

The weight of memory

Sue Kneebone
Unmoored Memories

Sue Kneebone's recent fieldwork has charted tens of thousands of miles examining chosen lands and their provocative and deeply rich histories. This meaningful action of research and discovery, mapping and notating is a transformative process that, through her art practice, creates a gradient of known and unknown narratives focused on the implications of social and environmental change from colonial incursion. Utilising the materials of a site whilst bettering her knowledge of the varied socio-cultural dimensions of a place Kneebone's artwork—whether it through bricolage or photomontage—confronts the legacy of colonisation and its unsettling affect from past to present.

For Sue, numerous lines of enquiry have crossed and coalesced whilst on residency at Sauerbier House. An ongoing component of Sue's practice has involved charting her familial ties to lands and coastlines awakening a need to better understand the colonial-settler body in an unknown environment. Kneebone's fieldwork began with the coastal passages, jetties and wharves of Port Noarlunga yet quickly traced familiar territory forming an uncanny connection between the Sauerbier family and Kneebone's own forebears including one of the first white settlers on Kurna Country, Benjamin Wickham.

It would be remiss to not discuss the lack of visibility Kurna culture has throughout the field of colonial incursion. During a studio visit with Sue she mentions the number of research documents that disregard First Nations Peoples reinforcing this undercurrent of misrepresentation, misguided information and sheer ignorance to the rich culture and history Aboriginal people have held (and continue to value) with Country for centuries. Many sites around Sauerbier House notate the settler's history blatantly ignoring the community who has nurtured it well before white settlement made their claim.

With this knowledge underpinning Kneebone's research what we see in her practice is a courageous confrontation of the layers and undercurrents at play. By taking physical materials of a site—something that held historical meaning to one, whilst remaining of deep cultural value to another, Kneebone intentionally aligns the narratives of many unspoken stories. This imagery; sometimes shadowy and weightless or stark and demanding empowers its viewer to reconstruct these stories whilst proposing disentanglement, colonial forgetting and unlearning.

By physically representing this 'history'— one that represses any engagement with fundamental truths of land and people, Sue Kneebone's artworks and practice-led research encourages empathic connections. These installations and sculptural forms are an act of memory retrieval.

Unmoored Memories is a nuanced reading of the complex relationship we hold with memory and place. Unlike other forms of text, art-making can represent the

absence of meaning and the act of colonial forgetting. By incorporating found objects from various reconnaissance trips around Sauerbier House and the Onkaparinga River Kneebone has created a point of departure. As opposed to providing an answer or solution this installation encourages the viewer to position themselves within the work; to discern and debate the ideas presented and perhaps inspire a deeper engagement with this land that has provided so much, for so many, for a millennia.

Rayleen Forester
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