

Contemporary Fine Art

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VALERIE SPARKS - ARTIST STATEMENT

PROSPERO'S ISLAND - SOUTH WEST

The landscapes of Tasmania provide a rich source of imagery and material from which to create an interpretation of Shakespeare's Prospero's Island. Prospero's Island - South West is one of 2 works exploring the narrative arch of 'The Tempest' through Prospero's shift from vengeance to forgiveness. The dramatic, unforgiving wildness of Tasmania's south and west coasts are brought together in an unsettling montage of locations to explore the theme of displacement, which is central to both The Tempest and the violent history of Tasmania. The parrot is from the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery collection and represents Prospero, who faces the storm he has created whilst, menacingly and knowingly glancing over his shoulder at the audience and viewer.

LE VOL 4

Le Vol 4 pays homage to the 19th century wood block printed wallpaper 'Le Bresil' (Zuber); a representation of a jungle scene, teeming with bird life. Landscape elements have been sourced from various sites around Tasmania, taken on a series of photoshoots throughout 2015 and 2016. This includes the Tasman Peninsula, Sarah Island, the banks of the Gordon River, the painted Rocks of Maria Island and the lichen covered rocks of Binalong Bay. The birds included in this work were photographed at a number of museums including the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, and the Vienna and La Rochelle Natural History Museums.

The 19th century scenic wallpapers were created during a period of colonial expansion and explored fantasies of travel and a fascination with the exotic. My pastiches revisit these themes in a contemporary context, reflecting on the interconnected spaces and the complex relationships of contemporary global systems. My landscape compositions bring together multiple points of perspective, different locations, times of the day and seasons, collapsing geographical space and time. The complexity and proximity of the diverse ecosystems of the Tasmanian natural environment provide a particularly rich location to explore these themes.

The French term Le Vol translates as flight, flying, theft, robbery, burglary. For the birds in this work, life and flight have been stolen and yet strangely reanimated by the taxidermist. Where as collecting practices have changed dramatically, as implied in the title, the work raises questions about early collecting practices as acts of theft.