





*ledger of lost souls #2*, 2023, hand cut stencils, hard cover book, 35x55cm

# Martin King

## diary of lost souls

February 14 - March 11, 2023

King Street Gallery **KS**  
on William **GLW**

  @kingstreetgallery

10am – 6pm Tuesday – Saturday  
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## Martin King diary of lost souls

On the surface of it, the lost souls that Martin King refers to in the evocative title of this exhibition, diary of lost souls are the avian species that populate his work – of which some are now extinct and many are threatened. The natural world has long formed a point of departure for King's art and in this body of work we see a dense aesthetic and philosophical layering within each piece. Visual material from an array of different historical and contemporary sources is skilfully wrought together to create poignant meditations on environmental loss, and its looming implications for humanity. This discourse speaks to notions of interconnection – the fragile connections that bind ecosystems together and the catastrophic results when such vital connections break down, to which the human species is in no way immune.

Certain works feature images derived from the John Cotton sketchbook in the collection of the State Library of Victoria. <sup>1</sup>Cotton was a British born naturalist and pastoralist who emigrated to Australia with his family in 1843 and proceeded to make studies of various birds he encountered between 1844- 1849. In King's major works pages from the diary of lost souls (2022) and tree of life, journey of lost souls in twenty volumes No 2 (2022) he pairs photopolymer gravure etchings of sketches from Cotton's book, printed on parchment yellow chin collé paper and grouped together to create the background upon which the large, silhouetted form of a tree is printed.

This hybridised tree is based on an English Ash and a Peppermint Gum that live in Melbourne's Fitzroy Gardens – an inner-city green space that was established in the late 1840s and 1850s. It's no coincidence that this is the same period Cotton was capturing native species in his sketchbook. In these poignant memoriams the mighty tree becomes both a living sentinel and silent witness to the ghostly forms of Cotton's birds. The tree's disjointed, hybridised form a reminder of the violent collision of nature and culture that colonialism engendered.

King's large graphite drawings on drafting film offer a dense aesthetic melange of references taken from various artistic and literary sources. One such work, his Hazelhurst Prize winning strangerlands II contains references to William's Strutt's Black Thursday painting of 1851 held in the State Library of Victoria's collection (and the subject of King's 2017 Creative Fellowship at the Library), Ingmar Bergman's film The Seventh Seal, an Iranian Illuminated 15th century manuscript and Goya's Los Caprichos. However, in this and in the other two large works of similar format diary of lost souls, pages\_21,22 (2022) and studies for diaries of lost souls (2023) it is the form and cultural significance of the book that takes centre stage.

Diaries, artists' books, sketch books, notebooks, illuminated manuscripts, old novels – books in their many forms provide pivotal physical and symbolic material for these artworks. In some pieces King transforms second-hand hardcopies into the substrate for new works, printing over and embalming them in encaustic wax. Whereas his

large graphite works feature imaginary books drawn in two dimensions. In diary of lost souls, pages\_21, 22 a white-faced owl stares out from the book's pages as it rests upon a sickle moon. Surrounded by skulls, silhouetted bird forms and other artistic references such as a detail from Albrecht Dürer's engraving Saint Jerome in His Study (1514), King weaves history and landscape into an image that is reminiscent of an illuminated manuscript in its mesmerising use of pattern, mystical motifs and aura of the sacred. Human mortality, the transience of life and the meaninglessness of earthly possessions are notions alluded to in the recurrent vanitas image of the skull and bound up in the reference to Saint Jerome. Perhaps King holds out hope that humanity's capacity for brilliance and wisdom, as symbolised by the book and the owl will be our salvation in the face of environmental collapse.

The skull motif features prominently in studies for diaries of lost souls, where in Venetian red King sketches a large skull alongside an owl on the pages of another imagined book which rests upon a montage of four landscape studies transcribed from Eugene von Guerard and Sydney Parkinson works. King's small etchings of birds peep through the layers, giving the physical impression of a notebook and evoking its use as a repository for varied speculations and observations.

This work plays with the notion of the constructed Australian landscape, and the mythologised space it occupies in the national imagination that has evolved from early representations such as these by Von Guerard and Parkinson. Again the owl, which is the Roman goddess Minerva's bird, and its accompanying skull delivers an

allegorical slant. The viewer is confronted with a wide-eyed reminder that all things pass, and with this an implicit plea to venerate the present. In a series of Australian postal stamp inspired works, King emblazons invented and enlarged commemorative stamps with phrases like 'one-hundred tears' 'new world post hostage' 'lost world' and 'unsuccessful species.' Stamps which function as markers to celebrate a nation's achievements, are here used to draw attention to a nation's shame in an explicit subversion of nationalistic rhetoric.

Works are sensitively drawn and meticulously observed. Yet alongside a sense of veracity to nature, each is composed to allow enough space between the layers for imagination to take flight. Heavy themes are executed with a poetic touch to form a beautiful lament for both the living and the lost.

**Marguerite Brown**  
Director, Print Council of Australia

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1 Cotton, John (1801 or 2 – 1849), Sketchbook belonging to John Cotton, with sketches and descriptions of birds and other flora and fauna indigenous to the Port Phillip District of New South Wales, [1844-1849].





*new world- NVG*, 2023, graphite and watercolour on drafting film and paper, 103x80cm



*now and then I*, 2023, etching, drypoint, photopolymer gravure, chine collé, 15x20cm



*now and then III*, 2023, etching, drypoint, photopolymer gravure, chine collé, 15x20cm





*tree of life, journey of lost souls in twenty volumes no.2*, 2022, etching, drypoint, spitbite, photopolymer gravure , hard cover books, 100x120cm





*strangerlands I*, 2021, graphite, watercolour, gouache, pastel and gold leaf on drafting film on paper, 150x226cm









*don't think leave it to the stars*, 2022, graphite, gouache, pastel on drafting film and paper, 107x237 cm



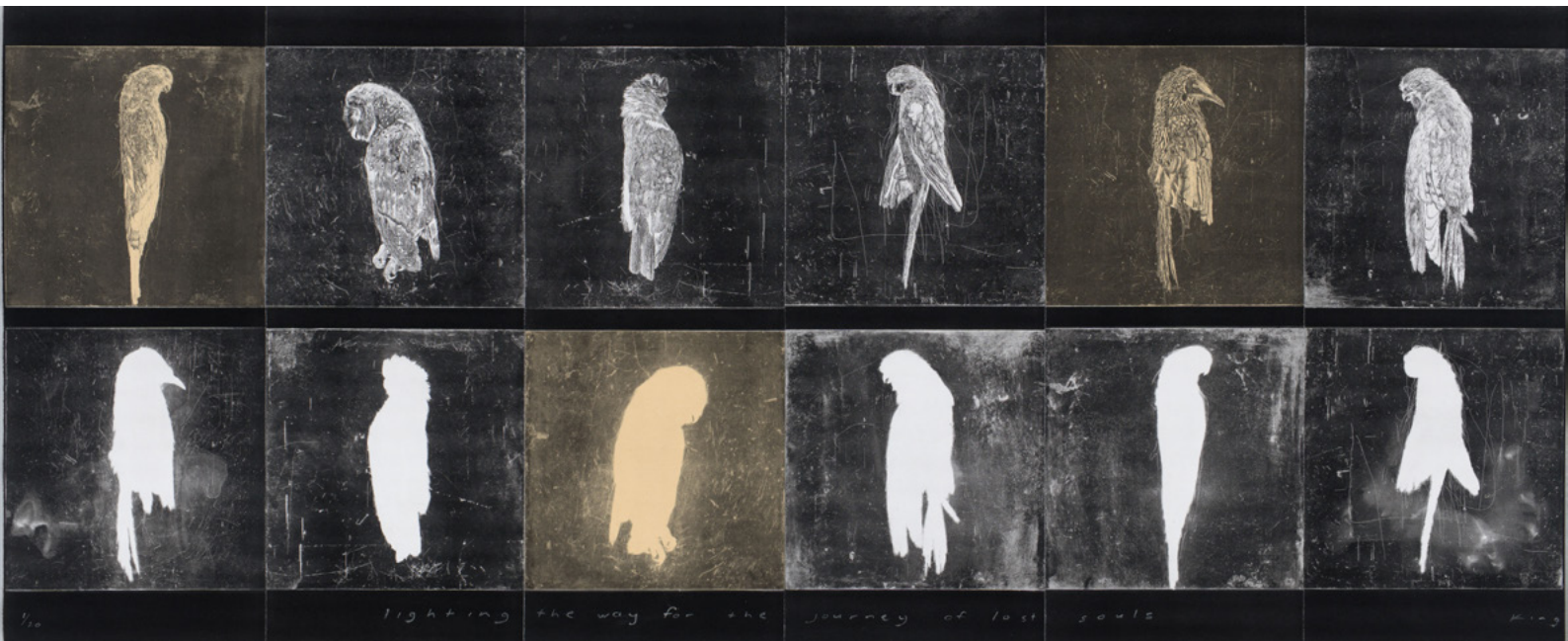


*new world- old world unsuccessful species*, 2023, graphite and watercolour on drafting film and paper, 100x80cm



*silent witness in ten volumes, no.3*, 2022, etching, drypoint, spitbite, hand colour, hardcover books, 112x87cm





*lighting the way for the journey of lost souls*, 2022, photopolymer gravure, chine collé, 60x145cm



*strangerlands II*, after W Strutt, *Black Thursday*, 1851, 2021, graphite, watercolour, gouache, pastel and gold leaf on drafting film on paper, 130x220cm









*sheltering owl*, 2022, etching, hand colour, wax hardcover books, 43x28cm



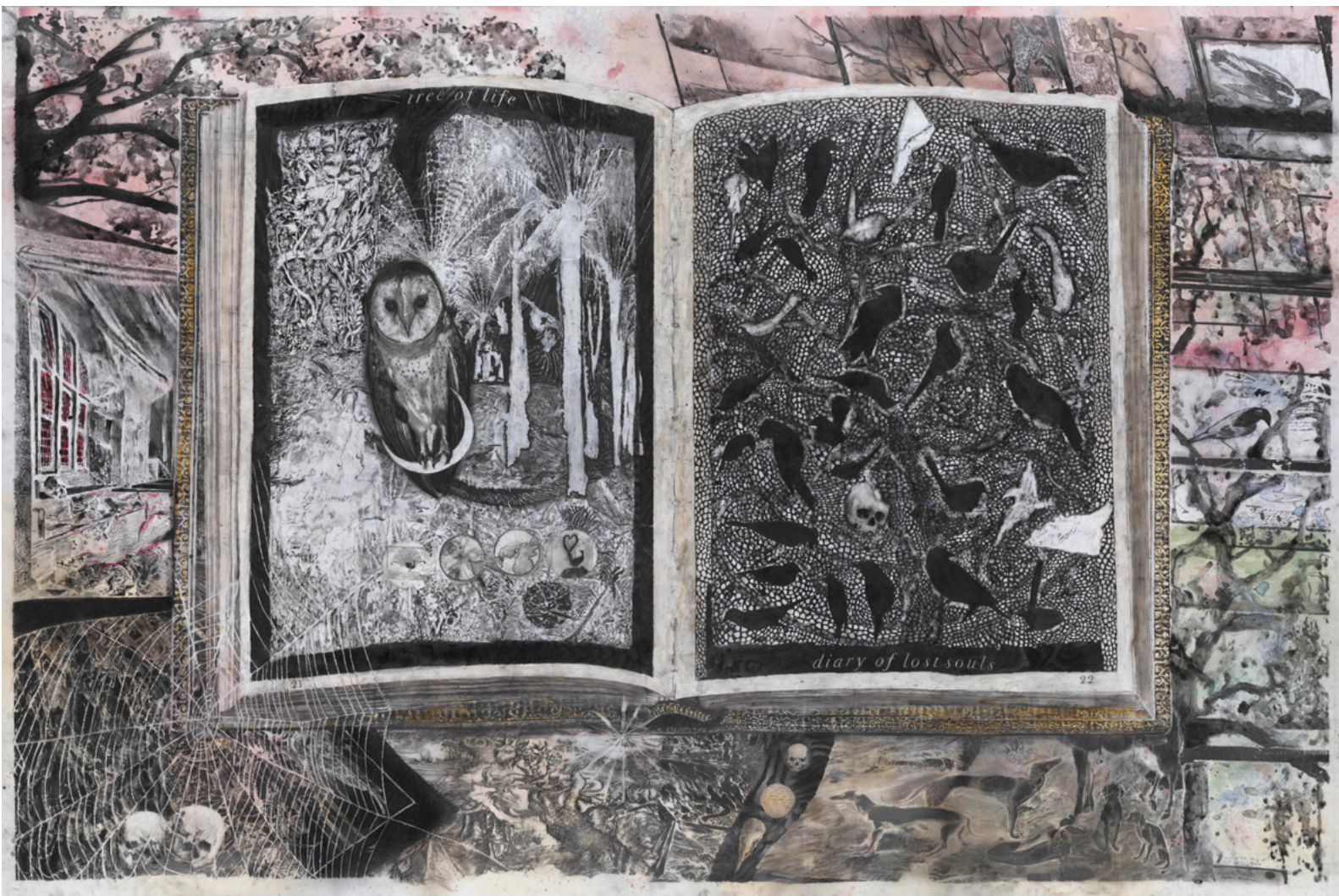
*strangerlands diary no.5*, 2022, etching, hand colour, wax hardcover books, 38x25cm





*commemorative stamp NO GO*, 2022, graphite and watercolour on drafting film on paper, 100x80cm





*diary of lost souls*, pages 21,22, 2022, graphite and watercolour on drafting film on paper, 220x130cm





*pages from the diary of lost souls*, 2022, etching, drypoint, spitbite, photopolymer gravure, chine collé, 100x80cm



*strangers in the city*, 2022, etching,  
relief etching, watercolour, hard cover  
book and wax, 45x20cm



*saved*, 2023, etching, relief etching,  
hard cover book, 57x21cm







*ledger of the lost*, 2023, hand cut stencils, hard cover book, 35x65cm



*ledger of the lost #3*, 2023, hand cut stencils, hard cover book, 17x26cm



## Martin King

Lives and works in Melbourne, Australia.

Born 1957 Melbourne, Australia.

### Education & Teaching

1994-2023 Senior Printmaker, Australian Print Workshop, Melbourne  
1996-2002 Master of Fine Arts, Monash University, Gippsland, Vic.  
1993-94 Part-time Lecturer-Printmaking, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne  
1990 Part-time Lecturer-Printmaking, Victoria College, Melbourne  
1986-87 Part-time Lecturer- Graphic Investigation, Canberra School of Art, ACT  
1985 Part-time Lecturer-Lithography and Etching, Warrnambool Inst.  
1982 Postgraduate Diploma Fine Art, Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney  
Part-time tutor- Printmaking, Sydney College of the Arts  
1980-81 Part-time Tutor-Drawing and Painting, Darwin Institute of Technology, Darwin  
1976-78 Graduate Diploma (Fine Art and Design), Caulfield Institute of Technology, Melbourne

### Collections

Art Gallery of New South Wales  
Art Gallery of South Australia  
Artbank, Australia  
Australian Print Workshop, Melbourne  
Australian Catholic University, Melbourne  
Australian National Bank  
Australian National Gallery, Canberra  
Allens Arthur Robinson, Sydney  
British Museum, London, UK  
Bharat Bhavan Museum, Bhopal, India  
Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery  
Carleton College Library, Minnesota, USA  
Chisholm Institute of Technology, Vic  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Education Department of Victoria  
Eltham College, Vic  
Faulding Collection, Adelaide  
Geelong Regional Art Gallery, Vic

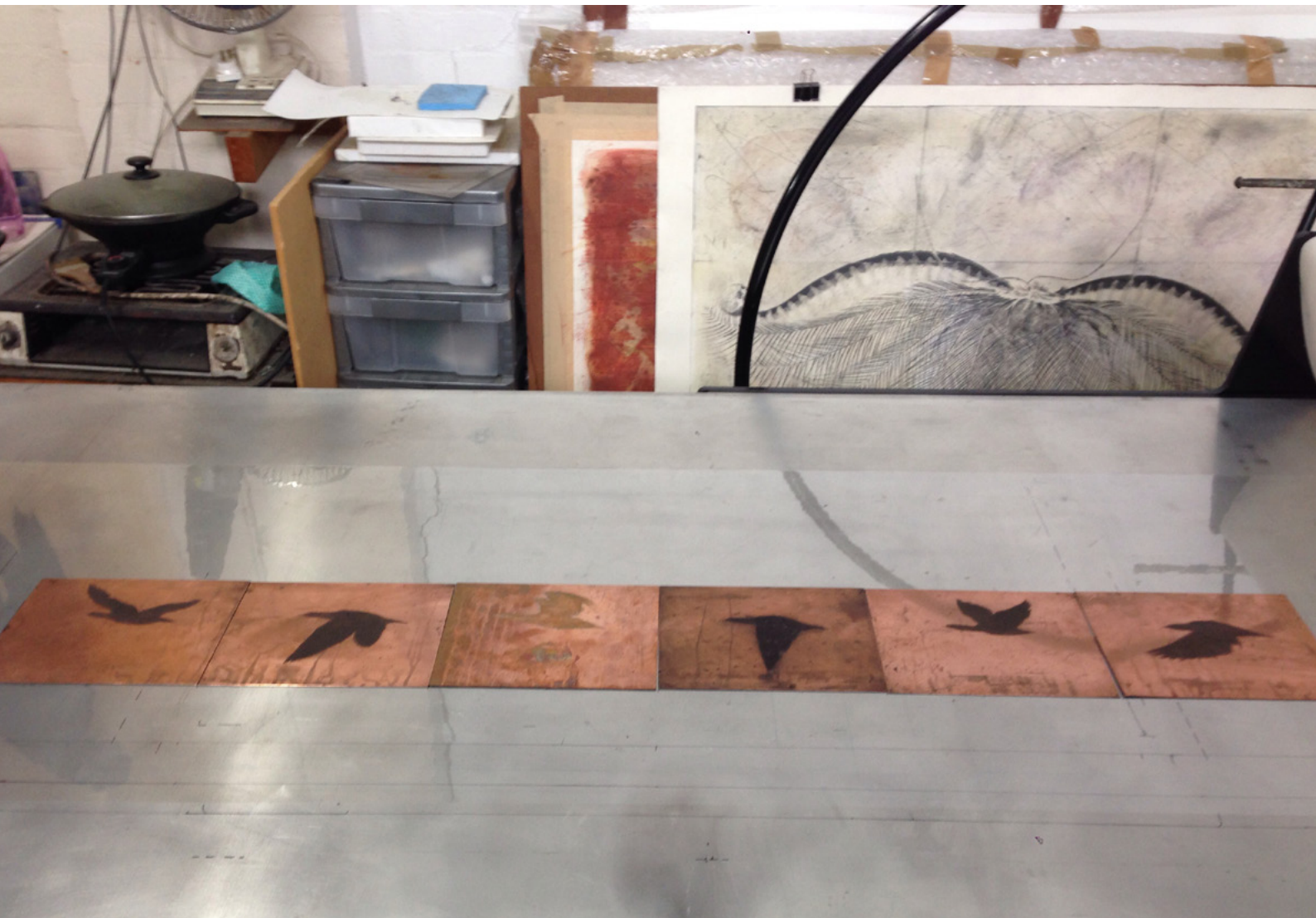
Gippsland Art Gallery  
James Hardie Collection, Sydney  
Lismore Regional Art Gallery, NSW  
Mackay Regional Art Gallery, Mackay  
Macquarie Bank, Sydney  
Maroondah Art Gallery  
M Karolyi Foundation, Vence, France  
MLC, Melbourne  
Monash University, Vic  
Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery  
National Australia Bank, NAB  
National Gallery of Victoria  
Nillumbik Art Collection, Eltham, Vic  
Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences,  
Northern Territory University  
Out Back Arts, INQ, QLD  
Print Council of Australia  
Queensland State Library  
RACV Art Collection  
State Bank of NSW  
Sydney College of the Arts  
Tamworth City Gallery, NSW  
University College of Southern Queensland  
Victorian College of the Arts  
Wangaratta Art Gallery Collection  
Warrnambool Regional Art Gallery, Vic

### Solo Exhibitions

2023 *diary of lost souls*, King Street Gallery on William, Sydney  
2022 *False Ornithologies and Unnatural Histories*, Delmar Gallery, Sydney  
2021 *Strangerlands* Australian Galleries, Melbourne  
2020 Bookworks Artspace at Realm, Ringwood VIC  
2019 *Unnatural History* King Street Gallery on William  
2017 *hoodwinks and lyres* King Street Gallery on William  
From the collection Martin King, Maroondah Federation Estate Gallery, Ringwood  
*Naturophilia* Lab 14, Melbourne University  
2016 *blind faith* Gallerysmith, Melbourne  
2015 *dawn survey #3* King Street Gallery on William  
*forest of dreams* Gallerysmith  
2014 *dawn survey #2* Port Jackson Press, Melbourne  
2013 *on the wing* King Street Gallery on William

	<i>dawn survey project</i> Project Space, James Makin Gallery. Melbourne	1997	<i>Footnote</i> Allison Kelly Gallery, Melbourne Stephen McLaughlan Gallery
2011	<i>Secret Life of Birds</i> King Street Gallery on William	1997	king street gallery on burton
2010	<i>recent work</i> The Art Vault, Mildura, Vic <i>Inferior Mirage</i> James Makin Gallery		Adelaide Central Art Gallery, Adelaide Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle
	<i>slowly disappearing darling</i> New England Regional Art Gallery, NSW	1995	king street gallery on burton
	<i>burnt creek offering</i> The Art Vault	1994	Gallery Rhumbarallas, Melbourne
2009	<i>Overflow</i> King St Gallery on William		Adelaide Central Art Gallery
2008	<i>Slowly Disappearing</i> Darling Port Jackson Press, Melbourne		Recent Prints East Melbourne Hotel, Melbourne
	<i>Masters Impressions</i> Roopankar Museum of Fine Arts, Bhopal India	1993	Launch of artist's book Seven Songs Seven Etchings Darren Knight Gallery, Melbourne
2007	<i>Slowly Disappearing Darling</i> Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery, NSW	1986	Dorretts Gallery, Canberra
	South Georgia Island Sub Antarctica	1984	Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney
	king street gallery on burton, Sydney		Galleria La Sirena, Barcelona, Spain
	South Georgia Sub Antarctica James Makin Gallery, Melbourne	1983	Tartessos, Galleria, Cadaques, Spain
2005	<i>recent work [prints and paintings]</i> king street gallery on burton	1982	Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney
	<i>Plain Song</i> Port Jackson Press Gallery, Melbourne		
2004	<i>Works on Canvas and Paper</i> Maroondah Art Gallery, Melbourne		
2003	<i>First Rain</i> king street gallery at Span Galleries, Melbourne		
	first rain king street gallery on burton		
	<i>First Rain: Works on Paper</i> Port Jackson Press Gallery		
2002	<i>Recent Work</i> Lake Gallery, Paynesville, VIC		
	<i>recent work</i> king street gallery on burton		
2001	<i>Going Over Old Ground</i> Mass Gallery, Melbourne		
	Recent Work Stephen McLaughlan Gallery, Melbourne.		
	Antipodes Gallery, Sorrento, Melbourne		
2000	Masters Exhibition Mass Gallery		
	Geodesy Span Galleries		
	<i>Recent Works on Paper</i> Motorworks Gallery, Melbourne		
1999	<i>Recent Works on Paper</i> king street gallery on burton		
	Stephen McLaughlan Gallery		
1998	<i>An Installation of Paintings</i> St Stephens Church, Richmond		





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