

# Terra|2023

Terra | 2023 showcases the creative works of **John TOOHEY**

Working with film and analogue cameras, John Toohey asks us to read the history of landscape through a series of apparently innocuous events that have devastating consequences.

Officially opened by **Robert FRITH**

## Spectrum Project Space

Opening: Wednesday 6 September 5pm–7pm  
Exhibition dates: 7 September to 5 October 2023  
Floor talk: Wednesday 13 September 12:30pm – 1:30pm  
Gallery opening hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am – 4pm  
Building 3, 2 Bradford St, Mount Lawley

*ECU Galleries acknowledges the traditional custodians, the Whadjuk Noongar people, and elders past and present. We pay our respects for the great privilege of living, making and researching on these unceded lands.*

ECU Galleries



## Artist's Statement

*Terra* is a solo photographic landscape history of Western Australia. At its core is the evidence, demonstrated through a series of photographic narratives, of the destruction of landscape since colonisation as a cultural act (hence the pun in the title). The dead and dying towns, the denuded terrain, the wreckage strewn across that landscape belong to a history that is gormless and ingenuous, brutish and pitiless, surreptitious, dishonest and inevitable.

There are two compelling processes available to historians: one is to tell a story that has so far been lost or otherwise hidden. The other is to shift people's perspectives so that old ways of thinking are discarded. This exhibition employs both. The panoramas explore the deep time of a landscape shaped by ice ages and fluctuating sea levels. The images depict events that indirectly play into the history of destruction, refusing to reveal meaning but implying that even acts of minor significance are inextricable from others that have dramatic repercussions.

The works are created with film. Analogue cameras impose limitations upon the photographer, obliging him or her to calculate and compose, but the images can also have a rawness and vitality that digital work cannot achieve.

## Biography

John Toohey is currently a PhD candidate in Art History at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, where he lived from 2012 to 2018. His thesis examines landscape history through Edwardian postcards. He has an M.A in Art History and an Honours Degree in History. His experience combines photography and landscape and social history, and recently includes the production of audiowalks, engaging listeners, readers and viewers in appreciating the hidden traces of the city around them.

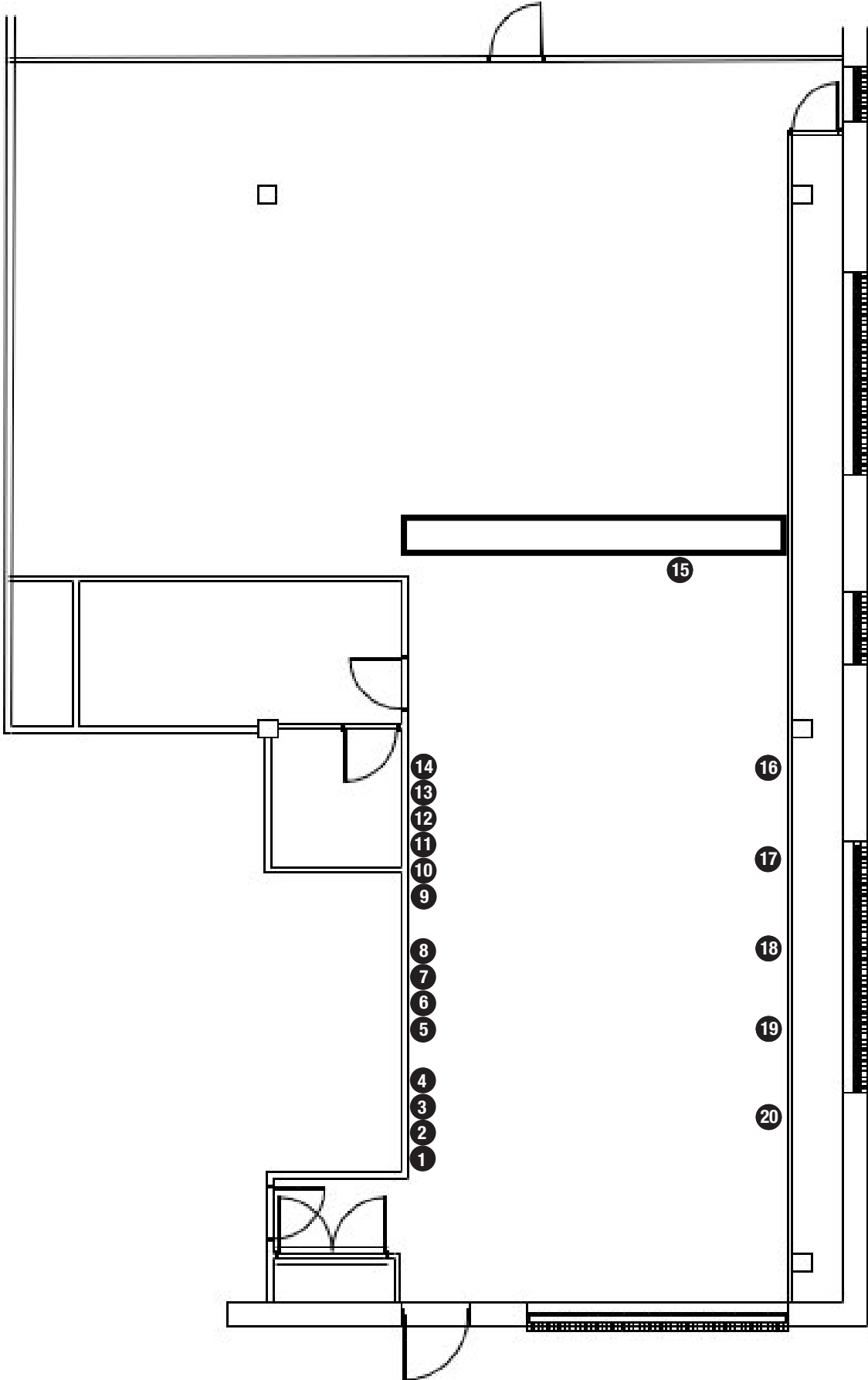
Toohey has exhibited and published his photographs in Australia and overseas and his work is held in national collections. His books and articles have had international success. In 2019 he won the Lawrence Wilson Art Writing Prize on Ailsa Lee-Brown's portrait by Adelaide Perry. His book, *Strange Encounters*, will be published in the UK in early 2024.

### Contact Information

Email: [johntoohey@hotmail.com](mailto:johntoohey@hotmail.com)

Instagram: [@jtoohey929](https://www.instagram.com/jtoohey929)

Spectrum Project Space floor plan



**March 1950** | *“Liberty looked out across the dry, red plains. There’s plenty of water out there, he said, refusing the offer of a water-bag. He set off, pushing his bike, his dog trotting beside him. Somewhere among the granite and the mallee a long seam of gold waited for him. Three days later remains of man and dog have been found on the track, in their last embrace. Was it thirst that killed Edward Liberty, or loss of will?”*

John Toohey, 2023

## List of Works

1 2 3 4

### **Blood and Bone I, 2023**

Digital prints from original negatives, 270mm x 180mm.

5 6 7 8

### **Blood and Bone II, 2023**

Digital prints from original negatives, 270mm x 180mm.

9 10 11 12 13 14

### **Blood and Bone III, 2023**

Digital prints from original negatives, 270mm x 180mm.

15

### **Torbay August 8, 2021, 14:27pm**

Photograph from original negatives, 370x1080mm

16

### **London Bridge, September 12, 2021, 2:36pm**

Basalt, > 350 000 000, Wajarri > 50 000.

Photograph from original negatives, 880mm x 135.5mm.

17

### **Lake Way, September 22, 2021, 9:28am**

Relic of river system > 40 000 000, Tjupani > 50 000, Slag heap < 50, Tjupani.

Photograph from original negatives, 880mm x 135.5mm.

18

### **Sandstone, September 12, 2021, 4:24pm**

Wajarri > 50 000, mine established < 120 years.

Photograph from original negatives, 880mm x 135.5mm.

19

### **Sandstone, September 12, 2021, 5:08pm**

Wajarri > 50 000, Mine abandoned < 50 years.

Photograph from original negatives, 880mm x 135.5mm.

20

### **Wiluna, September 15, 2021, 8:18am**

Tjupani > 50 000, town gazetted 1898.

Photograph from original negatives, 880mm x 135.5m