



Therese Ritchie, *They all look the same to me*, 2021, digital inkjet-print on paper, 50 x 80 [image], 64h x 91.6w cm [paper], Charles Darwin University Art Collection; CDU 3404

Presented by Charles Darwin University Art Gallery

An exhibition by

**Therese Ritchie**

# YOU ARE HERE

**10 June - 28 August**

**2021**



*YOU ARE HERE* is an exhibition with truth-telling at its core. Artist, Therese Ritchie factually examines Australia's frontier wars and the massacre of Indigenous peoples alongside the nation's history of coal extraction and infrastructure development implemented by European settlers, mining companies and successive Australian governments. *YOU ARE HERE* is an unflinching examination of how we got to where we are now.

Created in 2020-21, *YOU ARE HERE* makes apparent Ritchie's intense discomfort with the processes of land appropriation that resulted in the formation of the Australian nation. This body of work is Ritchie's interpretation of Australia's national history since 1770. Her evocative use of visual digital imagery – much of which is sourced from familiar historical paintings of Australian landscapes and events documenting Europeans in Australia – is overlaid with text and timelines that account for a litany of events, misdemeanours, atrocities, discoveries, manoeuvres and ploys that lead us to this culminating moment in Australia's history. *YOU ARE HERE* prompts wider conversations about truth-telling, care for country, the implications of mining and, issues of recognition about Indigenous sovereignty.



Therese Ritchie (b.1961) *It's a gas!* 2021  
Digital inkjet print on paper  
50h x 80w cm [image]; 64h x 91.6w cm [paper]  
Charles Darwin University Art Collection; CDU 3420

Art and activism exist in equal proportions in the artistic art practice of Therese Ritchie. As an activist, art is the tool of Ritchie's social action.<sup>1</sup> Her art prods, impedes, directs and intervenes in the social, environmental and political structures that surround her. Since early exhibitions such as *You are not from here are you?* (2000), Ritchie has produced a prolific and, at times, confronting body of work.<sup>2</sup> Her ability to provoke reactions, thought and discussion through her powerful imagery – sublime and disturbing in equal proportions – has reached its apogee in *YOU ARE HERE*.

Born in Newcastle in 1961, Ritchie arrived in Darwin in 1980 and commenced her studies of photography at the Northern Territory University (1981-84; now Charles Darwin University) under the tutelage of Martin Munz. In 1989, she taught photography to Indigenous students in Borroloola and began to appreciate the different ways her students viewed and photographically recorded their Country. In time, Ritchie's photography found its efficacy in graphic arts, including political posters. Her creative collaborations with Chips Mackinolty and Peter Cook led to the trio forming Green Ant Research Arts and Publishing in 1990. A decade later, Ritchie spread her wings and studied animation at Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne (1999). After returning to Darwin she undertook a Master by Research in Visual Arts at CDU (2003-04). Her research culminated in her first solo exhibition of digital 'fine art' prints, *Ship of fools* which Ritchie described as her attempt to convey her experience of living in a 'crash site'.<sup>3</sup> Most aspects of life in Northern Territory can be likened to war zones that are the outcome of the cultural collision between colonised and coloniser.<sup>4</sup> In *Ship of fools* Ritchie's technique of appropriating colonial historical images was first used and she has continued to explore this method.

Although photography, especially portraiture, remains a vital part of Ritchie's creative repertoire she has increasingly delved into the digital realm. Ritchie's creative process relies on an Apple Macintosh computer and digital design software (Illustrator, Indesign, Photoshop, Painter, Clip Studio) in place of a 'palette and paint'. Her creative process involves collecting images, colours, shapes or elements that she manipulates into a pastiche, before she digitally 'over-paints' them. It may take several weeks to collage an image or series of images together. In some instances, she draws onto a collage; either directly using a Wacom tablet and pen or by hand onto paper (which she later photographs and digitally imports into the image). Ritchie's imagery is incrementally built-up, layer upon layer, until it becomes apparent that it is deserving of 'painting' and refinement.

The 'drawn and painted' digital images that are incorporated in Ritchie's exhibition, *YOU ARE HERE* often reference paintings by colonial landscape artists – such as John Glover (1767 England -1894 Australia), Eugene von Guerard (1811 Austria - 1901 Australia) and George

1 The terms 'Artist' and 'Artivism' emerged from a 1997 gathering of Chicano/a artists from East Los Angeles and Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico and art spaces such as Self-Help Graphics, a print studio in East Los Angeles. See also Chela Sandoval and Guisela Latorre, "Chicana/o Artivism: Judy Baca's digital work with youth of Color." in *Learning, race and ethnicity*. Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2007.

2 This exhibition was presented at 24 HR Art, Parap, Darwin; see Joanna Barrkman 2010. "Busy little Insects: working at Green Ant" in *Not dead yet – a retrospective exhibition: Therese Ritchie and Chips Mackinolty*. Darwin: CDU Press, pp. 20.

3 This exhibition was presented at the Karen Brown Gallery, Darwin; Therese Ritchie 2004. *Ship of fools* exhibition catalogue. Darwin: self-published by the artist, p. 4.

4 Sylvia Kleinert, 2005. 'Crash sites: Rod Moss and Therese Ritchie' in *Artlink Magazine*, <https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/2032/crash-sites-rod-moss-and-therese-ritchie/> (accessed 15 May 2021).





Therese Ritchie (b.1961) *Mutant*, 2021  
Digital inkjet print on paper  
50h x 80w cm [image]; 64h x 91.6w cm [paper]  
Charles Darwin University Art Collection; CDU 2423



John Glover (1767-1849) *Ben Lomond from Mr Talbot's property - four men catching opossums*, ca. 1934  
Oil on canvas  
76.8 x 114.9 cm. Private collection



Therese Ritchie (b.1961) *You reap what you sow*, 2021  
Digital inkjet print on paper  
50h x 80w cm [image]; 64h x 91.6w cm [paper]  
Charles Darwin University Art Collection; CDU 3409



John Glover (1767 – 1849)  
*At Moulting Lagoon, East Coast, Tasmania*, 1838  
Oli on canvas 75.6 x 113.0 [image]  
National Gallery of Victoria, 2011.11  
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Stubbs (1724 England – 1806 England) - whose European sensibilities shaped their perceptions and representations of the Australian landscape and fauna. Ritchie considers the imagery of these artists as emblematic of how European cultural and belief systems were layered onto pre-existing Aboriginal world views, and obscured Aboriginal ways of seeing and relating to Country. According to Ritchie, 'I strip those early paintings back or juxtapose contemporary images on top of them and collapse time because I still think a lot of things that were happening then are still happening now, but in different ways.'<sup>5</sup> This incorporation of European landscapes into Ritchie's contemporary artworks destabilises and inverts the colonial gaze. It asks the viewer to consider how historical encounters and views continue to be perpetuated in modern-day Australian life, values and relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as well as relationships to the natural environment.

The complementary inter-relationship between image and text is apparent in Ritchie's oeuvre, attributable to her graphic design experience. *YOU ARE HERE* is an experimental exploration by Ritchie, who has relied heavily upon large-scale chronological timelines - printed on Photo-Tex<sup>®</sup> and attached to the gallery walls - that incorporate her imagery as well as text that recounts selected events and facts that convey her interpretation of the nation's history.<sup>6</sup> An upper-timeline documents the growth of coal mining and its associated infrastructure development in Australia. The lower-timeline conveys the parallel reality of massacres enacted upon Indigenous Australians as well as frontier wars and forcible land appropriation. With oppressive black backgrounds and white font, Ritchie juxtaposes these conveying these dense and disturbing timelines as 'my thesis about black and white race relations in Australia'.<sup>7</sup>

*YOU ARE HERE* is activism at its best. Ritchie's art is again poised to generate comment and discussion, but most importantly, it asks us to respond to the critical question of "What do we do now?"

Dr Joanna Barrkman  
Exhibition curator | Curator, CDU Art Collection and Art Gallery

**Warning:** Please be advised that the content of this exhibition may cause distress to viewers - especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

5 Interview with Therese Ritchie by Joanna Barrkman, 15 April 2021, Nightcliff, Darwin.

6 The largest timeline measures 240 high x 800 wide centimetres. Photo-Tex<sup>®</sup> adhesive fabric is a 95% block-out media with a bright white finish that is compatible with solvent, eco-solvent, and UV-curable ink. Photo-Tex<sup>®</sup> sticks to any nonporous flat surface.

7 Interview with Therese Ritchie by Joanna Barrkman, 15 April 2021, Nightcliff, Darwin.



## Therese Ritchie

Ritchie is Alumna of Charles Darwin University. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Graduate Certificate in Education, and a Master of Visual Arts by Research, awarded in 1986, 2002 and 2004 respectively. She was awarded a Graduate Diploma in Film and Television/Animation – Victorian College of the Arts in 1999. CDU Art Collection holds the largest collection of Ritchie's artwork in Australia. Ritchie was the recipient of the Freemantle Print Award in 1996 for her poster *Hadomi Timor* (Peace for Timor). In 2007, she was Artist-in-Residence at 18<sup>th</sup> Street Centre in Los Angeles, USA. Artworks by Therese Ritchie are represented in the following Australian public collections: Araluen Arts Centre, Artbank, Charles Darwin University Art Collection, Flinders University Art Collection, Gallery of Modern Art Queensland, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, National Gallery of Australia.



Therese Ritchie (b.1961) *Mining is sacred*, 2021  
Digital inkjet print on paper  
50h x 80w cm [image]; 64h x 91.6w cm [paper]  
Charles Darwin University Art Collection; CDU 3405

For further information: [www.thereseritchie.com](http://www.thereseritchie.com)

Therese Ritchie - selected exhibition credits include:

- 2020 *Lead in my grandmother's body*, Therese Ritchie with Sean Kerins, Jack Green, Nancy McDinny and Stewart Hoosan; see [www.leadinmygrandmothersbody.com](http://www.leadinmygrandmothersbody.com)
- 2019 *Therese Ritchie: burning hearts*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Northern Territory (solo exhibition)
- 2017 *Open cut*, Therese Ritchie with Sean Kerins & Jack Green, Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Darwin, Northern Territory
- 2017 *Love*, Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Darwin, Northern Territory (solo exhibition)
- 2016 *Blacks in the back, cunts in the front*, Outstation Gallery, Darwin, Northern Territory (solo exhibition)
- 2015 *Pride NT: our queer history*, Northern Territory Library, Darwin, Northern Territory (group exhibition)
- 2012 *Contemporary Australia: women*, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Queensland (group exhibition)  
*Roads cross: contemporary directions in Australian art*, Flinders University Museum and Art Gallery, Adelaide, South Australia, and Charles Darwin University, Darwin, Northern Territory (group exhibition)
- 2010 *Not dead yet: a retrospective exhibition of Therese Ritchie and Chips Mackinolty*, CDU Art Gallery, Darwin, Northern Territory
- 2009 *Animal show*, Karen Brown Gallery, Darwin, Northern Territory (solo exhibition)
- 2007 *Peace*, Karen Brown Gallery, Darwin, Northern Territory (solo exhibition)
- 2005 *Beautiful*, Karen Brown Gallery, Darwin, Northern Territory (solo exhibition)
- 2004 *Ship of fools*, Karen Brown Gallery, Darwin, Northern Territory (solo exhibition)
- 2000 *You are not from here are you?* 24 Hr Contemporary Art Space, Darwin (joint exhibition)

**CDU Art Collection** preserves and documents the visual arts of the Northern Territory through the acquisition of artworks, in various mediums, created by First Nations and non-Indigenous artists based in the Northern Territory or with connections to region. The collection also includes artworks from Indonesia and Timor-Leste. Comprising of more than 3,400 artworks, the CDU Art Collection is presented in public exhibitions and on-campus displays. The Collection is accessible as a teaching and learning resource.

**CDU Art Gallery** presents an annual program of exhibitions in its state-of-the-art gallery located within the University's Casuarina campus, Darwin. These exhibitions are professionally curated by CDU staff or are incoming-touring exhibitions from other Australian cultural institutions.

Curator, CDU Art Collection and Art Gallery  
Dr Joanna Barrkman

Collections and Exhibitions Officer  
Eileen Lim

[www.cdu.edu.au/artgallery](http://www.cdu.edu.au/artgallery)

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