

*Thomas A. Rivard*

# POINTS OF DEPARTURE: THE MYTHO-POETIC LANDSCAPE OF COCKATOO ISLAND

08

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper describes a project entitled Points of Departure, which forms part of a practice-led research investigation into how existing urban space might be both read and written using fiction, narrative and physical interventions. Through key artists and writers such as Poe, Greenaway, Carter, and Piranesi, and a description of an interrogative design process on Cockatoo Island in Sydney, this paper offers insights into how re-mappings, narrative insinuations and operative instruments might harness forces instead of producing forms. The project work was undertaken as both a creative exploration and a pedagogic experiment: five students undertaking an intensive design studio conducted initial exploratory work, my interpretations of which provided the narrative basis for the project. Through these implied fictions, coupled with my own cartographic explorations, I generated “portraits” of the Island (conflating myth and place), which in turn generated briefs for full size instruments made by the students. Finally, responding to these instruments, I created a series of architectural vehicles.*

*The processes employed in the project and described here did not aim to negate the existing spatial structures of Cockatoo Island but rather acted as an aleatoric, dissonant shifting of parameters to create dynamic relationships between place and its constituents. These imperfect reflections of place created a fluid field of multiple representations, an indeterminate space that prompted novel points of departure for spatial experiences. At the same time they invited an active individual response – a ‘wandering’. This wandering, in which reality is discursive and space and ritual are imperfectly conflated, provokes personal interpretations of space. These disconnected moments of understanding, this paper suggests, offer speculative re-interpretations acting on urban territories in pursuit of spatial openness, generative processes, and ultimately the means by which we can actively perform and participate in the city.*

## BIOGRAPHY

*Thomas A. Rivard is the head of the Sydney-based studio Lean Productions ([www.leanproductions.com.au](http://www.leanproductions.com.au)), a multi-disciplinary practice fabricating interventions, buildings, objects and fables, and bringing together myriad collaborators in pursuit of the impossible and the improbable. His work in the fields of performance, architecture, installation and media re-imagines the potential links between provocative cultural acts and the urban environments in which they thrive. He teaches regularly in Sydney’s universities, coordinates the Urban Islands program ([www.urbanislands.net](http://www.urbanislands.net)) and is undertaking a PhD at UTS.*

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Andre Breton posited that creative works, and our subsequent engagement with those works, create an elusive conceptual territory between what things are and what they seem to be.<sup>1</sup> The project **Points of Departure** aims to explore that territory: how it might be discovered and inhabited and, then, how it might give rise to methods, which use the fictive, the qualitative and the illusory as seminal ingredients, to both read and write the city. These acts of reading and writing are intended to operate less as methodologies dedicated to built form than as discrete and discursive operations generating the means by which the city and its constituent narratives can be realised in parallel to its material reality.

The first part of this paper describes some of the key theoretical considerations behind the project through the work of several artists and authors who conflate narrative and physicality. The project site, Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour, is then introduced, along with narrative and programmatic overlays informing the project. The second part of the paper presents a brief overview of the various processes and stages of the project undertaken, and the outcomes developed. The accompanying document outlines these creative stages in greater detail, and describes the subsequent itinerancies of the work, the projects' own migrant 'wanderings'.

## PART 1: OBSERVATIONS

The conceptual territory within which **Points of Departure** developed draws on various accounts of and forms of engagement with the city, ranging from fictions and

theoretical reflections to drawings of and installations within the city. First among these is the work of Edgar Allen Poe. Poe's work, with its impenetrable crowds and unfathomable spaces, illustrates an attempt to personally navigate, through fiction, the experiential space of the city.<sup>2</sup> The city fascinated and inspired Poe, and he framed it as a place of sheer experiential density coupled with narrative inscrutability.<sup>3</sup> However, unlike Poe's unwitting perambulators we too easily assign to (or demand from) the city a spatial, material clarity that constrains both our personal interpretations and sense of individual ownership of the city. In contrast, Walter Benjamin, attracted by the idea of urban obscurity (and its presumed attendant dangers) believed that in the case of Poe's work structure was more important than plot. Benjamin prized the indeterminate pursuit through the city described in Poe's stories, and the discovery of unknown and incongruous elements in the midst of Poe's crowds.<sup>4</sup> In the project described below, these 'incongruous elements' are explored as an operative strategy for making insinuated narrative implicit in creating the space into which the reader (or city dweller) travels.

This strategy is embodied by Peter Greenaway's project *The Stairs/Geneva: The Location*, in which 100 white wooden staircases were deployed around the city over 100 days, each holding a viewport framing a "living picture postcard" accompanied by a short commentary.<sup>5</sup> Inspired by the desire to activate the audience and the city concurrently, Greenaway's intent was to induce a sense of narrative de-familiarisation coupled with a heightened consciousness of one's orientation in space.<sup>6</sup>



01:  
Peter Greenaway, *The Stairs/Geneva: The Location*. Photo: Christophe Gevrey



02:  
Steven Young, *View of Cockatoo Island, Sydney Harbour*.

Greenaway's project challenged the authority of the frame in cinema; *The Stairs* privileged the participant who, while conscious of performing the act of viewing, 'performed' the project itself, and, by extension, transformed the city into a collection of singular points of imagination and themselves, as viewer, into an active participant in the work. The deployment of the work in Geneva was therefore less a singular 'writing' of the city than the deployment of a series of entry points offering access to an open-ended and changeable narrative, one constructed according to each participant's looking.<sup>7</sup> While the 'audience' was transformed into multivalent active participants the instruments of looking, the apertures held by the staircases, created an alternative version of the city, one continually oscillating between the fictions established by the viewers and the facts re-presented by the commentaries. In this way, in both interpreting the city and writing new personal narratives upon it, *The Stairs* became both a map and an instrument of erasure through superimposition, creating gaps to be filled by the audience's personal imaginings. The emergence of both the multiple access points provided by the staircases and this indeterminate imagined territory thus created a different kind of territorial map, one both accommodating and inviting a fundamental "unknowability."

As in Greenaway's project, the aim here is to represent the familiar in a manner that reveals the possibilities of the unfamiliar contained within. In this sense the work presented here recalls that of the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico. Vico believed that Cartesian cartography could only provide a mechanical description of the world; to move beyond this required the use of the language or fabric of a mythological past as a discursive framework for development.<sup>8</sup> In 1762 the Venetian engraver Giovanni Battista Piranesi, a contemporary of Vico, published his *Ichnographia Campi Martii antiquae urbis*, a series of etchings showing a map of the Forum of ancient Rome. Though containing recognisable monuments, Piranesi's map bears no literal resemblance to Rome, either ancient or 18<sup>th</sup> century; containing such imaginary marvels as the gates to the Underworld, Piranesi's map depicts the real city as contiguous with one located in imagination and prehistory.<sup>9</sup> Here, as in Vico's thinking, the primitive and mythic are revealed to underlie the physical fabric of the city.<sup>10</sup>

Piranesi's work thus assumes a critical dimension, actively resisting scientific objectivity in favour of a

city still informed by speculations, allegations and narrative, instead of simply 'facts'.<sup>11</sup> In Piranesi's rendering the *Campo Marzio* contains within it the real and the unreal, the past as well as an unrealised future. As a critical fragmentation of time and space, the map posits a disjointed geography of excisions and allegory, and conflates recognisable locations with mythic sites in a representation, crucially, open to personal interpretation.<sup>12</sup> In this way, as suggested above, Piranesi's map anticipates both Poe and Greenaway through its construction of a city greater than its constituent elements and infused with collective mythmaking based on an underlying mytho-poetic palimpsest,<sup>13</sup> "an intricate network of sites of interpretation."<sup>14</sup> Rather than a literal depiction of territory, Piranesi's narrative mapping alters the geography, scale and content of the city to both discover and re-present spaces of indeterminacy, and to invite the reader to fill in the various gaps.<sup>15</sup>

In this sense **Points of Departure** establishes a mytho-poetic landscape. Daedalus' labyrinth, that place of infinite wandering, is here taken to be the origin of the city,<sup>16</sup> its indeterminacy promising openness, or infinite possibilities for individual interpretation.<sup>17</sup>

## PROJECT SITE: COCKATOO ISLAND

The physical territory, part of the mytho-poetic landscape, is Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour, the largest of several islands in the Harbour that were originally heavily wooded sandstone outcrops. From 1839, following British colonisation in 1788, Cockatoo Island operated as a prison within a prison, a place of sequestration (as no prisoners could swim)<sup>18</sup> for recidivist convicts originally transported from Great Britain. Prisoners were employed to build their own barracks, as well as grain storage silos cut by hand from the Island's sandstone.<sup>19</sup> From 1857 onwards, the island was one of Australia's biggest shipyards; it comprises the nation's most extensive built record of shipbuilding, naval engineering and industrial practices from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1869 the convicts were relocated and the prison complex became an industrial school and reformatory for girls, as well as a vocational training site for orphaned and wayward boys, who were housed on a ship moored alongside the island.<sup>20</sup> After 1908 the island became exclusively a naval dockyard until its eventual decommissioning in 1991.

Paradoxically the very nature of Cockatoo Island led to its demise; its geographic isolation proved inefficient for modern shipbuilding. After 1991 the island lay vacant for fourteen years, access prohibited, its physical infrastructure decaying. John Jeremy's multi-volume history of the island dockyard evocatively describes this trajectory from a crowded place of intense, colossal and highly complex fabrication to an abandoned, quiescent ruin.<sup>21</sup> The material history of Cockatoo Island can, then, be presented in three stages:

**Prison**, a place of confinement, carved out of stone by its own inmates, from which flight was deemed impossible. In this state, no one left the Island.

**Dockyard**, a constantly expanding workshop transforming materials into machines. Significant aspects of the operations included the drawing of the ships (often at full scale), sectioning (the cutting of the parts) and the joinery (assembling the parts). Ongoing modifications to the island continued to accommodate these operations: cutting, excavating, extending and erasing the physical fabric, both built and geologic. The ultimate products of these operations were vessels for the Royal Navy that left the Island, permanently.

**Vacant Site**, an urban ruin with both physical and psychical qualities emerging as the island became increasingly detached from the city, both operationally and conceptually. In this state, no one went to the Island.

In this final state Cockatoo Island is a *terrain vague*, a site of interpretation receptive to the construction of an imaginary that is, also paradoxically, specific to that place. As defined by Ignasi de Sola-Morales, *terrain vague*, with their lack of use and spatial potentiality, exist as zones of latency within the city: voids as absences, but also as promise, as spaces of encounter. These spaces are inherently uncertain or indeterminate: they are discontinuous spaces in which non-use is seen simply as cultural obsolescence. Here memory, coupled with expectation, is the dominant characteristic, and as Sola-Morales points out "the Romantic imagination which still survives in our contemporary sensibility feeds on memories and expectations," finding in them opportunities to establish new personal narratives, of "the other, the alternative, the Utopian, the future."<sup>22</sup>

In 2005, Cockatoo Island's gradual rehabilitation as a public event space and site of cultural curiosities began. The island has since become an experiential museum of sorts, home to the Sydney Biennale, myriad other arts and music festivals and many other programs and events of cultural production and creative imagination. This constantly shifting calendar of disconnected events, coupled with the inevitable (if photogenic) mismatch between contemporary culture and the industrial architecture of the island, results in an artifice, a disjunction between site and experience, a product of a compositional operation which the surrealist artist Max Ernst characterised as "the union of two apparently incompatible realities."<sup>23</sup> In this sense Cockatoo Island comes to embody something of Peter Greenaway's thinking on the museum. Greenaway characterises the museum as inherently a site of surrealist operations in which the curatorial project creates new juxtapositions between objects wildly separated in time and space.<sup>24</sup> In this project this surrealist curatorial act, already unwittingly begun with the cultural programme on Cockatoo Island, becomes a specific strategy for re-imagining the island.

A second strategy for the project, building on the description of alternative representational techniques described above, is a strategic meandering through space to excavate its latent potentials, or a 'drift' originating from the Situationists' most renowned urban strategy, the *dérive*. As Tom McDonough notes in his reconsideration of the Situationist movement, for the Situationists the city was less a conjoined physical structure than a series of discontinuous points of potential "reciprocity and community."<sup>25</sup> This rethinking of the city is made manifest in the series of maps produced by the Situationist International in the late 1950's, in which isolated islands invite personal wanderings. However, McDonough suggests that underpinning these individual responses to a physical territory invoked by the maps was a profound interest in the city as a source of history, not chronologically ordered but as a repository to be excavated. The "secrets held within the urban landscape" were to be unlocked by wandering through the city, by the act of *dérive*.

Some further developments of the idea of the drift are explored in Paul Carter's study of migrancy and myth. In Carter's work the drift has an essential role in understanding place, especially in disturbing the order



of colonial place-making and place marking. For Carter places are seen as discursive constructs and the drift, characterised as a track or trace, is neither a delineation of space nor an erasure of what has come before. His two descriptions of trace are valuable here in highlighting the objectives of the project. Carter's first 'trace' is the material record of a place, the marks on a landscape infused with a history of their making, a writing without text.<sup>26</sup> On Cockatoo Island, the extensive (and often violent) material excisions and fabrications are traces of the island's brutal history and keys to its easily romanticised past. The various manipulations, containments, sequestrations and exclusions of water, and the penetrations and excisions of stone, the two primordial constituent elements of the island, remain evident across Cockatoo, and these traces are, to restate McDonough, the island's "secrets locked within its landscape."

Carter's second description of trace invokes a line of purpose, a process that incorporates movement into place-making, in opposition to the line as delineation. This line of purpose derives from the notion of migrancy as a form of settlement that does not erase earlier forms of settlement, but rather retains something of their memory as a history of movement. Cockatoo Island is implicated in a material history of migrations, either to the island in the form of convicts and (later) industrial materials, or from the island in the form of stone and, eventually, highly complex warships. However, more significant in this history of migration is the island's disconnection from the continuous history of Sydney.<sup>27</sup> The abandonment and continued estrangement of the island from the city, and the rehabilitation of the island as a site of discontinuous, ceaseless curation ensures that all visitors are now migrants to Cockatoo Island.

## SUBJECT: DAEDALUS

The myth of Daedalus forms a framework for the mythopoetic status of Cockatoo Island. Daedalus was, first and foremost, a migrant. Banished from ancient Athens for killing his nephew, he subsequently found refuge in the employ of King Minos of Crete. His personal history mirrors that of Cockatoo Island, but like all reflections, reversed. Daedalus gained renown in Athens for sculpting statues so lifelike and animated that they needed to be chained in place lest they, according to Socrates, "play truant and run away." As Indra McEwen notes in

*Socrates' Ancestor*, this chaining down suggests a shift from privileging motion to valuing fixity (a conflict at the root of Carter's second description of the 'trace', and migrancy as opposed to settlement). We might consider, then, in reaching back to the pre-Socratic figure, to the unchained statue, an elevation of personal experience over established knowledge.<sup>28</sup> Daedalus, that master artificer, values the experience of making over the rules of making or the thing made.

In the second stage of his history, as apocryphally the first architect, Daedalus was in service to Minos, commander of the most powerful navy in the known world. In this role Daedalus designed fortifications, piers and seawalls, reifying the boundaries and thresholds of Knossos. He was also instrumental in the design and fabrication of the ships of the King's navy, being credited with inventing the prow,<sup>29</sup> and as McEwen notes the term *daidalon* (referring generally to a built work but also to the cutting up and joining together of parts) applied to armour, but especially to the fabrication of ships.<sup>30</sup> Most notoriously, Daedalus was responsible for the hollow cow into which the Queen secreted herself for her union with the White Bull, the offspring of which, the Minotaur, would never leave the island.

The final stage of Daedalus' history was that of prisoner. Minos imprisoned Daedalus, with his son Icarus, in a prison of his own making for his various transgressions (creating the false cow, but also assisting Ariadne by providing her with the ball of thread by which Theseus navigated his way out of the labyrinth). For Daedalus, the labyrinth ceased to be the archetypal place of wandering, a place of infinite chance and opportunity, and became a place to leave, from which to become migratory by transcending the physical boundaries of place.

## PART 2: OPERATIONS

Paralleling both the material history of Cockatoo Island and the personal history of Daedalus, the creative explorations undertaken in **Points of Departure** followed three distinct phases, the processes and results of which were recursively folded back into subsequent explorations.

**1. Situation and Insinuation** – Migratory explorations on Cockatoo Island and narrative interpretation of the discoveries.

**2. Transformation and Projection** – Narrative remodification of sites on the island and the invention of spatial instruments and animate vessels supporting these plans.

**3. Exodus and Installation** – Departure from the island, and deployment of an alternate Cockatoo Island in the city.

Concurrent with these three material explorations was the production of an operative drawing, combining reconstructions of the island with the multiple new realities being developed. As John Berger offers in his essay “Drawn to that Moment,” the drawing, once freed from the burden of static representation, allows for the recognition of both time and space, and the “simultaneity of a multitude of moments.”<sup>31</sup> The drawing (*Table of Contents*) was inspired by the Mould Loft on the island, a building where cutting templates for the ribs (and later steel plates) of ships were set out using a network of hand-drawn lines scored into and annotated on the timber floor, leaving an overlapping tracery of years of calculations and fabrications.<sup>32</sup>

In his book *Dark Writing*, Paul Carter insists that in order to recognise (and preserve) the constantly evolving nature of place, we must draw differently, incorporating relationships, histories and movement.<sup>33</sup> Cartographic practices that reduce Cockatoo to a single dimensionless line bounding space eliminate the possibilities inherent in an abstract or shifting threshold where the relationship between water and land is constantly changing. The drawing above began by incising the changing perimeter of Cockatoo Island from its original state before major alterations began in 1790 to the present day into a timber door recovered from the island.<sup>34</sup> This operative drawing of the island’s thresholds involved a mapping of the ways in which land meets water; this act, offering a spatiality to the edges, allowed the coast “line” to take on a dimension, and by extension become both territorial and relational.<sup>35</sup> Through this drawing the mutability of the island is made clear, and a necessary pre-condition for understanding the island established, where the island is no longer seen as a static figure, but rather as a shifting territory engendering constantly evolving potentialities.

This initial series of markings established the operative boundary spaces of the project – the divergent thresholds of Cockatoo. Rather than a cartographic tool to simplify complex and incompatible conditions, the door-as-drawing board evolved into an instrument to both accommodate incongruous discoveries and a discursive surface on which to plot the trajectories and outcomes of emergent investigations.

## 1. SITUATION AND INSINUATION

In phase 1 of the project, exploratory wanderings of Cockatoo Island were undertaken by a group of students engaged in the design studio run concurrently with the development of this creative work. Incongruous conditions and elements were discovered and these conditions were re-presented in narrative terms to augment purely visual observations.<sup>36</sup> From these discoveries and re-presentations, narratives were constructed using both the real and imagined histories of the occupations of Cockatoo over time. These narratives became myths in which the incongruous elements, their new characterisations, or the experiential qualities revealed by these elements featured in the subsequent inhabitations of the island.<sup>37</sup>

Using these meanderings, discoveries and narratives as new means of interpreting the island, characters from the Daedalus myth were situated within particular locations on the Island. In this way these sites, both cuttings and constructions achieved by manual labour, conflate the immediately present and the altogether elsewhere, and offer new tectonic and affective qualities complementing (or implicating) those archetypes associated with them.<sup>38</sup> The correspondence of these mythological archetypes with sites on the island constructed new situations, both specific to physical conditions of place but also redolent with poetic potential. This synthesis of concerns incorporates the corporeally exact and illusory narrative, as in Giambattista Vico’s description of place-making as a poetic endeavour. As Carter notes, Vico’s combination of the literal and the symbolic, *ingegno*, depicts disconnected, divergent aspects of spatial constructs.<sup>39</sup>

In the final stage of this first phase of the project these site-archetype confluences on Cockatoo Island became the subjects for a series of experimental depictions, or “portraits.” Using a series of materials (chalk, oil, inks) applied on 100 year old slates recovered from the island,



these depictions layered a number of secondary physical considerations over both the portrait of the archetype and the physical sectioning of a particular location.<sup>40</sup>

While occupied with the figuration of both site and character this process of portraiture, conflating archetype and location, also aimed to escape material and mythological characterisation and to generate a series of briefing instructions. These instructions associated with each conflated pair (i) a sense, (ii) an operation (deriving from either the archetype or procedures enacted upon the site), (iii) a tectonic or spatial condition interpolated from those actions, and (iv) a piece of music linked to each brief. Finally, a migratory program was attached to this information for each site/archetype/project. These “programs” were not functional briefs *per se*, but rather concepts for episodic or operative spatial instruments (to be developed independently by the five students) along with a suggestion as to how the spaces might eventually perform.<sup>41</sup>

## 2. TRANSFORMATION AND PROJECTION

From the briefs above full-scale instruments were created within those new narratives being developed for Cockatoo Island, as well as accompanying texts outlining the relationship of these instruments to the island and describing their role in facilitating departures from it.<sup>42</sup> These imminent departures developed as strategies for “leaving” the island, that is, for transferring both the project’s concerns and its speculative outputs from this idealised place to a wider urban context. Critical to this operation was a graphic strategy reversing conventional cartographic techniques, namely that of the marine coastal survey conducted using rhumb lines and triangulation.

Prior to the invention of chronometers (which allowed sailors to accurately establish their position at sea), seafarers relied on rhumb lines, bearing lines that allowed a constant course without changing direction. Early oceanic navigational charts feature interlocking networks of these rhumb lines drawn across the surface of the ocean, providing (in theory, though often much less accurately in practice) direct connections to the coastlines of distant islands.<sup>43</sup> These trans-oceanic lines were the products of centuries of surveying from sea via triangulation, however, as Carter notes, exact positioning

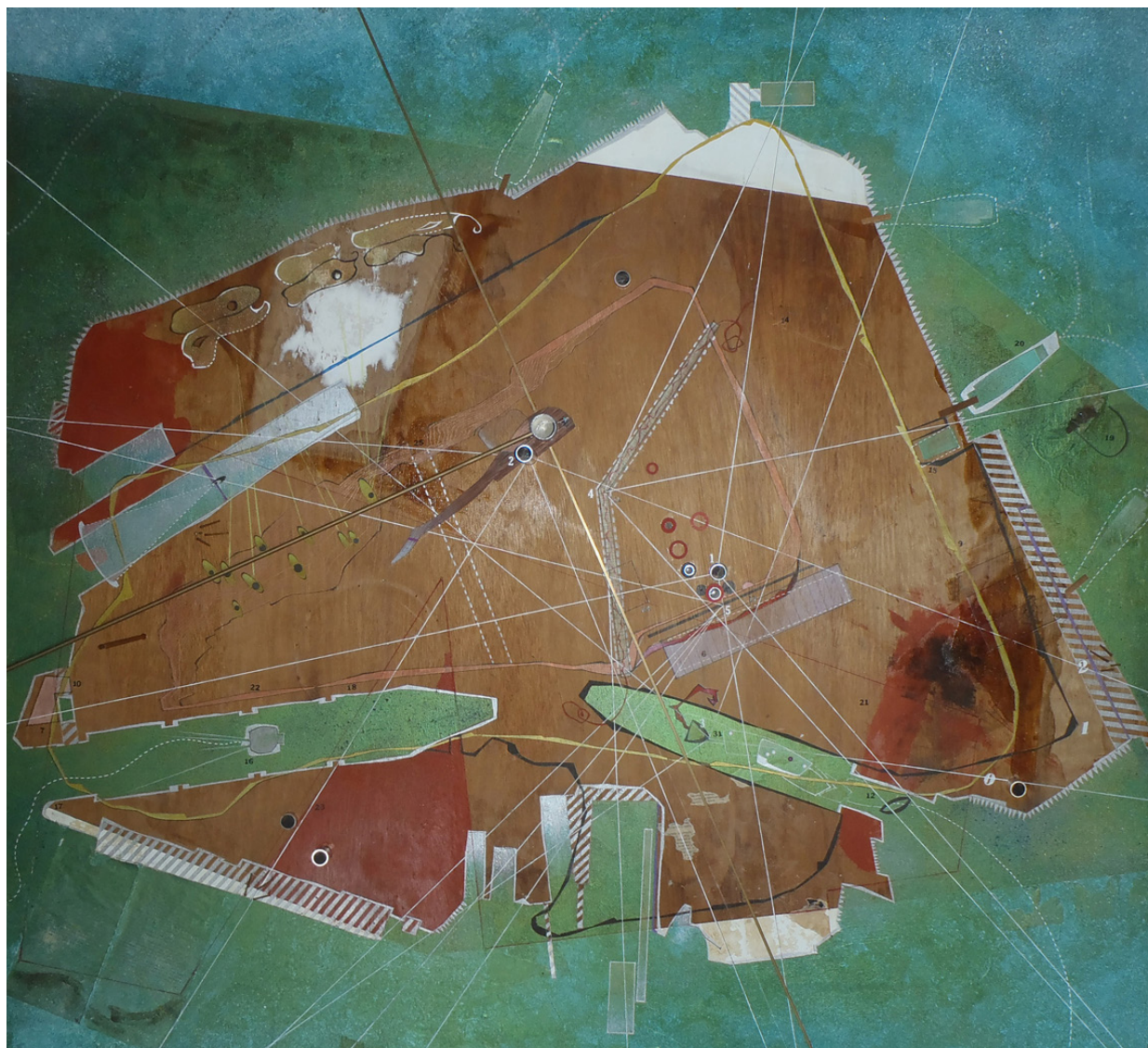
could not be assured and many of these maps contained gaps where no definitive coastline could be established. These gaps, as unknown sites, became potential sites of discovery, promising, as they did, the possibility of harbours, rivers or other inlets that might offer a way into the new country.<sup>44</sup> In this project, similar gaps, the areas where the line does not exist as a definitive bounding line, but rather as a littoral *zone*, became the points of departure: they became architectonic thresholds of movement.

Each of the selected sites on the island was mapped against a particular threshold relating to the briefs deriving from the portraits. However, instead of navigating via rhumb lines from a point at sea oriented to cardinal axes, here the bearing lines originated from specific locations on the island, and oriented themselves to the associated threshold conditions around the perimeter of the island. Treating these thresholds as fluid interfaces between land and water, having both a spatial and an operational dimension, the applied lines of movement did not terminate at an invented coastal line, but rather continued off into the harbour, projecting paths of migratory desire from the Island.<sup>45</sup>

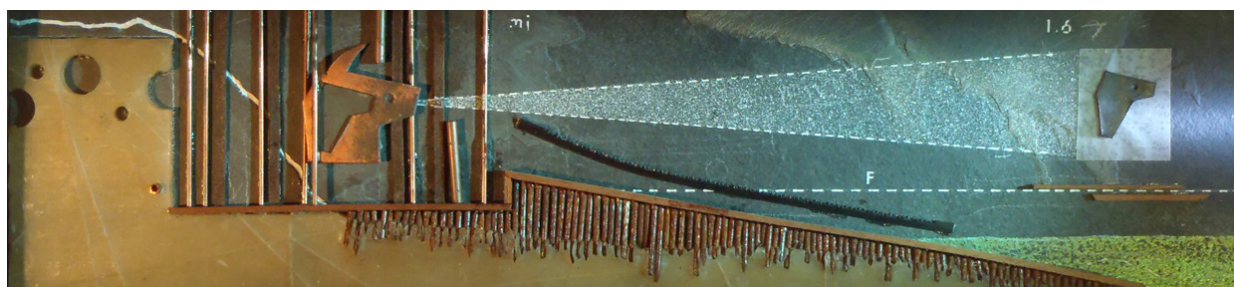
## 3. EXODUS AND INSTALLATION

Having determined these points of departure the various thresholds were taken as the basis of a series of migratory instruments. The programs for these instruments again derived from the portraits, and from the operations of the one-to-one instruments (and associated narratives) produced for the installation. This combination of the abstract and evocative with the highly specific and operational continued the process begun with the portraits, however in this instance in reverse; instead of excavating from concrete realities they sought to construct a set of projections from inferred conditions. These projections became instruments focusing operations away from the island, but still deriving their operational motives from the tectonic and spatial situations on the island.<sup>46</sup>

The migratory ‘vehicles’ were developed and presented through a series of sectional maquettes, each established through a cross sectional cut through those thresholds derived above. These thresholds, as the launching points for the migratory vehicles, were the basis of the



03:  
Thomas Rivard, *Table of Contents, Cockatoo Island*.



04:  
Thomas Rivard, *Vitreous Cinema, Cockatoo Island*





05:  
Thomas Rivard, *Minotaur*.

amphibious tectonics for the vehicles and the basis of the relationship between the changing surface (and level) of the Harbour, the conditions of ground from which the vehicle departed and the negotiation between these two conditions.

The various vehicles, instruments and drawings developed over the course of the project<sup>47</sup> were installed in a former prison cell in Sydney.<sup>48</sup> These artefacts were not static exhibits, but rather demanded an active engagement from the viewers requiring physical manipulation in order for their contents to be revealed. An interactive soundscape was installed around the perimeter of the cell, consisting of recordings taken around the perimeter of Cockatoo Island, the sounds of water and land meeting, and synchronised to the geometry of the space. As participants moved towards the edges of the room, the volume increased, recreating within the confined space of the cell the aquatic threshold of the island.

## NOTES

- 1 As Breton notes:  

'Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions.'

Breton, André. 1972. *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp.123-124
- 2 Vidler, Anthony. 1992. *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, p.4
- 3 Smith, P. D. 2012. *City: A Guidebook for the Urban Age*. New York: Bloomsbury, p.165
- 4 Gilloch, Graeme. 1996. *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*. Cambridge UK: Polity Press, p.141. Criminality as a means of erasing oneself from the constituents of the city also became an operative practice: the Situationists considered the *derivé* a subversive activity in large part because they did not shop.
- 5 Greenaway, Peter. 1995. *The Stairs: Geneva the Location*. London: Merrell Holberton, p.18
- 6 Elliot, Bridget & Purdy, Anthony. 1997. *Peter Greenaway: Architecture and Allegory*. Chichester: Academy Editions, p.92
- 7 Willoquet-Maricondi, Paula & Alemany-Galway, Mary. 2008. *Peter Greenaway's Postmodern/Poststructuralist Cinema*. New York: Scarecrow Press, p.48
- 8 Pérez-Gómez, Alberto. 2008. *Built Upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp.89-90
- 9 Bloomer, Jennifer. 1993. *Architecture and the Text: The (S) crypts of Joyce and Piranesi*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, pp.67-70
- 10 The context for Piranesi's work – which seemingly proposes destruction, restoration and reconstruction concurrently – is, as Aureli notes, the 15<sup>th</sup> century tradition of *instauratio urbis* (literally "the instalment of the city") and attempts to restore the form of ancient Rome. The Enlightenment loomed over these romantic re-readings of Rome, challenging antiquarian scholarship with scientific (predominantly archaeological) knowledge. This archaeological knowledge was recruited to supplant the myths of ancient knowledge with empirical methods free from ideology: cartography sought to replace the allegorical narrative of maps with the exactitude of objective data. This is exemplified by Giovanni Batista Nolli's *Nuova pianta di Roma*. Nolli used the most current measuring instruments and techniques to create (fourteen years before Piranesi's plan) the first cadastral map of Rome, purporting it to be a comprehensive map of the "real" Rome. So treasured was Nolli's plan for its putative accuracy that it was used by the city of Rome's planning department until 1973.
- 11 Aureli, Pier Vittorio. 2011. *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp.108-115
- 12 Bloomer, Jennifer. 1993. *Architecture and the Text*, p.70
- 13 Yourcenar, Marguerite. 1980. *The Dark Brain of Piranesi, and other essays*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, p.90
- 14 Bloomer, Jennifer. 1993. *Architecture and the Text*, p.72
- 15 Vidler, Anthony. 1992. *The Architectural Uncanny*, p.37
- 16 Jormakka, Kari. 2005. 'The Most Architectural Thing', in *Surrealism and Architecture*. Thomas Mical (ed). New York: Routledge, p.293
- 17 In the same manner, Gilles Deleuze held that this labyrinth, in its manipulations of both time and space, could be an instrument to eliminate the literal: instead of cartographers, we need to be "cryptographers," to decipher the connections between fissures in physical matter and our personal insinuations into those gaps. Deleuze, Gilles. 1993. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.3
- 18 With one exception: the only known escapees from the Island, Frederick Ward and Frederick Britten, successfully swam to the mainland in 1863. Ward later achieved renown as the notorious bushranger Captain Thunderbolt.
- 19 Manual quarrying by these convicts provided stone for major projects around Sydney, and between 1847 and 1857 this conscripted labour force was used to construct the Fitzroy Dock, the southern hemisphere's first dry dock.
- 20 Jeremy, John. 2005. *Cockatoo Island: Sydney's Historic Dockyard*. Sydney: UNSW Press, pp.2-6
- 21 Jeremy, John. 2013. *The Island Shipyard: Shipbuilding at Cockatoo Island 1870 to 1987*. Sydney: Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, p.305
- 22 Sola-Morales, Ignasi De. 2002. 'Terrain Vague', in *Territories*. Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gill, pp.108-9
- 23 Ernst, Max. 1948. *Beyond Painting, and Other Writings by the Artist and His Friends*. New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, p.13.
- 24 Pascoe, David. 1997. *Peter Greenaway: Museums and Moving Images*. London: Reaktion Books, pp.208-9. Greenaway's own curatorial works seek to subvert the temporal linearity and material authority of traditional institutions by fragmenting historical narrative and celebrating the quotidian. This subversion of the museum is also a recurring theme in the work of the surrealist artist Joseph Cornell, who collected, collated and curated disparate found objects into miniature collections contained in boxes. In these works Cornell ignored any sense of chronology, liberally combining "subjects from different contexts, countries, and epochs, comfortably placing living and long-dead figures side by side." Hauptman, Jodi. 1999. *Joseph Cornell: Stargazing in the Cinema*. New Haven, CA: Yale University Press, p.12.
- 25 McDonough's re-thinking of the Situationist International focuses principally on their legacy of spatial thinking rather than their critique of the visual spectacle. McDonough, Tom. 2009. *The Situationists and the City*. London: Verso, pp.9-12
- 26 Carter, Paul. 2004. 'Mythforms: Techniques of Migrant Placemaking', in *Drifting: Architecture and Migrancy*, Stephen Cairns (ed.). London: Routledge, pp.88-90
- 27 Carter, Paul. 2004. 'Mythforms', p.91
- 28 McEwen, Indra Kagis. 1997. *Socrates Ancestor: An Essay on Architectural Beginnings*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp.5-6
- 29 Nyenhuis, Jacob E. 2003. *Myth and the Creative Process: Michael Ayrton and the Myth of Daedalus, the Maze Maker*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, pp.25-7
- 30 McEwen, Indra Kagis. 1997. *Socrates Ancestor*, p.48
- 31 Berger, John. 2001. 'Drawn to That Moment', in *Selected Essays*. Geoff Dyer (ed). London: Bloomsbury, p.423
- 32 Hyde, Olivia. 2007. 'The Mould Loft', in *Cuttings*. Joanne Jakovich (ed). Sydney: Sydney University Press, pp.111-117
- 33 Carter, Paul. 2009. *Dark Writing: Geography, Performance, Design*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, p.7

34 The threshold conditions mapped:

<b>Seawall</b>	(linear separations)
<b>Ramp</b>	(transitional zones)
<b>Rubble</b>	(fractured surfaces)
<b>Suspended</b>	(layered planes)
<b>Floating</b>	(shifting zones)

These particular elements, and all subsequent developments of the project, are contained in a supplementary document to this paper, presented as a navigable electronic territory. This document outlines the evolution of the creative process, as well as the relationships between its constituent parts.

35 Carter, Paul. 2009. *Dark Writing*, p.75

## 36 Incongruity

## Re-presentation

A. Pairs of sinks	Parallax photography of sinks
B. Material junctions	Casts of gaps between materials
C. Voids under cranes	Volumetric studies of absences
D. Flora growing in cracks	Collection of botanical specimens from the Island
E. Microclimatic shifts	Mouisture and wind mappings around the island

37 Two examples of the implied fictions derived from the site investigations:

A pair of shipworkers in the 1930's, whose relationship developed via furtive meetings at the paired sinks; their (scandalous) desire for union seemingly remaining unfulfilled. Told via a series of (constructed) artefacts: time clock cards showing congruent work shifts over time, archival photographs, and a truncated letter from Sweden in 1980 purporting to tell the story of the author's uncle (one of the shipworkers), but left unfinished...

Danae, a young girl desperate to escape the brutal 1870's reform school, but unable to swim. Relentlessly wandering the Island at night, she slowly discovers the elemental nature of water by sequestering herself in depressions in the sandstone, where the ground water percolates out and over her. Possibly, she escapes the Island by swimming (or drowning), as recounted in the fragments of a diary written by one of her fellow detainees.

38 Selected Cockatoo Island sites and their applied archetypes:

A constricted spatial gap between a 15-meter high hand-hewn sandstone cliff and the largest building on the Island, the Turbine Hall, heroic product of a wartime machine sensibility, becomes the geo-spatial incarnation of the Minotaur, the classical hybrid. The Gap, a literal separation between a violently reconstructed nature and an implacable machine architecture, hovers between two seemingly irreconcilable vectors in the making of Cockatoo, now conflated with a character whose nature is entirely the product of the fact that he is both, and neither, man nor beast. A remote corner of the Turbine Hall is also the location of an isolated pair of sinks, notional site (in the proffered fiction) of the liaisons between the 1930's shipworkers.

**Ariadne**, eldest princess in the Royal household (and keeper of the rituals of rebirth and healing enacted on her dance floor and provider to Theseus of the ball of string by which he navigated his way out of the labyrinth) becomes complicit with the Dogleg Tunnel, another man-made excision of the sandstone of the Island, two straight borings (and their

associated side chambers) into the rock which meet deep inside and under the constantly seeping stone of the Island.

**Phaedra – Water Towers:** the second sister, associated with duplicity, or the concealment of intentions, and the three grouped water towers which, contrary to gravity and liquidity, sequester bodies of water above the ground.

**Pasiphae – Dry Dock:** the Queen, societal incarnation of the fertility goddess, and mother to the Minotaur, and the Fitzroy Dock, a volume carved into water, in which ships were both birthed and berthed, vessels held within invented spaces.

**Theseus – Grain Silos:** the hero, adventurer, wayward son, philanderer, killer, purveyor of brute force and violence, with a patrimony both mortal (Aegeus) and divine (Poseidon); and the bottle-shaped silos carved into the rock of the Island by particularly brutal forced labour.

39 Carter, Paul. 2009. *Dark Writing*, pp.22-3

40 Portraits – the operations involved in the “drawing out:”

A ground line, marking the original profile, or skin, of the Island. A marking or measuring (a Colonial act of “ruling” the earth via Cartesian coordination) of the ground in pursuit of an idealised outcome.

The subsequent enactment of that marking via enforced bodily actions on the Island –the manipulation of stone with hand tools; the outcomes are a deviance from the purity of geometric desire.

The superimposition over these geometries of desire and acts of excavation of the fundamental body part of the archetype central to their roles and actions. Thus, the shoulders of Theseus, the Minotaur's skull, Pasiphae's womb, Ariadne's leg and the duplicitous absence (while present) of Phaedra.

A series of gestural marks in oil and chalk specifying that initial violence inherent in the manual marking, excavation and displacement of stone, followed by the infiltration of water into the resultant voids, understood (in the pre-natatorial Colonial era) as a malign presence.

Architectonic armatures laid on the drawing surface mediating between the idealised (rationalist and geometric) intent for sites and the tangible, man-made results. These structural frames also support shards of glass elevated off the surface of the tiles, which cover the resultant gaps between geometry and reality, creating an illusory picture plane.

Behind the armatures, developed in a language of antiquated mechanical drawing, the suggested presence of a series of machines, each related to the sensations being discovered through the drawing process. These iconographic instruments also bear a trace of the operations inherent in their associated archetypes; they are, correspondingly, (A) a gantry crane, (B) a pneumatic pump, (C) a butterfly valve, (D) a diving bell and (E) a Gatling gun.

Each portrait contains a series of insignias based on the broad arrow symbol (pheon) applied to convicts' uniforms in the penal colony are. These insignias become complicit with particular rituals extracted from the portraits: (A) 7 male and 7 female sacrificial virgins, (B) wine chalices, (C) water level markers, (D) sperm cells and (E) a victory tattoo.



## 41 Briefing instructions and performative programs:

**Minotaur:** a beast, a scandal, a shame, a monstrosity. A cowboy.

Situation: **The Gap** between the Turbine Hall and the sandstone cliff, flanked by the exposed rock of the Island (the surface pulled away) and the concealed interiority of the machine hall (the surface applied). This was once filled with fog.

Sense:	Sight
Operation:	Hybridisation; the impossibility of reconciling idea and reality.
Condition:	Leverage
Accompany:	Stephen Sherril, The Minotaur Takes a Cigarette Break
Migratory Program:	<b>Swith Room (the Afterimage)</b>

**Ariadne:** goddess of nature & culture; abandoned and future bride. Woman.

Situation: **The Dog Leg Tunnel**, connecting the Eastern Apron with the Southern Precinct, where everyone on the Island took refuge when Japanese midget submarines shelled Sydney Harbour in 1942.

Sense:	Touch:
Operation:	Borders cut between sand and water
Condition:	Containment
Accompany:	Leonard Cohen, Avalanche
Migratory Program:	<b>Map Room (Traces)</b>

**Pasiphae:** queen, romantic, miscegenationist. Mother.

Situation: **The Fitzroy Dock**, linking two strands of Cockatoo's history - prison and dockyard. The Dock was built by convicts working in diving-bells at their own pace. The most advanced facility in the colony; vessels were hauled in by man-power.

Sense:	Smell
Operation:	A vessel suspended within a hole in the water
Condition:	Fertility
Accompany:	Tim Buckley, Song to the Siren
Migratory Program:	<b>Dark Room (the Family tree)</b>

**Phaedra:** second sister, goddess in waiting, future Mata Hari. Woman.

Situation: The **Water Towers** on top of the Island made redundant by both the delivery of water as well as its retention and recycling. One short and squat, one tall and statuesque, one a metal box, these containers command the Island.

Sense:	Hearing
Operation:	Invisible concrete voids in the sky
Condition:	Subterfuge and sequestration
Accompany:	Lee Hazelwood, One Velvet Morning
Migratory Program:	<b>Walk on Water (Echoes)</b>

**Theseus:** hero, lover, adventurer. Also: killer, deserter, philanderer. Man.

Situation: 13 (or 15, or 18) **Grain Silos**, cut into the rock in an attempt to corner the fledgling Colony's grain supply in response to shortages brought about by a drought. They were never used for their original purpose. In 1852, 3 prisoners drowned in one.

Sense:	Sight
Operation:	Immersion in an alternate atmosphere
Condition:	Resistance
Accompany:	Joe Jackson, Real Men
Migratory Program:	<b>Water Theatre (the Ship of Theseus)</b>

## 42 Full scale instruments developed for the sites and narratives:

## 1. (Mi) - der Zwischenraum (the gap).

A point of change, of new identity and of new beginnings.

The space is the machine; the machine contains and conceals desire.

Trapped within, extracted from a place invisible to the naked eye, and presented in a place in a constant state of change.

The device is an internally illuminated box, containing a machine whose purpose cannot be fathomed. Through a small aperture on one side of the box, one of the profiles of the men implicated in the dockyard romance is revealed. The viewport on the other side of the box shows the silhouette of the second man, cast by the machine. The two images cannot be seen simultaneously.

## 2. (Ar) - The Serangeum Chambers.

The Dog Leg Tunnel has been harnessed for its condition of retaining water, an attribute that Danae had grown attached to. It is now known as the Serangeum Chambers, made up of 5 rooms following the traditional Roman bathing rituals. These spaces have been carved into the sandstone and then re-framed in timber.

The multi-scalar model of the migrants' bathing rooms depicts the hand basins of the Apodyterium on a 1:1 scale, the foot bathing bench of the Tepidarium on a 1:10 scale and the two co-joined pools of the Caldarium on a 1:50 scale.

## 3. (Pa) - Dissimulo (maternum)

Evolution and mutation: 'camouflage' was genetically developed in order to further investigate diversity as a familial framework. The subconscious layering of history as temporal sediment is complicit with a flow of scent: spore-laden moving air. A temporary accommodation, a memento mori, the vessel exhibits a predisposition to containment, yet slowly reveals it's inner self through decomposition.

Accommodating both growth and decay, the instrument is a temporary seed bank, holding within it a rotating selection of smaller vessels with the collected specimens from the Island, as well as becoming a growing vessel for those seeds that happen to germinate while in the case.

## 4. (Ph) - Reliquary (excavated)

The crane, instrument of shifting perspectives, stands in as a final transit point before dispersal.

The choice to adapt the new? Or a forced removal?

The place to occlude one's identity, an abandonment, leaving behind relics of from a past life.

A collection chest, personal repository of remnants echoing days long past, archaeological in its density and in its fragmentary nature, while also intimating portents for the future. It is impossible to see the contents clearly or completely, only in sidelong glimpses off mirrors.

## 5. (Th) - The Weather Machine

Where the weather machine as a force changes the state of space, or manipulates spatial conditions, so too does that of Cockatoo Island. A point of divergence is discovered when the force of weather acting upon physical matter transforms its original spatial conditions, therefore redefining it. Space becomes a world that is neither defined nor limited by that which encompasses it, because of its transience.

43 Barber, Peter. 2014. 'A Catalan Merchant and his Markets', in *Mapping our World: Terra Incognita to Australia*. Robert Nichols (ed). Canberra: National Library of Australia, p.54

44 Carter, Paul. 2009. *Dark Writing*, p.57

45 Triangulation - rediscovered threshold conditions:

(Mi) Minotaur + the Gap (conditioned by leverage):  
Concrete ramps

(Ar) Ariadne + the Dogleg Tunnel (containment):  
Floating infrastructures

(Pa) Pasiphae + the Fitzroy Dock (fertility):  
Stone rubble

(Ph) Phaedra + the Water Towers (subterfuge):  
Suspended surfaces

(Th) Theseus + the Grain Silos (resistance):  
Sea walls

46 Vehicles – migratory instruments leaving the island:

(Mi) Ramps, Switch Room (the Afterimage), *der Zwischenraum*. An amphibious cinema, images projected from the top of Slipway 1, onto a screen floating on a barge; the audience inhabits the sloping surface in between projected light and received image. In the afterglow, the cinema floats away.

(Ar) Floating docks, Map Room (Traces), *Serangeum Chambers*. A migratory swimming pool, originating at the site of the pool on the Island where reformatory girls and orphaned boys mixed; deliriously it detaches, inscribing new territories, water in water, then returns to land. [This instrument is a deliberate echo of Rem Koolhaas' Floating Pool of the Russian Constructivists from his book *Delirious New York* (1978). The pool as posited by Koolhaas is a heterotopic "enclave of purity in contaminated surroundings," a migratory city block with its contained program.

(Pa) Rubble, Dark Room (Family Tree), *Dissimulo (maternum)*. A tank, a vessel and a mobile market, where soil meets water. Food grown and prepared on the Island is dispatched, waste collected and composted, and a single tree, dispersing its seeds at night, moves across the water.

(Ph) Suspensions, Walk on Water (Echoes), *Reliquary*. A submarine territory, present but unseen, a colloidal infrastructure within the water and under the surface. A stage

without a theatre, impossible ground, where, miracle-free, the cast walks on water. It is not there.

(Th) Sea walls, Water Theatre (Theseus' Ship), *Weather Machine*. A cauldron, an aqueous chamber, a space in which to negotiate difference, and weather personal reflections and community dialogue. A meeting room, a classroom, an operating theatre, a courtroom – a pure interior.

47 List of elements in the installation:

The **Table of Contents**, reconfigured as a lectern, or altarpiece, but slightly too high to view comfortably, necessitating a step up to it.

The **5 Portraits** of site and archetype, also presented on another piece of furniture, displaying the series as iconic artefacts demanding translation.

5 full-scale **Instruments**, narrative characters and operational devices within the narratives of migration developed to leave the Island.

5 sectional constructs showing the **Migratory Vehicles** and their Points of Departure from the Island.

48 **Points of Departure** was initially installed in Gaffa Gallery, an arts centre located in a repurposed 19<sup>th</sup> century police station in the centre of Sydney, for Sydney Art Month, 2013.

## FIGURES

01 Greenaway, Peter. 1994. *The Stairs/Geneva: The Location*. © Christophe Gevrey. Reproduced by permission of the photographer.

02 Young, Steven. 2010. *View of Cockatoo Island, Sydney Harbour*.

03 Rivard, Thomas. 2013. *Table of Contents, Cockatoo Island*. Mixed media on wooden door.

04 Rivard, Thomas. 2013. *Vitreous Cinema, Cockatoo Island*. Wax, lead and steel on slate.

05 Rivard, Thomas. 2013. *Minotaur*. Mixed media on slate.

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