



My work responds to the history, archaeological dig, and landscape, and included in all the works are some elements and materials from the site. These include yellow and red oxides ground from rocks collected, gorse sticks as drawing tools, merino wool, mosses, sticks, grasses and seeds used within the works on paper and the distinctive caps worn by the convicts. The natural earth pigments collected from the site and used later in my studio, are a silent nod to the original indigenous inhabitants of this landscape, who no doubt valued this rich source of coloured earth.

The techniques I used for the works on paper include rusting, intaglio etching, woodblock, lino etching, rust and ink painting, and drawing. The three-dimensional objects based on the convict caps also resemble pods, and the paper to make these underwent a series of processes including intaglio etching and rusting, before starting to cut the pattern,

(which took some time to figure out), and stitch them together by hand. They were then waxed with beeswax. They are all different and represent aspects of the site and the history, bringing the 'vital materialism' of the site into the works. Future work will include a site-specific installation for Ten Days on the Island Arts Festival 2017.

The methods and materials I used for these works replicate the practices and materials from the site. Gouging, scratching, stitching, grinding and repetition were among these techniques, and, as I worked, became a reminder of the daily lives of the convicts. During a visit to QVMAG to view the convict items in the collection, I became drawn to the form of the original leather caps worn by convicts, so beautifully tailored and designed, yet worn for such punitive work. They seemed to me to be a metaphor for the dichotomous relationship between man and nature.

*Fog, mist, sag, rock, scrape and sift, slowly exhuming the past... the smell of old dark soils damp and musty, yellow red oxides of the rocks, scratchy bushes of wild hawthorn and gorse, the gentle sounds of grazing sheep.*

At the Kerry Lodge site, the past is slowly revealed layer by layer, discovering artefacts that give a glimpse of the history of the convict station and memories embedded deep within this landscape. Being on site I bore witness to the painstakingly slow, laborious process of an archaeological dig, backs bent over, almost reverent. It felt like a privilege, and an intrusion.

New languages and symbols, delicate rituals and the sounds of nature accompanying the tedium. And a realisation: that archaeologists require a strong back and good knees, as well as a good imagination, for they are storytellers, piecing together the narrative of the site from the artefacts uncovered.

Interestingly, to date no Aboriginal artefacts have been discovered, perhaps due to the intensive farming practices over hundreds of years that may have uncovered artefacts that were not recorded, or were lost.

As relationships developed and the contribution artists could make became more evident, it was noted that artists 'noticed things I never would have seen and had a different way of looking at things', (in conversation with archaeologist Dr Elena Casella). This aspect of transdisciplinary projects is one that can provide insights: working with other professionals, having exchanges of processes, languages, and conversations, can influence how a site is perceived and hence how future projects may proceed.

Local artists had the privilege of being present for the whole time while interstate artists had some time restrictions, spending time available gathering information and collecting

materials. During this first of many site visits I spent time sketching, taking video and photographs and engaging in conversations with other artists and archaeologists, with intervals of digging and sifting. There was a constant ebb and flow of participants; volunteers, a surveyor and other archaeology students from the university. Morning tea was set up at the tent day-camp, a time for making connections and friendships. Some of these relationships present fertile ground for future collaborations and projects, providing opportunities for the artists involved in the project.

The history of the site continues, the activities and artworks all contributing to a narrative that reaches into the past and reshapes the memory embedded in the site, as the landscape itself continues to change.

The artworks produced will be exhibited at several exhibitions and events, including a new on-site installation

—  
Wendy McGrath,  
*Rusted Landscape*, 2016,  
painting, rust medium on  
Hahnemühle etching paper,  
pencil, 30 x 1000 cm.