites in Broken Hill, I did not wish to focus on ruination, but rather to acknowledge the complex role of these shadow places in sustaining human life, and to highlight the agency of their materiality within the context of geology and deep time.

I took photographs of the horizon at each site, with my perspective oriented west towards WA, Australia’s largest mining state.¹⁰⁸ With the permission of Broken Hill LALC, I also collected iron-rich rocks in these areas. In my works, the rocks become

¹⁰⁵ Tyson Yunkaporta, *Sand talk : how Indigenous thinking can save the world* (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia: Text Publishing Company, 2019), 44.

¹⁰⁴ Manuel DeLanda, "Material Expressivity," no. Matters #4 (January 5 2009).

¹⁰⁵ M. Peljo, [v], 193 p. : ill. (some col.), maps ; 30 cm. H1 - Earth Sciences (Branner) *Broken Hill Exploration Initiative : abstracts of papers presented at the July 2003 Conference in Broken Hill* (Australian Capital Territory: Canberra, A.C.T. : Geoscience Australia, 2003). <https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/5684007>.

¹⁰⁶ Trevor Dart, 2024.

¹⁰⁷ Plumwood, "Shadow Places and the Politics of Dwelling."

¹⁰⁸ Ashleigh Dorrell, "Mining in the Pilbara: A Cut Above the Rest," (2024).

<https://australianminingreview.com.au/features/mining-in-the-pilbara-a-cut-above-the-rest/>.

anchor points from which to meditate on the horizon, both literally and metaphorically. I reference Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic process, "fusion of horizons," which articulates how integration of different perspectives results in the emergence of new understandings and deepening insight.¹⁰⁹

The first half of my process in creating *Borderlands* deliberately draws on representationalist conventions of photography: taking landscape photographs of significant sites and utilising traditional methods of pigment production and application in photographic retouching. The second half of my process involves changing the "material reconfigurations of [photographic] apparatuses through the enfolding of particular subversive resignifications."¹¹⁰ I will discuss artists Danie Mellor and Gerhard Richter, whose practices have shaped my approach, before explaining how I further develop my own methodology to harness the materiality of sites.

Danie Mellor and Gerhard Richter: Interventions

Ngadjon-jii and Mamu artist Danie Mellor's practice highlights the tension between Western and Indigenous approaches to vision using photographic and material engagement. His 2025 survey exhibition *Marru | The Unseen Invisible* at the Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art presents works that investigate remembrance, the relationships between First Nations culture and Country; and the impact of colonialism on social and natural worlds. The word 'marru' in Dyirbal, the language of Mellor's matriline, translates to "something gradually coming into sight... becoming visible,"¹¹¹ which unfolds in his photographic works.

¹⁰⁹ Jeff Malpas, "Hans-Georg Gadamer," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman (Stanford, CA: Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2025).

¹¹⁰ Karen Barad, *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 219.

¹¹¹ Danie Mellor, "Artist story/ Danie Mellor explores Australia's shared history," *QAGOMA*, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BChpuYGABb4>.



Figure 22. Danie Mellor, The far Country, 2022, chromogenic print, 180 x 240cm (framed)

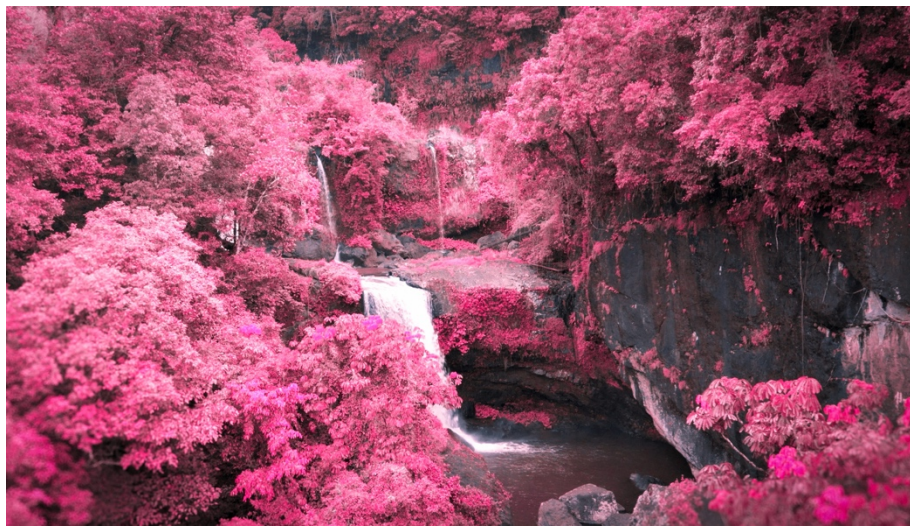


Figure 23. Danie Mellor, Dark star waterfall (still), 2025, Two-channel video projection: 16:9, colour, sound, 24 minutes; historic footage and images: National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Queensland State Archives, State Library of Queensland, Creative Australia

Mellor reifies the logic of ‘marru’ through an infrared photographic process which captures a wavelength of light imperceptible to the human eye. Sophia Nampitjimpa Sambono writes on Mellor’s practice: “In the spectrum of infrared, an intangible space is revealed — a zone of memory, spirit and Dreaming. Capturing the hidden dimension of infrared light allows unseen dimensions of the rainforest to be visualised,

registering and remembering ancestral presence and ancient histories.”¹¹² Mellor sees this as “a kind of proof and evidence of what and who has been here and was before – it is an unseen world of presence, knowledge and phenomena.”¹¹⁵ Mellor’s approach to making the invisible visible results in a palimpsest of erasure and asignification.

While Mellor’s mechanism of infrared light is located within the matrix of the camera, I use methexical methods involving contact with materials in the darkroom. I share similar intentions in subverting Western visual epistemes and facilitating alternate ways of seeing and knowing. In this vein, I also draw from German artist Gerhard Richter’s method of ‘overpainting’ and superimposition.

¹¹² “Themes in the Exhibition, ‘Danie Mellor: marru | the unseen visible’,” Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, 2025, <https://collection.qagoma.qld.gov.au/index.php/page/mellor-themes>.

¹¹⁵ Sambono, “Themes in the Exhibition, ‘Danie Mellor: marru | the unseen visible’.”

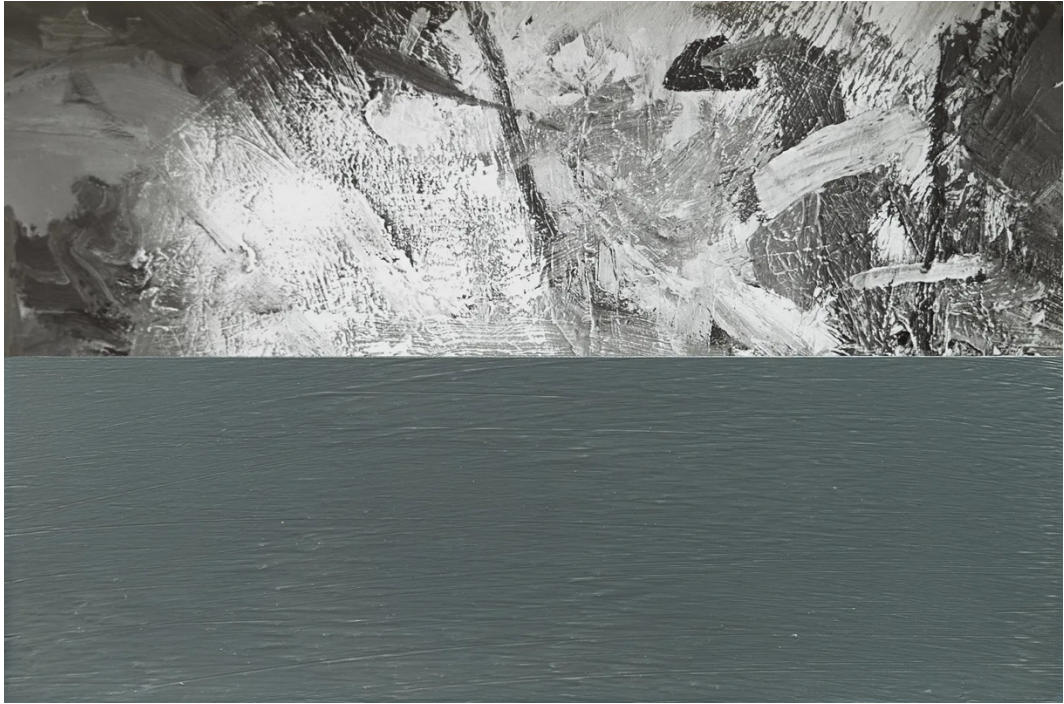


Figure 24. Gerhard Richter, 128 Details from a Picture, Halifax 1978 IV (1/128), 1998, Oil on black-and-white photograph, 15 x 22.4cm.



Figure 25. Gerhard Richter, Fextal, 1992, Oil on colour photograph, 10 x 15.1cm.



Figure 26. Richard Daintree, Corporation Quarry, Rockhampton, 1864-1871, Albumen print, overpainted, mounted on board, 19.4 x 26.3cm.



Figure 27. Richard Daintree, Alluvial Gold Mining, Creek Sluicing, 1864-1871, Albumen print, overpainted, mounted on textile support, on wooden stretcher, nails, 44.3 x 60.8 x 2.0cm

Richter's ongoing series *Overpainted Photographs*, beginning in 1986, treats photographs as substrate rather than images: photographs are the media onto which he paints.¹¹⁴ Unlike the stylistic retouching of colonial pictorialism typified in the works of Richard Daintree,¹¹⁵ Richter's 'overpaintings' are subject to chance, or "painting like nature."¹¹⁶ Aline Guillermet recounts: "Richter does not apply paint to the photograph using a brush, but instead resorts to a series of manipulations which radically narrow his authorial control"¹¹⁷: pressing, scraping, dabbing and smudging. I have drawn from Richter's 'chance' procedure in my practice.

Although distinct, both Daintree and Richter's practices of hand-colouring fundamentally added to an already printed photographic surface. There is a clear delineation between colouration – the paint superimposed onto the picture – and the photographic object itself. Parallel to the emergence of print retouching techniques, far more volatile interventions were being developed involving manipulating the photographic film itself before printing. Typically, this involved removing dust, scratches or spots on the surface either during camera exposure or in the handling of the film, and use of an 'intensifier' by applying a translucent light-sensitive colourant solution to the film. My work involves these more haptic methods, using superimposition, intra-action and diffraction to obfuscate the photographic image.

Crocein Scarlet

The Eastman Kodak Co. product *Crocein Scarlet* was a red dye developed in the 1980s, historically used to remove imperfections and improve the visual quality of black and white photographic images. When applied, the red dye imparts colour to the negative, which absorbs certain wavelengths of light and reflects others. The colourant affects the contrast, printing density and overall gradation of the print by "controlling the

¹¹⁴ "Gerhard Richter: "I Acknowledge Only What Is", Christie's, 2024, <https://www.christies.com/en/stories/german-artist-gerhard-richter-a6abbe5d296b419186fa20d3bd25b2c1>.

¹¹⁵ Martyn Jolly, "Frontier and Metropole, Science and Colonisation: The Systematic Exhibitions of Richard Daintree," *History of photography* 43, no. 4 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.2020.1788233>; Richard Daintree was a significant colonial photographer, surveyor and the first Queensland geologist for Northern Queensland, who was known for his pioneering work of photographic retouching. He is just one example of the close connection between photography, geology, and prospecting.

¹¹⁶ Aline Guillermet, "'Painting like nature': Chance and the Landscape in Gerhard Richter's Overpainted Photographs," *Art history* 40, no. 1 (2017): 181, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8365.12225>.

¹¹⁷ Guillermet, "'Painting like nature': Chance and the Landscape in Gerhard Richter's Overpainted Photographs," 179.

colour of the light reaching the emulsion during exposure,”¹¹⁸ acting as a retardant and transforming the spectral properties of the light source.

All chloro-bromide (black & white silver gelatine) photographic emulsions are blue light sensitive with a slight sensitivity to green light.¹¹⁹ Consequently, black and white darkrooms are fitted with a red ‘safe-light’ because the paper isn’t sensitive to wavelengths in the range of 580 – 740 nanometres (amber through to magenta).¹²⁰ *Crocein Scarlet* is effective at masking blemishes because it essentially spot filters the light by counter-measuring the under- and overexposed details with a spectral value on this spectrum, the ‘permittivity’ and ‘permeability’ of which define how electromagnetic waves propagate and render a photographic print.

Struck by this finding while working in the darkroom, I started to contemplate the optical qualities of other materials within the approximate range of visible red light. In particular, I considered mineralogic and lithologic materials like iron ores in gangue minerals or iron oxide copper-gold (IOCG) deposits.¹²¹

As one of the primary elements involved in rock formation, iron accounts for approximately 5% of the Earth’s crust.¹²² Almost all sedimentary rocks are iron-bearing.¹²³ Iron is widely deposited across the Australian continent, in layers of crystalline-textured iron-rich minerals and chert, recognisable by a reddish exposed surface due to oxidation. From the goldfields situated in the Lachlan Fold Belt spanning much of NSW where Frank was mining, to the largest mining industries in the Pilbara, iron is not just inanimate in its ubiquity; it is a geomorphic agent with inextricable links to deep time and colonial discourses. Hence, I decided to use the iron-bearing rocks collected from Broken Hill to create pigments for overpainting my landscape photographs taken from those very sites.

¹¹⁸ J. Ghislain Lootens and Lester H. Bogen, *Lootens on photographic enlarging and print quality*, 7th ed. (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Co., 1967), 144.

¹¹⁹ Limited Harman Technology, *Contrast Control for Ilford Multigrade Variable Contrast Papers*, Harman Technology Limited (Ilford, 2010), <https://www.ilfordphoto.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Contrast-control-for-Ilford-Multigrade.pdf>.

¹²⁰ Limited Harman Technology, *Safelight Filters and Darkroom Lamps*, Harman Technology Limited (Ilford, 2010), <https://www.ilfordphoto.com/amfile/file/download/file/605/product/613/>.

¹²¹ David Huston et al., "Part two: Geology of Critical Commodities, and Australia's Endowment and Potential," in *Critical commodities for a high-tech world: Australia's potential to supply global demand* (Geoscience Australia, 2013).

¹²² Australia Geoscience, "Iron," *Australian Mineral Facts* (2025/05/14 2025), <https://www.ga.gov.au/education/minerals-energy/australian-mineral-facts/iron>.

¹²³ Keith A. W. Crook and Harold J. Bissell, "Sedimentary Rock - Iron-Rich, Clastic, Chemical," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2025/09/10 2025). <https://www.britannica.com/science/sedimentary-rock/Iron-rich-sedimentary-rocks>.



Figure 28. Graeme Churchard, Banded iron formation at Fortescue Falls, Dales Gorge, 2013, digital photograph.

Photographic methods

Pigment Millbase Production

Chemical pigment molecules, including iron oxides, absorb and emit specific waves of light depending on their molecular structure, reflecting the colour we perceive.¹²⁴ The iron oxide samples I collected from Broken Hill contained a range of particle sizes, agglomerates and aggregates. First, I used a hammer in a bucket to break up large sections. Then, I used a mortar and pestle to further refine the particles. Finally, I used a glass-made muller and slab to disperse the particles in an oil-based binder, producing a medium in the style of traditional pigment production. The resultant colourant bears unique chemical traces that articulate the history, ecology and geology of the landscape.

¹²⁴ "Pigments, Dyes, Inks and Glaze," Rice University, <https://chemart.rice.edu/Pigments&Dyes.html>.



Figure 29. Jack Harman, A collection of Hematite, Magnetite and Goethite sourced from abandoned mines around Broken Hill prior to hand-milling, 2024, digital photograph.



Figure 30. Jack Harman, hand-milled pigment (work in progress), 2024, digital photograph.

Photographic printing and enlarging

I then applied the hand-milled colourant to the photographic negatives I took in Broken Hill. Colourant was applied to sections below the horizon line, in a symbolic act of replacing the representational landscape with its materials. Before applying the colourant to the negative, the dispersion of the iron oxide polymeric pigments required wetting the pigment surface and blending the pigment as uniformly as possible. The medium was then applied pragmatically as the colourant was drying quickly and the particle size distribution made it difficult to apply uniformly. Finally, I enlarged and developed the tinted photographic negatives with assistance from artist and photographic technician Kiah Pullens at Wetlab Colour Darkroom.

Once applied to the photographic negative, the colourant became a fuzzy interference filter with its variable refractive indices.¹²⁵ The iron-rich minerals were not precisely distributed within the wavelength range which would react with photographic paper, so certain details of the original photo-image emerged while others disappeared and receded. In this way, the polarisation density responded non-linearly to the electromagnetic light field produced by the condenser of the enlarger, and through the media as it was re-emitted and projected onto the latent photographic paper. There is an ambiguity and formlessness in the final printed images.

¹²⁵ Ivan Moreno, J. Jesus Araiza, and Maximino Avendano-Alejo, "Thin-film spatial filters," *Optics letters* 30, no. 8 (2005), <https://doi.org/10.1364/OL.30.000914>.



Figure 31. Jack Harman, work in progress #1, 2024, digital photograph, Wetlab Colour Darkroom.



Figure 32. Jack Harman, Untitled, 2024, silver gelatine photograph, B&W negative film, swamp mahogany from Camden region, oxidised finish, 90.5 x 74.5cm (framed)

Diffraction analysis

Iron, participating in the eidos of light filtration, sheds light for the matter. The resultant images can be considered in terms of methexis rather than representation. For Bolt, methexis “is a non-representational principle... it produces rather than represents reality.”¹²⁶ The darkroom exposure works through dispersed features: the quivering of the light, the ‘fuzziness’ of vibration, and the fragmentary and uneven texture and facture of the colourant. In the process of exposure, the latent image gradually develops through the “cutting together/apart that is the nature of intra-actions,” merging the landscape image and colourant into a composite image conjugated by superimposition.¹²⁷

What is happening here is a material-discursive confluence constituted by both human and nonhuman agency. The diffraction of light through matter is a displacement of the pro-filmic image,¹²⁸ facilitating a transformation where the material and semiotic fuse. In addition to the complex spatiality of the palimpsest captured on photographic paper, the work embodies a complicated spatial condition, quivering between the registers of painting and photography.

Instead of a linear Cartesian perspective, diffraction provides what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe as a “point of departure in a passional line in the process of sweeping away towards ‘realness’ that is vertiginously asignifying, asubjective, [and multiple].”¹²⁹ In the luminous intensity of the darkroom, the picture plane on which the iron pigment has been superimposed is transfigured, fractured by errant and itinerant light, which itself becomes unthematized, having a deterritorialising¹³⁰ effect. The fractured beams of the multiple points of light do not produce an articulated, sublimated work, but a more primitive substance.

¹²⁶ Bolt, “Shedding Light For The Matter,” 136.

¹²⁷ Karen Barad, “Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come,” *Derrida Today* 3, no. 2 (2010): 247, <https://doi.org/10.3366/drt.2010.0206>.

¹²⁸ “pro-filmic.” <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100348422>.

¹²⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A thousand plateaus : capitalism and schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2004), 187.

¹³⁰ Ian Buchanan, “deterritorialization,” (Oxford University Press, 2018 2018).

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198794790.001.0001/acref-9780198794790-e-180>.

According to Barad, the presence of intra-acting agencies “undermines the notion that there is an inherent fixed (apparatus-independent, Cartesian) subject-object distinction.”¹⁵¹ The properties of entangled particles cannot be understood in isolation, resulting in a “disruption of before/after,”¹⁵² disturbing the appearance of the surface plane like a visual torque, “threaded through one another in a nonlinear enfolding of spacetime mattering.”¹⁵³ These images are not representations; rather, they trace matter through and in relation to space and time, harking back to a polytemporal geo-phenomenological conceptualisation.

More-than-human materials, both in the context of Frank’s hauntology and broader ecological crisis, enact their agency upon the pictorial plane through intra-action, obfuscation and an enfolding of time. They indicate both presence and absence, marking where the trace once was. This thickened sense of space, where presence and absence merge, alludes to First Nations peoples’ model of deep time, which scholars call ‘everywhen.’ As Steven Gilchrist explains, “For Indigenous people, the Dreaming does not merely preserve the past. Rather, it speaks of eternal becoming. It is the totality of Indigenous knowledge and its future potential, made alive through its immediate and continuing transmission.”¹⁵⁴ Drawing from Indigenous epistemologies and ecological thinking, *Borderlands* invites contemplation on deep time and material agency, which is always ambiguous, generative and unfurling. I propose such non-linear, intra-active, and terrestrial ways of knowing as richer alternatives to Western anthropocentric representationalism.

¹⁵¹ Barad, “Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance,” 253.

¹⁵² Barad, “Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance,” 248.

¹⁵³ Barad, “Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance,” 254.

¹⁵⁴ Stephen Gilchrist, *Everywhen : the eternal present in indigenous art from Australia* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Art Museums, 2016), 19.

Coda

At the beginning of this project, I identified the harmful impacts of the rift between human and nature implicit in Western epistemological regimes associated with the Anthropocene. Within a reductive, instrumental Western gaze towards nature, narratives of mastery and conquest act as signifiers and give rise to colonial hegemony and ecological crisis. This rift is present in my own settler-colonial history, and I therefore sought to begin my inquiry via genealogy, through my great-grandfather's archive.

Drawing from post-humanist and Indigenous perspectives, I adopted ecological thinking and situated knowledge as counter-epistemologies, eschewing Western Cartesian representationalism for a more embodied and positional approach. In charting Frank's archive and the landscape of his mining pursuits through fieldwork, I sought to bear witness to the shadowplaces of his, my, and collective Western colonial history. However, I did not find what I expected: there were very few sites I could precisely locate, and much information was conflicting and indeterminate. In grappling with the fallibility of the archive, I concluded that it held merely a spectre of Frank, formed by tenuous representations shaped by social habitus. In trying to en flesh his ghost, I instead uncovered the generative potential of hauntology – present absences – and the voices of non-human witnesses: the stones, soil and earth from which he mined.

Responding to Frank's archive using anarchival practices, I enacted a performative, intra-active methodology involving the agency of nonhuman materials in producing – rather than merely representing – my works, via material-discursive processes. In my drawing series *Chronotope*, I used archival absences as a generative starting point to harness the testimony of nonhuman materials through soil chromatography in attempting to en flesh Frank's ghost. In my photographic series *Borderlands*, I used diffraction as a metaphor and working methodology, using nonhuman witnesses to disrupt traditional representational photographic practice. Both works are fundamentally speculative and ambiguous, and dissolve fixed boundaries between space, time and matter.

I choose to leave these works as open-ended, indeterminate intimations rather than fixed outcomes. In acknowledging my positionality and embodied limitations - becoming answerable for how I see - my works present a deliberately incomplete, obscured view of the earth rather than claiming a totalising knowledge. Like the generative and ambiguous nature of my works, I signal that repair and reconciliation is never a final state, but a continuous dialogue.

Have I succeeded in enacting the counter-epistemologies which I set out to do? In my fieldwork and artmaking, I have sought to generate new work and knowledge, albeit imperfectly. Ultimately, despite centering the agency of nonhuman materials, I am still constrained by the nature of human epistemology. I cannot understand materials on their own terms. The rift remains between the essential unintelligibility of non-human materials and the ineradicable symbolic order in Western subjectivity. In one sense, I have simply added one more voice to the mire of Frank's archive.

Situated knowledge and ecological thinking offer many opportunities to inform future projects. The stories from Frank's archives all contain conceptual and material possibilities for associative works. In concluding and moving forward from this research project, I aim to continue practicing from a grounded and decolonising posture, acknowledging expansive ways of knowing and the intra-active agency of the more-than-human.

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Appendix: Catalogue of Works Presented for Examination

Longue Durée (crystal-image)

2024-2026

time-based media, Kodak SAV2050, 35mm slides, mica, glass grinding slab, steel variable

Chronotope (Series)

2024

paper chromatograph, trace elements and minerals

C = 37.7cm

Parliament of Things (Gathering)

2026

installation; comprised of Frank's archival contents, and anarchival objects, custom table, various display mounts

240cm x 80cm x 75cm square base

Borderlands (series)

2024

silver gelatine photograph

variable

Untitled

2025

silver gelatine photograph, B&W negative film, swamp mahogany from Camden region, oxidised finish

90.5cm x 74.5cm (framed)

Matrix #3

2025

B&W negative film, hand milled iron pigment, and trace elements in linseed oil,

Linhof cut film holder, dark slide

2 Parts; each part 18cm x 12cm

Stepped Wedge (Alogon)

2025

cast iron, iron(III) oxide patina, wax

30 x 8.8 x 9cm

Frank & Tiger (verso/ recto)

2024

pigment print on Ilford smooth cotton rag

37.5cm x 31.5 (framed)

Frank Fossicking

2024

archival prints

49.4cm x 41.3cm (framed)