

ON THE  
TRAIL  
HIMSELF

Paul Borg





# ONE TREE HILL



An Exhibition by Paul Borg  
28 February – 25 March 1998

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Dedicated to my grandparents

*"Take the freeway you'll get there in few minutes"*

*Get a lifestyle. Top estates.*

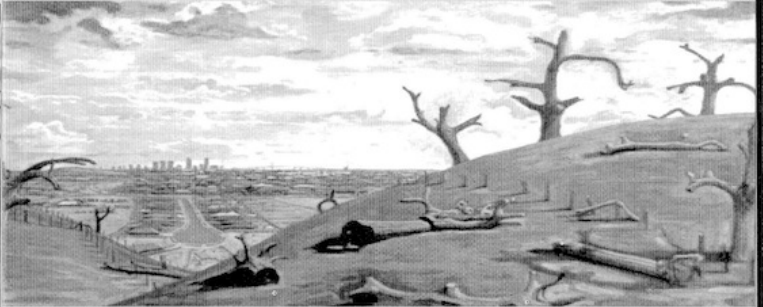


*"Don't fence me in."*

*Display homes.*

*Affordable house and land packages*

*"What nationality are you?"*



*'Fertile Land'*

### The Shed

Behind my grandfather's house in a Melbourne suburban backyard was an old shed built from second hand materials. It had a dirt floor and was covered in blackberry bushes. One day, as a boy, I wandered in and on the main bench stood a radiant white Madonna fresh from her mould.

There was a room in his house where the statues were stored and painted. When the sun came through the north window the statues were alive.

*Dream Homes*

### Rabbiting

My parents would take us rabbiting and for hours we would walk over hill after hill. The landscape was scattered with dead trees. In their metamorphic state they had a dramatic, tragic presence. Certain trees became familiar to us and were landmarks. One hill I remember had two dead trees that looked like large hands or chicken feet reaching out desperately trying to grab the sky.

*"Life in the fringe."*

"Can I pick the trailer up I need to go and get some firewood"



'Ornamental Hill'

### Replicas

In London I visited the 'Plaster Rooms' at the Victoria and Albert Museum. These rooms are filled with plaster replicas of classical sculptures, statues and fragments of architecture, all lifesize and painted to imitate the surface of the originals. I walked down aisles cluttered with fragments of history. The rooms were in a sense a backstage of props from past cultures. It was as if all the major sculptures of history were gathered together for one last bow.

**T**he idea for this exhibition *One Tree Hill* came from a trip to Europe some years ago. Having been born and brought up in Australia, I visited my parents' homeland and asked myself the question: how relevant is my cultural heritage?

Throughout Europe I observed many broken sculptures and statues scattered throughout the rural and city landscapes. These weathered fragments were very similar in colour, texture and drama to the dead gum trees.

On my return to Australia I travelled on the freeway out to the country and found my attention drawn to the trees. Left in a changing landscape, they reminded me of the sculptures in Europe. I realised this was the link I needed. My aim then was to make paintings that looked Australian but had a European presence about them.

After taking photographs of trees and making drawings I found that there were distinct shapes that recurred in different locations – surreal dog forms, human figures. I then decided to recreate these trees from clay and wax and set them up in my studio on a miniature hillside. The set became a still life of the landscape, allowing me to capture a theatrical effect.

Symbolically the trees represent life, death and decay, reminding us of how temporary our lives are. The tree forms have metamorphosed in death, becoming something new. To me the trees suggest people in a fragile social landscape. Each generation is losing more and more, becoming something else. As a first generation Australian I am a fragment of a past culture. Old culture in contrast to new culture. Trees, telegraph poles and fencelines are evidence of the early European impact on the landscape, existing beside the new fast culture of freeways, roads, overpasses and distant suburbia. The scene raises issues of progression and change.

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Design—Julie Hunt

