A stutter in the landscape

Dr Rob Garbutt
Research Seminar

Date and time: Thursday 8 October 2015, 2:00pm-3:00pm
Venue: Building 500.1102AB, Curtin University, Bentley
Book your free seat: By Monday 5 October 2015 by going to robgarbutt.doattend.com

The Centre for Human Rights Education and the Department of Communication and Cultural Studies at Curtin University invite you to a research seminar with Dr Rob Garbutt, teaching-research scholar at Southern Cross University.

Rob's research interests are in cultural studies pedagogy, research methods and projects that work at the intersections of place, identity and belonging. Rob has a BSc in Pure and Applied Chemistry (UNSW), a Masters of Adult Education (UTS), a PhD in Cultural Studies (SCU) and regards himself as a bricoleur in the academy. He has published in a range of journals and edited books. His book The Locals was published by Peter Lang in 2011. Rob is one of five co-authors of Inside Australian Culture published in 2015 by Anthem

Abstract: Contemporary Australia is often represented in terms of settled and unsettled spaces. The settled regions, in the southeast and southwest of the nation are contrasted with unsettled spaces – wilderness, desert and, sometimes, Aboriginal lands. These representations provide a spatial context for embodied senses of self and belonging that pattern the everyday politics. This paper examines how an embodied, practice-led research methodology has the potential to re-present settled Australia as spaces of multiplicity, where stories layer landscape in ways that insert a stutter into dominant narratives of place. The case study in this paper is located in Lismore, rural NSW, where western, industrial agriculture dominates a hinterland that appears cleared of Aboriginal presence. A rural Australian subjectivity has installed itself and made itself at home. Nowhere is this exemplified more than at the Lismore Showground where the Agricultural and Industrial Society holds its annual three-day exhibition or "Show". The Lismore Show Aboriginal Committee’s Aboriginal Heritage Signage Project, however, disturbs this exemplar of settled space. The landscape is retold as layered, as a place of multiplicities, of multicultural encounters. The reflexive, practice-led methodology developed during the project is itself an embodied cultural encounter in the landscape. This encounter between local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal team members produced interpretive signs that use direct language to transform a settled gathering place into a place of ongoing multiplicity and encounter over millennia to the present. By avoiding reductive representations, the signs produce their own encounter with people and stories in a decolonising landscape.

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