

A World Carved to Fragments and Seconds

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The camera shutter carves the eternal now, the everywhen in which our timeless story lives, into fragments; into fractions of seconds. In those micro-moments we are transported into a new space, a frozen time outside of time, a world off the edge of the world. Time is frozen, the images fractured and reformed, reshaped into new stories. These are our stories, the stories of people impacted by colonisation and by attempted genocide.

Barkindji artist Kent Morris' epic photographic works have always reminded me of a kaleidoscope, a device of mirrors and glass to look into and through, to a place of beauty. We can thereby be transported into the device of mirror and light, transported into another space; a within from which we can look out - perhaps a space where we can return home to Country and take control of our sky Country.

There was, in these earlier works, always sky, and a bird, and a diamond made of rooftops, breaking and reshaping the field of the sky Country itself into the sacred symbols of the Artist's people. We were invited into the light and into the eyes of a bird, onward from there into sky Country, and there to anywhere, anywhen, everywhere/when. The work was light, and hope and air a love song to Country and to lost culture and family; and because we love what is lost there's a mournful tone to that light. Those works spoke of diamonds and glass and the crowns of our people and our non-human relatives; jewels stolen by the coloniser.

The marks that carved the space into diamonds, in the same way the camera carves time into stillnesses, were made from the built environment, white-fellas edifices, walls, towers and rooftops. In that way Morris laid claim on his ancestral lands on the culture the colony tried to destroy. The diamond patterns that were once carved into shields were carved by the artist into the very sky using the tools of the colonisers.

In this new body of work, *Silent Sovereign Seconds*, the artist invites us inwards, to the soul and the body of Country, from the sky Country to the land and the water and our plant family. The airy Kaleidoscope has become a journey home to, and for, our hearts and souls. The birds are still there, but they are no longer poised on rooftops, on the edge of the sky, urging us outwards. We follow their eyes, the arrow of their beaks, downwards to country or outwards to water.

We can stand before these works and face a window, portal, a doorway that takes us inwards to our selves, where we are and were we belong; where we might go or become. Use those portals and escape, to another moment. The patterns draw our eyes into a dance across the glistening surface, there is no stillness here, even in these frozen moments of time.

And yet something is not quite right, this is not the Country of our ancestors, the country where our bird cousins feel at home, this is country stolen, colonised, subjugated. In many of these fragments of space and time we can see something that does not belong, the bark of a European tree, rectangles of brick; the colony keeps sneaking in. The worlds in which the birds reside are colonised, broken ground, brick and stone, coloniser trees, and yet beneath all this is the bones of Country and those bones are ours, always will be.

And Morris is again reminding us that we are responsible for taking back our places, our homelands, our Country. He has marked the land as ours.

The artist and I have at least one important thing in common, we are products of colonisation, our lands taken and changed, our people removed from culture. We are carving out moments of connection with Country, with culture, with family, wherever we can find them. We make art to find those places, frozen moments in time, frozen fragments of space, in which we might be reminded of our belonging, our sovereignty. In our hearts we know, and we fight for it, that this is where we belong and always will.

We can take the magic carpet-kaleidoscope ride through diamond mirror worlds to where we belong, perhaps home to Country, perhaps to the minds and the shining eyes of our bird relatives, perhaps to a moment, a fraction of a second, between breaths, in which colonisation does not exist or at least cannot touch us.