# OBJECTS TESTIFY

Joel
Sherwood
Spring

1 August —
22 September
2023

## LIST OF WORKS

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Joel Sherwood Spring
*DIGGERMODE* ( 2022)
Two-channel video installation
00:28:50:00
Videographer: Akil Ahamat
Sound production: Bridget Chappelle
Commissioned by ACMI
Courtesy Joel Sherwood Spring

Tracing the material and cultural implications of extraction and storage, DIGGERMODE is a generative behind-the-servers look into how memory works within platform capitalism.

The work uses artificial intelligence (AI) to depict landscapes in the style of acclaimed Arrernte artist Albert Namatjira being torn apart by mining machinery, and to answer questions like "Who's your Mob?" Presumably, anyone could do this – but should anyone be able to appropriate Indigenous art from the internet? How do we protect our knowledges in digital spaces? Can sand used to make silicon microchips contain memories of Country?

*DIGGERMODE* questions the social and environmental ethics of technology in constructing, storing and sharing our images, whether in surveillance databases, museum archives or online. The work considers the cultural and environmental damage caused by new technology and data storage, grounding the possibilities of 'the cloud' and AI in the broader context of ongoing colonisation.

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Object No. 2019/38/1
Support posts (2) for Fort Phillip Signal
Station flagstaff, wood, Sydney, New South
Wales, Australia, 1850-1930
Powerhouse collection, Sydney Observatory
Collection, 2019

The over-production of agricultural produce in the colony was just as difficult to manage as under-production, and "in the last few years of King's rule, the Isle of France, Tahiti and the outlying settlements were all considered as possible markets".[1]

Agricultural production, as a way of extracting value from the land, was linked early in the colony's history to the global economy. Modes of transportation, via boat or wagon, became tools for restructuring social and spatial relationships to land and water.

1          Roberts, Stephen H. *History of Australian land settlement (1788-1920)*, Macmillan & Co., in association with Melbourne University Press Melbourne, 1924.

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Object No. 7176
Model furnace, lime kiln, periodical furnace for limestone burning, wood/metal, made by J Schröder Actien-gesellschaft, Darmstadt, Germany, c. 1880
Powerhouse collection, Purchased 1884

Object No. A7841
Presentation trowel in case, various materials, maker unknown, England, given to Judge Josephson for laying foundation stone of Christ Church, Enmore, New South Wales, Australia, 1880-1881
Powerhouse collection, Gift of Royal Australian Historical Society, 1981

Object No. P417-1
Object lesson card and frame, part of collection, 'Pearl Oyster and Pearl Mussel', framed, seashell/guanine/wax/cardboard/ glass/wood/paper, published by Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1880-1884
Powerhouse collection, Purchased 1884

The history of Architecture in so-called Australia, or at least a part of this history in the south-eastern coast is a history of cement or calcium oxide, known as burnt lime. Cement mortar is used in masonry structures including the composition of bricks. It is also the binding agent in concrete which is the most ubiquitous building material in the world today. In the context of Warrane/ Sydney, this cycle operates at another scale when we consider where the lime came from.

> It is true that the old kitchen-middens, or shell heaps, of the blacks were then numerous on the banks of the river, but these were very quickly removed to Sydney [where they were used for lime]. Settlers up the river were compelled to dredge for the shells they required ... by hand ... large quantities of enormous mud oysters were obtained by convict labour from the foreshores of the river.[2]

2        Hibble, Walter. 'Early history of Ryde and Surrounding District'. Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, V.3, No. Pt. 6, 1916: 277-8.

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Object No. 87/946
Head of pick, mining tool, maker unknown, place of production unknown, date unknown, used on Hill End or Sofala goldfields, New South Wales, Australia, c. 1870
Powerhouse collection, Gift of G Hempstead, 1987

Object No. H9573
Leg manacles, hand-forged, iron, Australia, maker unknown, c.1800 - c.1899
Powerhouse collection, Gift of Royal Australian Historical Society, 1981

Object No. A11050
Board game, 'Race to the gold diggings of Australia', linen/wood/paper, maker unknown, England, 1850-1869
Powerhouse collection, Purchased 1984

R*ace to the Gold Diggings of Australia* is the earliest known board game that uses "Australia" as its theme. The game board features an oval track representing the sea voyage from Britain to Australia. In the game, children can race each other from Plymouth, in England, to Port Phillip, a stepping-off point for the Victorian gold fields.

We take for granted the relationship between information and the economy. But that relationship had to be constructed at a moment when political economy became policy in the 19th century. In tracing minerals to their origins, understanding their properties, and thinking about their potential economic uses, the players learn to think as an economically entrepreneurial subject. Extraction is a game.

On the colonial frontier, digging was the way to economise a settler's most important asset; their bodies.

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Object No. 86/613-4
Box, for set of anthropometric instruments, wood/metal/textile, maker unknown, France, 1850-1880
Powerhouse collection, Purchased 1986

Object No. 2017/51/78
Standard grain weights with case, 1oz to very small, made by L Oertling, London, England, date unknown
Powerhouse collection, Gift of Department of Services, Technology and Administration, Sydney, 2010

Gunter's chain
Courtesy The Nguyen Collection of Anglo-Australian Arts

The colonial survey of this continent's land and its inhabitants is ongoing, and the tools of evaluation have always been mobile.

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Object No. 2007/62/4
Silicon wafer, silicon/plastic/metal, used by
Australian Nuclear Science and Technology
Organisation, Sydney, New South Wales,
Australia, 1980-2007
Powerhouse collection, Gift of Australian
Nuclear Science and Technology
Organisation (ANSTO), 2007

Object No. D.46228
Spodumene, lithium aluminium silicate
Ravensthorpe, Western Australia
The Australian Museum Collection

Object No. D.60737-001
Silicon-refined
The Australian Museum Collection

Object No. D.60736
Quartz crystal group with molybdenite,
silicone dioxide, Kingsgate, New South Wales
The Australian Museum Collection

Object No. DR.106
Limestone, Calcite, calcium carbonate
Jenolan Caves, New South Wales
The Australian Museum Collection

Object No.D.36858
Columbite, iron manganese niobate
Londonderry, Western Australia
The Australian Museum Collection

Object No.D.15325
Cobaltite, cobalt arsenic sulfide
Carcoar, New South Wales
The Australian Museum Collection

Object No. D.46260
Millerite, nickel sulfide, Kambalda, Western
Australia, The Australian Museum Collection

As a philosophical discipline, geology is a
history of ideas about the origination of the
earth and being. Lithium, nickel, cobalt and
silicon are key components in batteries
and electronic storage essential to the
production of electric vehicles, solar panels
and smartphones. In Australia today those
who extract lithium present it as a step
towards a decarbonised planetary body,
and yet to exhume lithium requires the
destruction of another kind of body - the
body of Country.

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