

MoMento

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History of Other Places



Documenting the Past and Present

Anita Tótha

As human beings we are born with an innate curiosity. At first, the discovery of the surroundings in which we are raised in help shape who we become as adults. Then, as we become older, we develop an interest and the means towards exploration of unknown and foreign places. Explorers with an insatiable desire for adventure, such as Ferdinand Magellan, Vasco da Gama, Jeanne Baré, Harriet Chalmers Adams, Jacques Cousteau and Edmund Hillary travelled the world near and far, contributing significantly to our knowledge of geography, anthropology, history, botany and animal studies as we know them today. In modern times, some of these bold adventurers had cameras in hand. In previous centuries, they came prepared with paper and pigment to draw people and places in their journals, in an effort to document the exotic and otherworldly – to record exactly what they saw, framed within their world view.

Photographers and photographic acts embody the human fascination with unknown lands and potential discoveries. The photographic endeavour plays out within a wider quest for knowledge and understanding. Photography started with the invention of ‘light paintings’ and camera obscura, but as technology developed over time, photographers eventually had the ability to capture the image of a person, place or time on film in an instant. Roger Fenton famously photographed *The Valley of the Shadow of Death* during the Crimean War in an effort to report what was happening on the war front. Eugène Atget obsessively documented Paris before parts of the city were demolished in an early attempt of modernisation. Robert Frank showed us what America looked like in the fifties from an outsider’s perspective. Marti Friedlander and Ans Westra depicted New Zealand as they saw it in the sixties and following decades. All of these images are now a distinct part of our photographic history.

With each photograph featured in this issue of *MoMento*, the authoring photographers continue the tradition of exploration and discovery, portraying the history of a place through their lens.

In *From A Changed North* German-born, Australian photographer Katrin Koenning returns to where she grew up in the Ruhr region of Western Germany, which is compromised of urban-industrial cities including Dortmund, Essen and Bochum. Her photographs depict a place that was once familiar and thriving, now in a state of decline.

Becky Nunes is the observer in her series *The Graveyard Snail*. The place is Grafton Gully, under the Grafton Bridge, a place hidden away from view and long forgotten about as the inner city of Auckland continues on its daily routine. A contentious site for Aucklanders to this day, the area still embodies associations of life and death, past and present and spirituality.

Australian photographer Jessie Boylan continues her exploration of Victoria’s goldmines, where the mineral was discovered in the mid-eighteenth century. In the series *Fourteen Ounces II*, she overlays historical images of the gold rush with her own images taken in the same location. Each image provides a different perspective of the land, collectively showing where history has occurred.

During dictator Enver Hoxha’s nearly forty-year rule in Albania (1944–85), some 700,000 bunkers were built, one for every four Albanians. The bunkers were originally constructed in an effort to prevent possible invasion, one that never arrived. Wayne Barrar’s series of photographs entitled *Hoxha’s Bunkers* documents the Albanian landscape that is littered with these bunkers and what they have been transformed into to suit today’s resourceful Albanian.

In *Aukati—Boundary*, Shelley Jacobson documents the area in and around the Mangatawhiri stream, which once marked the 1863 boundary between the Kingitanga territory in the Waikato and British occupied areas in the north. A seminal point in the Waikato Land Wars, the area is steeped in history and importance, adding to the fragments remaining from New Zealand’s colonial past.

As the viewer of these images taken in fascinating places, one can start to piece the photographs together as history in the making. The second the photographer clicked the shutter, the image on the film/sensor became a part of the past – the photographer’s attempt to preserve their discovery and reflect upon what they saw.

Katrin Koenning
From A Changed North



Katrin Koenning, *Bus Stop #1, Werne*, 2010

From A Changed North documents the social, cultural and economic implications of history and change in Germany's formerly industrial Ruhr area. KK



Katrin Koenning, *Kiosk #1, Felsenmeer*, 2010

Becky Nunes
The Graveyard Snail



The Graveyard Snail was created as part of the larger *Co-orbital* project (pilgrimsprogressdotme.wordpress.com). This work has hinged on a series of visits to a single place and a process of co-authorship; an openness to what has been offered up at each visit. The site is Grafton Gully, a transitional landscape that has registered our varying preoccupations with nature, death and the movement of people and things. Drilling back into the timeline of this place reveals a series of excavations, modifications, transgressions and re-purposings. There exists an oscillation between disturbance and equilibrium, *tapu* and *noa*. In this place I am at once observer and catalyst, forager and witness. Images and text form a digital book (www.thegraveyardsnail.com). This provides some insight into the provenance of the objects and the ways in which they orbit and intersect each other, opening out interpretations of the larger photographs and moving image that form the *Co-orbital* project. BN



Jessie Boylan
Fourteen Ounces II



The discovery of gold in the Victorian Goldfields in the mid 19th century attracted an unprecedented population rise and caused an enormous housing and economic boom in the region. Today, the impacts of the gold rush are still present in our landscape, environment, towns, wealth and psyche. These disused mine sites and diggings have left multiple scars on the landscape that tell a story of settler Australia and its destiny. By layering photographs from the gold rush era with images taken today, I am exploring how the land was changed by the gold rush and how it has regenerated over time. JB



Jessie Boylan, *Gold Mining Scene/Red Hill, Forest Creek Diggings, Victoria, 1861-2014*

Wayne Barrar
Hoxha's Bunkers



Wayne Barrar, *Caravan and bunker restaurant, Durres beach, Albania, 2011*

The series *Hoxha's Bunkers* documents part of a network believed to have involved some 700,000 bunkers constructed in Albania by that country's former dictator, Enver Hoxha. Motivated by an increasing sense of paranoia, Hoxha ordered the construction of bunkers at a ratio of approximately one bunker for every four Albanians. Their crippling cost of production is matched today by the steep costs of removal. Consequently the bunkers have often been recycled and commodified, serving as cafes, bars, rubbish dumps, and animal housing, among many other local uses. Others have been broken up to extract reinforcing steel. Only recently have they been systematically removed in some areas as an attempt at erasure. WB



Wayne Barrar, *Roof of bunker, road to Elbasan, Albania*, 2011

Shelley Jacobson
Aukati—Boundary



Shelley Jacobson, *Behind SH1 (verge)—Territorial boundary prior to the Waikato Land Wars*, 2014

The Mangatawhiri stream near Pokeno marks the 1863 boundary established by Kingi Tawhaiao separating British-settled areas to the north and Kingitanga territory to the south in the lead up to the Waikato Land Wars. When British troops invaded the Waikato by crossing this border in July 1863, war commenced. In the intervening years, the wetlands and waterways of the area have been drained and a reduced Mangatawhiri stream at Te Aukati Ki Mangatawhiri runs under what is now SH1. This isolated section of riverbed and scrub backing on to the highway is the subject of the series *Aukati—Boundary*. SJ



Shelley Jacobson, *Behind SH1 (riverbank)—Territorial boundary prior to the Waikato Land Wars*, 2014

Contributors

Wayne Barrar

Wayne is an Associate Professor at the School of Art at Massey University, Wellington. His photography has been widely exhibited and published since 1984. His publications include the books *Shifting Nature*, University of Otago Press, 2001; *An Expanding Subterra*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2010; and *Torbay tī kōuka: A New Zealand tree in the English Riviera*, University of Plymouth Press, 2011. Work from *Hoxha's Bunkers* has been exhibited recently in the US and published in *Cabinet* journal in conjunction with an essay by New York based project collaborator David L. Pike. www.waynebarrar.com

Jessie Boylan

Jessie is a photomedia artist based in Castlemaine, Victoria. Her work explores the human impact on the land and its inhabitants in relation to environmental and social devastation such as nuclear testing, mining and war. She also looks at ideas of history and place in relation to contemporary Australian identity, community and activism. www.jessieboylan.com

Shelley Jacobson

Shelley is an Auckland based artist. Her work is a series of creative explorations in cultural geography. She completed a Master of Fine Arts at Massey University, Wellington and a Diploma of Publishing through Whitireia New Zealand. As of 2014, Shelley assists with PhotoForum's publishing activities. www.shelleyjacobson.co.nz

Katrin Koenning

Katrin is a German-born, Melbourne-based photographer whose work is exhibited internationally. She is a curatorial adviser for Wallflower Photomedia gallery and a lecturer at Photography Studies College, Melbourne. www.katrinkoenning.com

Becky Nunes

Becky is a founding member of New Zealand photography collective Tangent and an award-winning commercial and editorial photographer. Her self-directed work engages with landscape, object and cultural memory. This work has been shown in galleries and publications both nationally and internationally. Becky is currently Head of Department for Photography at Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design in Auckland. www.beckynunes.co.nz

Anita Tótha

Anita is a photographer, curator and writer originally from New York. She attended the School of Visual Arts in New York City, where she majored in photography. She completed internships with photographer Simen Johan and the Yossi Milo Gallery and subsequently worked at the gallery. Anita is currently based in Auckland and is co-founder of Tangent, a New Zealand photography collective. She also runs the Auckland branch of The Photobook Club. Anita recently contributed writings to *Feature Shoot*, *Pro Photographer* magazine and *D-Photo* magazine. www.anitattha.com

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PhotoForum is a non-profit society dedicated to the promotion of photography as a means of communication and expression. Membership is open to all photographers and those interested in supporting the objectives of PhotoForum. www.photoforum-nz.org



Featuring

Wayne Barrar

Jessie Boylan

Shelley Jacobson

Katrin Koenning

Becky Nunes

Essay by Anita Tótha

Edited by Shelley Jacobson