



**Louise Flaherty**  
***Memorial for Forgotten Plants***  
**1 September - 14 November 2018**  
**Exhibition Space Residency**  
 Presented in partnership with the City of Adelaide

Image: Louise Flaherty, *forgotten plants* – Adelaide CBD, 2018, white ink on black paper, dimensions variable, photo: Daniel Marks

## Getting to know you: a memorial for forgotten plants

In another year the plains of Adelaide were Kurna country striped with walking paths and dreaming tracks and dotted with campfires and bark shelters. There were lots of dogs and children, good feasts and dancing. This went on for so many years that all the local plants would have been known, their uses, their qualities, their habits.

In another year the book *Wildflowers of South Australia* with 20 images drawn by Fanny de Mole was published. Her goal was to show “the flowers with which we daily meet in our grounds and with which we would gladly make our friends in England familiar.” That was in 1861.

In another year Dorrit Black’s uncle J.M. Black, who was born in Wigtown in Scotland in 1855, botanised all over South Australia making a four volume *Flora of South Australia* published volume by volume in the 1920s much of which is still used today and which he then revised, almost finishing it before his death in 1951.

In another year I walked the streets of Adelaide with my dog Skeeter looking for weeds to collect and take home. I was thinking of the weeds as being something like the people from all over the world now making homes in South Australia. I also collected beer coasters and painted rudimentary portraits of the weeds on the coasters which were then left in pubs, scattered like weed seeds. This project was shown at Format Gallery on Peel Street in a group exhibition called *little weeds: small acts of tenderness and violence* curated by Lisa Harms in 2010.

Among the weeds which I researched through J.M Black’s first 1909 book called *Naturalised Plants of South Australia* was an especially interesting cosmopolitan one called purslane, also called pigweed or munyeroo, which is both global and an inland Australian native plant used by Central Aboriginal people who collected the seeds and ground them for flour. It is a great source of omega3 oils, was used by Ancient Persians and in Elizabethan England and is eaten today in the Mediterranean. It probably grows under your clothesline in summer. It does under mine.

In another year *Memorial for Forgotten Plants* Louise Flaherty's participative and experimental residency at the Mill asks us all to look and notice what is growing around us and in particular to think about the plants that were living on the square mile of Adelaide before it was paved and urbanised, a process which only started in 1836.

Louise has hung most of the actual plants upside down from lengths of string around the walls. Their bodies make delicate and exquisite corpses. The voices of the plants that are thus present express both infinite variety and a firm sense of endurance. Over her residency she has also made many paintings of them in black ink on white paper, with white ink on black paper and in black and white on the pages of an old gardening book. With her mentor Laura Wills she has constructed a large chocolate lily image on the wall from cut-up Adelaide street maps. Louise and Laura also pasted up heaps of photocopies on the wall outside in Angas Street of the plant paintings made in workshops by children in black and white in a wide range of styles that emphasize the many different ways we can look at plants and think about them.

The more you walk and the more you look the more you see. Most of us would know some of the 86 plants on the list of local plants used by Louise. A few are rare, a few are uncommon, one is vulnerable, one is endangered. The plants are not extinct or lost just out of mind and Louise has told me that a strong by-product of doing this work is that now she now notices them when she sees them in gardens or parks. It is like recognising a friend. Thus the work of art and the close attention it needs and produces reinforces connection and responsibility, pleasure and knowledge.

This reminds me too of my own experience with the weeds, who are always waving at me from all kinds of places all over the world, and of the words of John Ruskin that Bernard Smith used to close his great book *European Vision and the South Pacific* that was first published in 1960. Words which remind us to think global and act local.

"If you can paint one leaf you can paint the world," he wrote though I wonder whether it could be reworded to: "When you paint one leaf you are painting the world."

Stephanie Radok, 2018

## Louise Flaherty *Memorial for Forgotten Plants*

*'I am currently working on a project titled Memorial for Forgotten Plants. From my initial research into the original flora of the western suburbs on the Adelaide Plains, I have now shifted my research and work on the Adelaide CBD area, which consists of a list of 86 plants. I have been creating memorials for these plants that rarely exist in their natural environment; having been taken over by introduced species. These "memorials" have been depicted in the form of ink drawings, collected plant specimens and paper installations. I have also invited participants, including children and other artists, to contribute to a wall of drawings depicting plants from this list of 86 plants. One collaborative piece involved Laura Wills and I creating a collaborative wall piece highlighting the chocolate lily (*Arthropodium strictum*). A lot of my work in the gallery is a work in progress and still evolving. The work is about highlighting native plant conservation as well as mourning the loss of the original landscape that is no longer here.'* Louise Flaherty

**Artists Biography** Louise is an artist and arts worker based in Adelaide. She studied Visual Arts at the South Australian School of Art, receiving first class Honours. She was a Founding Director of Downtown Arts Space, and has worked at the South Australian School of Art and as the Arts Program Manager at Barkly Regional Arts in the Northern Territory. Louise recently undertook a mentorship with artist Laura Wills, focussing on community engagement and participatory practice. She has an upcoming residency at Sauerbier House.

**About the program** The Mill's *Exhibition Space Residency* program is presented in partnership with the City of Adelaide. The program positions artistic process to the fore, allowing audiences direct access to creative research and making. During this residency The Exhibition Space operates with a studio-like mentality where knowledge arises through participation and experimentation. This is our second Residency, following on from our inaugural Exhibition Space Residency John Blines, *memorias exspirare*.

### Thanks to contributors:

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