

LOST TO WORLDS

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This work began with a brief visit to Tasmania in 1999. An old friend took me to the site of a former nineteenth-century female factory and told me about another, which I later went to see. These two sites are all that remains of a one-time network of places of incarceration for convict women. Where the Ross Female Factory used to be there is now a sheep paddock entirely open to the sky; the South Hobart site consists of a large empty yard enclosed by a high stone wall. What struck me forcibly was how very little of either place there was left to see.

Last year I returned to each of these places several times. As I photographed and looked and wandered around, ideas formed. Not too many and none of them crystal clear. Somehow this seemed fitting. Gradually I was realising that it was not the past itself that was drawing me, but the broken and fragmentary form in which it comes down to us - and the dilemma of what to make of that.

Everything I saw and felt about the sites during those visits is present - either visible or buried - somewhere in this work. Though its roots are in the past it is more truly about the here and now - about evidence, remembrance, disintegration, photography. If these sites make anything clear it is that a ruined past can never be made whole again. It can only be glimpsed, gestured towards, evoked, conjured, lost again.

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