



11. *Clearing, Tambo Crossing* (2010)
digital print on Awagami Unryu paper
edition of 5
paper size: 64 x 84 cm
image size: 42 x 66 cm



10. *Site, Snowy River* (2010)
digital print on Awagami Unryu paper
edition of 5
paper size: 74 x 89 cm
image size: 52 x 69 cm



9. *Alpine garden, Cobungra* (2010)
digital print on Awagami Unryu paper
edition of 5
paper size: 63 x 81 cm
image size: 41 x 61 cm



1. *Leaping Bluff, Metung* (2009) ink drawing, stitching on Japanese mulberry paper, paper size: 59 x 116 cm, image size: 49 x 95 cm

The Myth of Lohan Tuka

The first detailed account of a white woman among the *Kurnai* tribes of Gippsland was a report by explorer Angus McMillan, first published in the *Sydney Herald* on December 28, 1840 under the heading 'Supposed Outrage by the Blacks'¹.

McMillan and three companions had come upon an Aboriginal camp of about twenty-five men, women and children near Flooding Creek (now Sale). The Aborigines had fled on their approach and McMillan described how one of the women appeared to be 'looking back at them' as the Aboriginal men escorted her away. In the camp, McMillan found over thirty European artifacts including bloodstained clothing, household items, English money and a bible printed in Edinburgh in 1838. McMillan and his companions also discovered the body of a young child. The child, they determined, had been 'beyond doubt...of European parents'. McMillan concluded that the woman looking back as she was lead away was a European woman held captive².

The manner of the sighting — the glimpse of a retreating figure looking plaintively back — was to be repeated by others many times over the ensuing years. A publicly funded expedition in 1846 failed to find the captive white woman and two further government funded searches proved equally fruitless. An Aboriginal child taken captive was the first to refer to the white woman by her *Kurnai* name 'Lohan Tuka'³.

Was there such a woman? Phillip Pepper recorded a description of Lohan Tuka as a legend of '...a big pale-coloured woman with long flowing red hair who lived by herself. She came out of her cave to frighten the people and little children'⁴. But there may have been more than one white woman living amongst the *Kurnai* during this period. Pepper also recounts how his grandmother's people remembered the shipwrecked boats and the stories of white women taken by the tribes⁵.

The myth of a white woman held captive by blacks was potent among the anxious settler community of the 1840s, fueling a sense of outrage and providing an impetus for the terrible violence toward the *Kurnai* that underpinned the spread of white settlement throughout the region.

The myth intersects chronologically and geographically with the establishment of my own settler family in Gippsland. The issues it raises — the anxieties of identity and place and contested narratives of belonging — are central to my understanding of myself as Australian.

¹ J Carr, *The Captive White Woman of Gipps Land*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 2001, p. 3.

² *ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

³ *ibid.*, Chaps. 11-16.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 76.

⁵ When Pepper asked his grandmother if the story was true she replied 'It might have been true, could be true, but it mightn't be either'. P Pepper, *You Are What You Make Yourself To Be: The Story of a Victorian Aboriginal Family 1842-1980*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1980, p. 49.



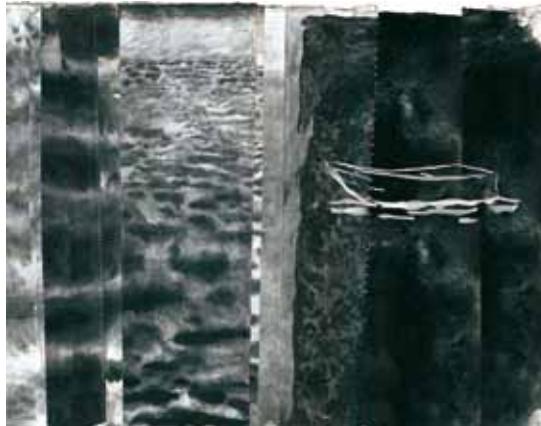
walking home jan davis

works on paper 2009/2010

grahame galleries + editions
9 October – 13 November 2010



4. *Fragments of a map, Omeo* (2010)
digital print on Awagami Unryu paper
edition of 5
paper size: 76.5 x 100 cm
image size: 63 x 80 cm



5. *Crossing Lake King* (2010)
digital print on Awagami Unryu paper
edition of 5
paper size: 78 x 100 cm
image size: 63 x 80 cm



6. *McMillan's run, Tabberabbera* (2010)
digital print on Awagami Unryu paper
edition of 5
paper size: 78 x 100 cm
image size: 63 x 80 cm



3. *First sighting, near Flooding Creek* (2010) digital print on Awagami Unryu paper, edition of 5, paper size: 83 x 100 cm, image size: 63 x 80 cm

'... if memory is imagined as a real space – a place, theatre, library – then the act of remembering is imagined as a real act, that is, as a physical act: as walking.'

Solnit, Rebecca 2001, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Verso, London. p. 77.

walking home is my metaphorical return journey to Gippsland, the place of my childhood. The images are drawn from the intersection of two narratives of Gippsland: the myth of Lohan Tuka, the white woman reputedly held captive by the *Kurnai* tribes in the 1840s and the story of my settler family's arrival at the same time. The prints operate as imaginary maps for my journey, maps which record the places where particular events from the narratives occurred or could have occurred. The places named in the titles suggest resting points on my way. The works evoke the tracks and traces of people walking across places, through time.

jan davis



14. *Lohan Tuka comes ashore* (2010) digital print on Awagami Unryu paper, edition of 10, paper size: 36 x 32 cm, image size: 21 x 18 cm

Cover Image: 2. *In search of Lohan Tuka from the mountains to the lakes* (2009)
digital print on Awagami Unryu paper, edition of 5, paper size: 70.5 x 56 cm, image size: 45.5 x 56 cm



8. *McMillan's road, Iguana Creek* (2010)
digital print on Awagami Unryu paper
edition of 5
paper size: 80 x 100 cm
image size: 61 x 80 cm



12. *The white woman* (2010)
digital print on Awagami Unryu paper
edition of 10
paper size: 43 x 52 cm
image size: 21 x 32 cm



13. *Swifts Creek* (2010)
digital print on Awagami Unryu paper
edition of 10
paper size: 43 x 52 cm
image size: 21 x 32 cm



7. *Herd resting, Dargo Plains* (2010)
digital print on Awagami Unryu paper
edition of 5
paper size: 51 x 100 cm
image size: 30 x 80 cm