

Paper summary

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Imogen King is currently completing her PhD at the University of Sydney, studying Eighteenth-century French women and their relationship to print culture. It examines practices of print collecting, curating, making, and patronising, and how these varied uses of prints were employed towards the construction of artistic and social identities.



Ruins in the Garden

Hubert Robert, Jonathan Jones, and False Histories in Landscape

This paper starts with the notion that our environments are understood to hold history, particularly in the form of architecture. Old buildings and ruins allow us to situate ourselves as inheritors of place and help shape our self-understanding. This being understood, what happens when the environments around us, and the architectures they hold, fictionalise or obscure the true history of a site?

To do this I wish to examine French painter Hubert Robert's *Le Temple de la Piété filiale*, and Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi artist Jonathan Jones' installation *Barrangal Dyara*. These are both works which examine how we construct memory in the landscapes around us, with a particular focus on garden architecture as a tool of mythmaking about place.

Hubert Robert is known for his depictions of historical and decrepit architecture, in which the *The Temple of Filial Piety* appears typical. The intrigue of the work lies in the locale of this temple, not as its form suggests in ancient Greece, but rather in a French eighteenth-century landscape. This displacement reveals the structure as a folly or *fabrique*, a false pleasure architecture found in gardens, particularly in the picturesque gardens of 18th Century France. Oft left undiscussed with follies is how, in presenting false historic architecture in an otherwise natural seeming landscape, the narrative of the site and the cultures that occupied it becomes confused. In my work I wish to address this act of displacement as a means of generating 'false history,' and examine how Robert naturalises this obfuscation of the past.

This notion is also traceable in Jones' work, which interrogates the site of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney, and the now destroyed Garden Palace that once occupied it. Jones questions the buildings placement (or rather displacement) in the landscape, as a European structure which falsely narrativized the history of First Nations Australians, and did so within a broader garden landscape which also 'rewrote' the ecological history of place. Jones' installation explores the building as a locus of forgetting and misremembering- and re-replaces architectural form and native flora within the gardens to rekindle knowledge of place. His work turns art into a means through which we can make sense of these now confused environments.

In summary, my work addresses how a longing for visible histories in the landscape can lead to acts of falsification and forgetting. Moreover, it asks how artists can either legitimate or challenge us to understand these altered environments.