

Spencer, *Pumphouse*, 1999. Installation detail. Muldura Arts Centre.

Spencer's current installation, *Pumphouse*, invites his quest for audience interaction. The work is divided into three small rooms referred to as the 'quarters': they reflect notions of class and historical spaces. The interconnected rooms house three large photographs depicting FMIT pumphouses. These large red pumphouses, built nearly a century ago, were constructed along the unpredictable Murray River and guard the heart of industry in this district—the irrigation system. As in previous works, Spooner highlights certain elements which give viewers an entry point to what is not an easy space to access. The circle, evident in round windows and architectural details, has been isolated from the photographs, highlighting the significance of all things circular and connected with this region: irrigation pipes, the seasons, ripples in the river and the philosophical issues, and recycling. Circular holes have been physically cut into the carpet and relocated to other rooms (creating wormholes connecting the spaces). The walls have been painted the same murky brown of the river to the height of the dado line. Spooner has used the Chaffey archives and analysed the floral wallpaper in the other rooms of the mansion. Photographs are included on the walls of the 'servants quarters' providing another layer of historical context to the

When you enter the gallery you are greeted by two gleaming and black icons of the irrigator's trade—large pumphouses—perched as if in some curious courting ritual on the river lawns. On entry to the gallery space one is greeted by photographs first and can be absorbed in the details of the cycles evident in them, the circular gaps, the placement of architectural features and ripples create a sky/foliage. There is virtually no signage; the viewer receives a pure visual experience. The fear is that a general audience may miss the significance of the

## the convict and the jew: sue pedley & tess horwitz

Canberra Contemporary Art Space

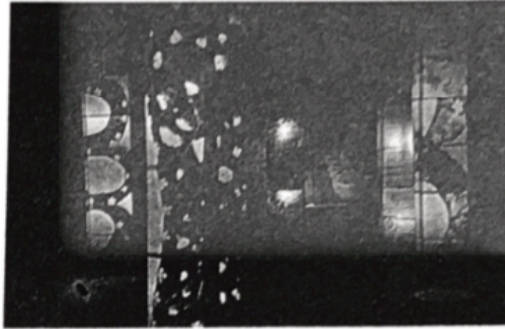
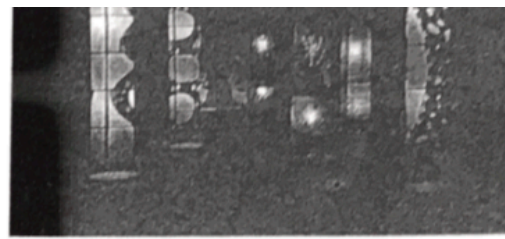
Entering the space of *The Convict and the Jew* is to enter the etched-out familial space of Sue Pedley and Tess Horwitz. Their combined histories are invoked here, cheekily referenced in the politically incorrect baldness of the moniker they have given to their exhibition. Pedley and Horwitz draw on these weighty words to form the framework for their collaborative efforts. However, this is not an exhibition showcasing a political essentialism of the 'Convict' and the 'Jew', but rather appropriates these tags to engage with the nuanced personalised histories of both artists.

These histories are inscribed geographically via their mapping of the space of past familial links. Their work traces a geography of familial ties, realised literally through the charting of their family histories in the space of this exhibition. The work is thus framed by a suggested geography that, incidentally, harks back to the literal localised identity of the convict in Van Dieman's Land and the Jew in Auschwitz. Cartographies are activated in the space through the traces left by photography, drawing, sound and the hushed light that animates these elements. Pedley and Horwitz articulate a mapping through imprinting, inscription, threading, a tying up of loose ends.

Maps and old portraits stain the surface of large paper and canvas lamps that hang in the centre of the exhibition space, giving them an archival terminology. A family tree on an adjacent wall forms a map of names on its branches that sprout across the wall, locating each family member in its hierarchical space. The marks of inscription of these family topographies in the exhibition are the residues of the artists' sifting and sorting through the stories that mark out family histories. They are the leftovers; the visible artefacts of this rehabilitation of family.

As such, the process by which marks are made, whether literally or through the 'mark' a family makes upon one, is important here. This emphasis on process, on the process of reaching into a family history to map its relations, is actualised in the whirlwind of activity encountered on the walls as one first enters the space. Whirls of branches spring from the wall, strings tumble over notational drawings, and remnants of crumbled plaster line the edges of the floor. A thread of sound stretches out the noise of scratching and scabbling, testimony to the sounds of 'making'. These traces are a mapping of their process, their procession through the past, memories retained along the way.

Combined, the work of Pedley and Horwitz forms a palimpsest of histories in the space, layered atop one another to echo through the generations that are invoked here. In this sense, the stories that Pedley and Horwitz 'uncover' are those of erasure and reinscription, mapping specific histories through the accumulation of lore about them. To what extent, then, are they constructed through storytelling and myth-making?



Sue Pedley and Tess Horwitz, *The Convict and the Jew*, 1999. Installation views. Top: Lamps and family tree. Paper, photographic processes, batik, perspex. Above: Lamps and family tree. Paper wire lights, perspex, wood, plastic.

Pedley and Horwitz construct a mapping of histories made personal through identification with them. The tentative nature of this identification is reflected in the apparition of the family tree; which floats, backlit, upon an opaque white screen. There is the sense that in this insubstantial state it could dissolve and reconfigure, tumbling the tidy array of names affixed to its branches onto the ground in disarray. This installation is an acknowledgment of the overlapping intertextuality of the artists' histories, not grounding any one interpretation. Pedley and Horwitz leave a trail of breadcrumbs for us, then vanish. But not without a trace.

isabella reichert

## tears of ecstasy: danielle thompson

Stills Gallery, Sydney

The real measure of a poetic image is in its reverberations.

Gaston Bachelard<sup>1</sup>

Bachelard evokes a wave-like image to define the poetic—and he assigns this reverberation a sonorous quality. Such a description allows for the consideration of time, space and movement in the contemplation of certain types of images. But it also suggests that the first point of perception is a *bodily* one. Sonority is a quality heard and felt, it is a vibratory response that arises first from the senses before being intellectualised. Poetic reverberations might be experienced as small, imperceptible ripples of sensation or as a full-bodied upsurge—a wave of feeling.