



EXQUISITE SITES

Loosely inspired by the surrealist game of Exquisite Corpse, two artists take turns inscribing, (re-)etching and printing the same copper plates. The first person making a mark on a new plate chooses the site, and after that, all additions to the plate must represent the same site using different methods. After each round, one-third of the plate is chopped off, excluding it from further alterations.

by Justas Pipinis
and Brendan Cooper

THE PREMISE

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EXG

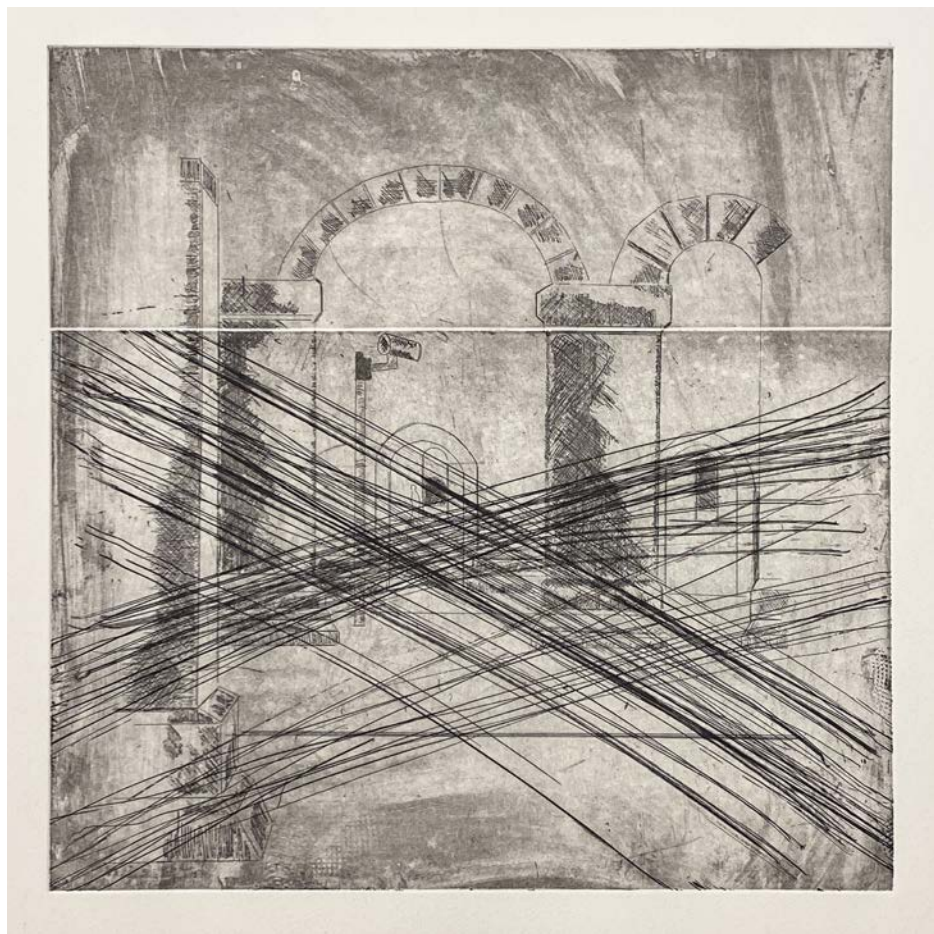


QUISITE SITES

Brendan Cooper (Ballarat) is a printmaking, sculpture, landscape, and journey artist. Justas Pipinis (Melbourne/Stockholm) tries to make sense of the things that don't. The two met while undertaking MFA at RMIT and have been making sporadic appearances in each other's processes ever since. This is their first full-scale collaboration.



Brendan Cooper
ES1 (QB) State I (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
40 x 40



Justas Pipinis (ft. Brendan Cooper)
ES1 (QB) State II (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
40 x 40



Brendan Cooper (ft. Justas Pipinis)
ES1 (QB) State III (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
40 x 40

Location for the EXQUISITE SITE 1 selected by Brendan:

Ever since I first encountered the Queen's Bridge in the early 1980s, it has excited and intrigued me. Its collection of arches feels like a mysterious labyrinth in the middle of the city, evoking a sense of wonder. And I love labyrinths!

ES1 STATE I by Brendan

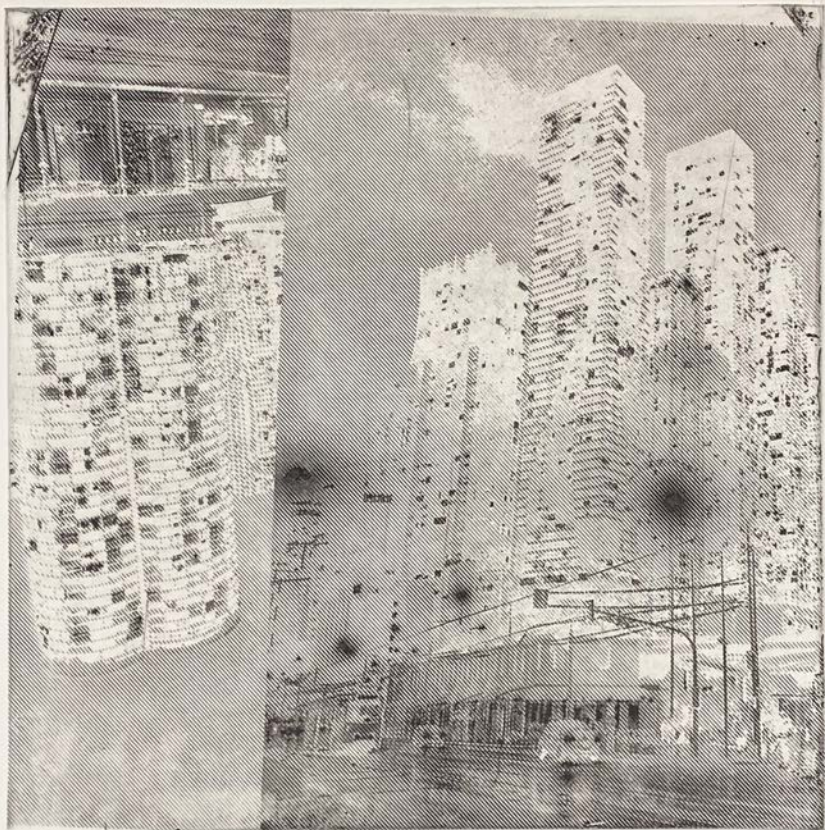
Drawing is a strength of mine, so it was a natural choice for capturing the character of this place. However, I think I could have been more aggressive with my gestures; a rougher, more naïve drawing style might have been more representative of the spirit of the site.

ES1 STATE II by Justas

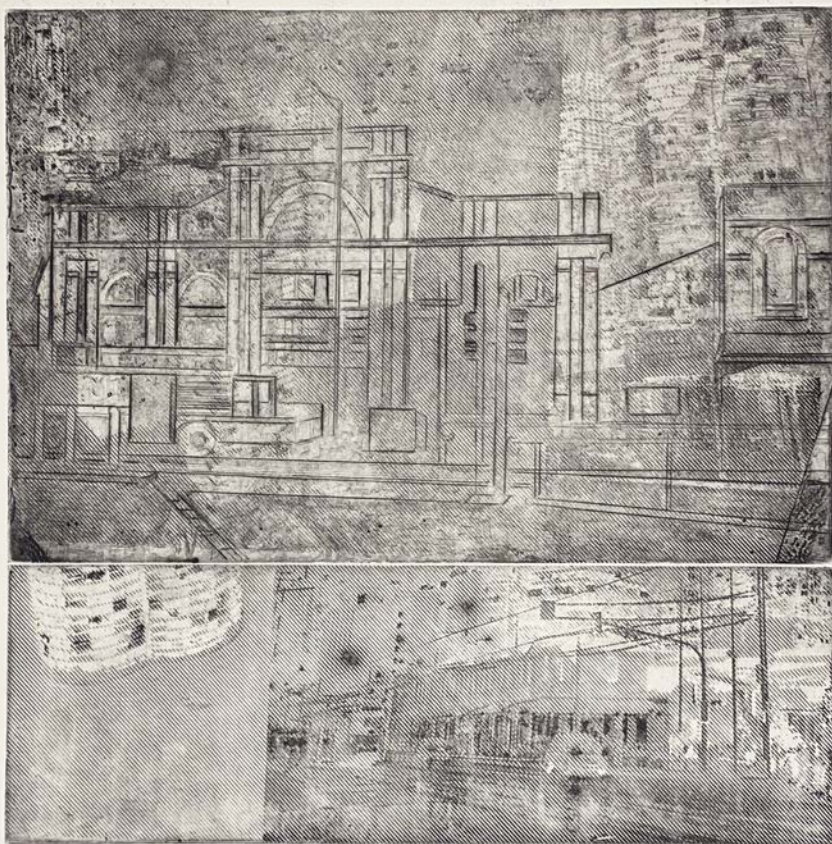
Exploring the arches, I felt like I was in a traffic resonance chamber – trains ran above, trams and cars under. I exposed the plate to the vibrations of the bridge, but the resulting marks were nowhere close to the intensity of my sonic experience, so I picked up a few bricks that had fallen out of the arch walls and used them to scratch the plate mimicking the flow of traffic.

ES1 STATE III by Brendan

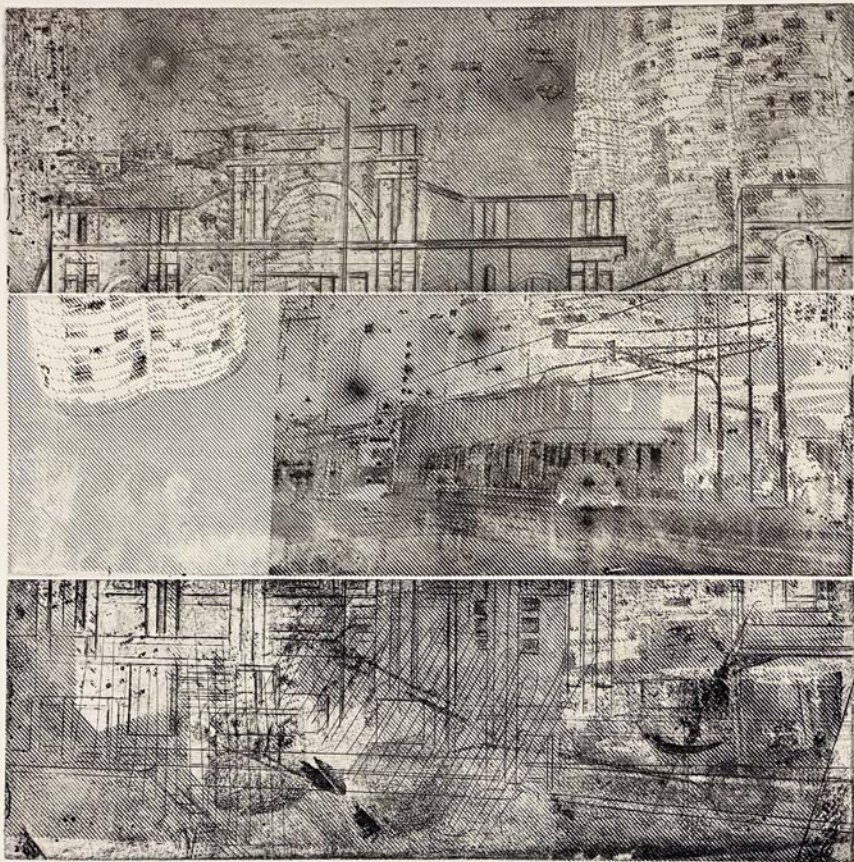
In every city, there is an underbelly, and this is one of Melbourne's. This place has a tragic history of violence both in the modern day and against the Aboriginal people in the past, which leaves a permanent blemish on the site. I cannot celebrate the wonderful Victorian brickwork and disregard the dark side of the history, so I chose to finish this print by violently throwing the plate and stepping on it.



Justas Pipinis
ES2 (QVM) State I (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
40 x 40



Brendan Cooper (ft. Justas Pipinis)
ES2 (QVM) State II (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
40 x 40



Justas Pipinis (ft. Brendan Cooper)
ES2 (QVM) State III (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
40 x 40

Location for the EXQUISITE SITE 2 selected by Justas:

Melbourne CBD skyscrapers looming over the historic Queen Victoria Market are part of my everyday view. I wondered how a recent snapshot taken at nighttime would come out in an etching.

ES2 STATE I by Justas

An overly dark image would make it difficult to add new marks in the following rounds, so I inverted my snapshot. Just when I was about to expose the photosensitive plate, I realised that I did not have a large enough transparency for the motif. Joining two smaller bits risked an annoying misalignment, so I placed one of the bits upside down at a slight angle to make my miss look purposeful.

ES2 STATE II by Brendan

I could not locate the exact spot where the first image was taken, but having recognised the market, I focused on its main façade. I liked the contrast between the old and new and wanted to give the image more depth by layering. However, I underestimated the rough surface of the original photo etching, which made it hard to draw on, resulting in a bit of a mess. The print turned out OK, though.

ES2 STATE III by Justas

Following the rule of not repeating the same method on the same plate twice, I could no longer do photographic etching or drawing, so I bought a few lemons and cucumbers at the market and chopped them on the plate, letting their skins and the knife make new marks. As Brendan had already accidentally turned one of the plates upside down, I printed them in an order that I found aesthetically most appealing.



Brendan Cooper
ES3 (OMG) State I (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
40 x 40



Justas Pipinis (ft. Brendan Cooper)
ES3 (OMG) State II (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
40 x 40



Brendan Cooper (ft. Justas Pipinis)
ES3 (OMG) State III (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
40 x 40

Location for the EXQUISITE SITE 3 selected by Brendan:

I chose this site because of its history and Moreton Bay Fig. The tree is located on what was the Old Melbourne Gaol. For me, it represents a metaphor for life: its roots reach down into a bloody past while its branches reach for a hopeful future.

ES3 STATE I by Brendan

This print is based on a perspective drawing designed to pull the gaze towards the tree. I even changed the building slightly to let the wall, building, bench, and wooden deck smoothly slope towards the vanishing point. I aimed to highlight the tree's branches and roots, showing its endurance over time.

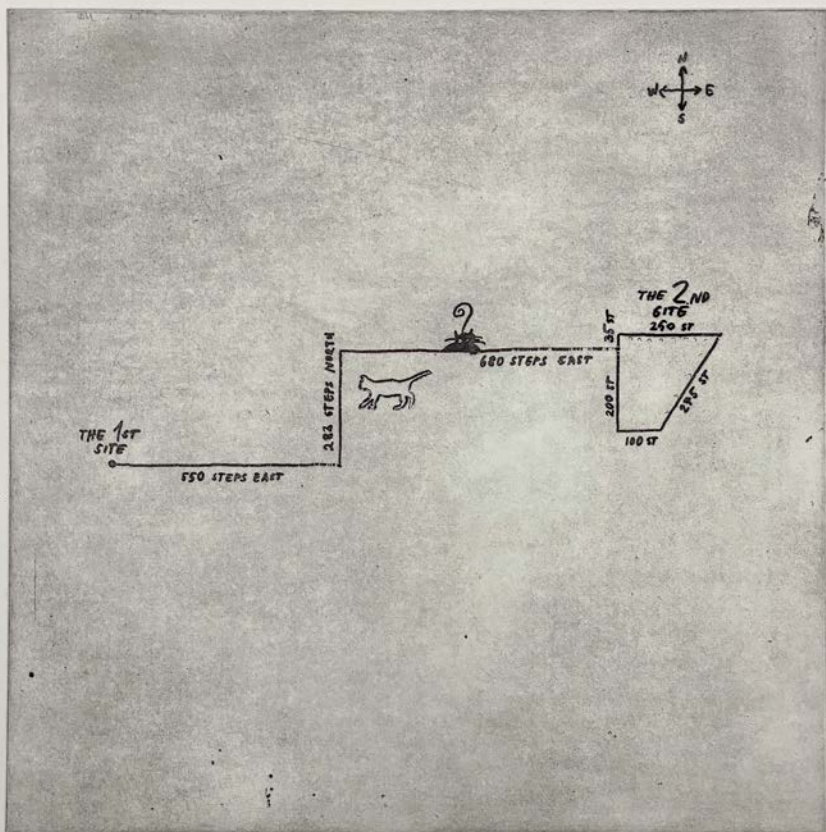
ES3 STATE II by Justas

The thirsty roots of the fig in Brendan's drawing prompted me to expose the plate to nearby water features, but even a focused water stream struggled to move the soft ground and uncover the plate for etching. Then, I saw the pipework encasing an adjacent RMIT campus building like a steampunk version of the roots, so I took a few snapshots, arranged them in a collage and etched it on the plate. I did not expect it to come out so dominant, though.

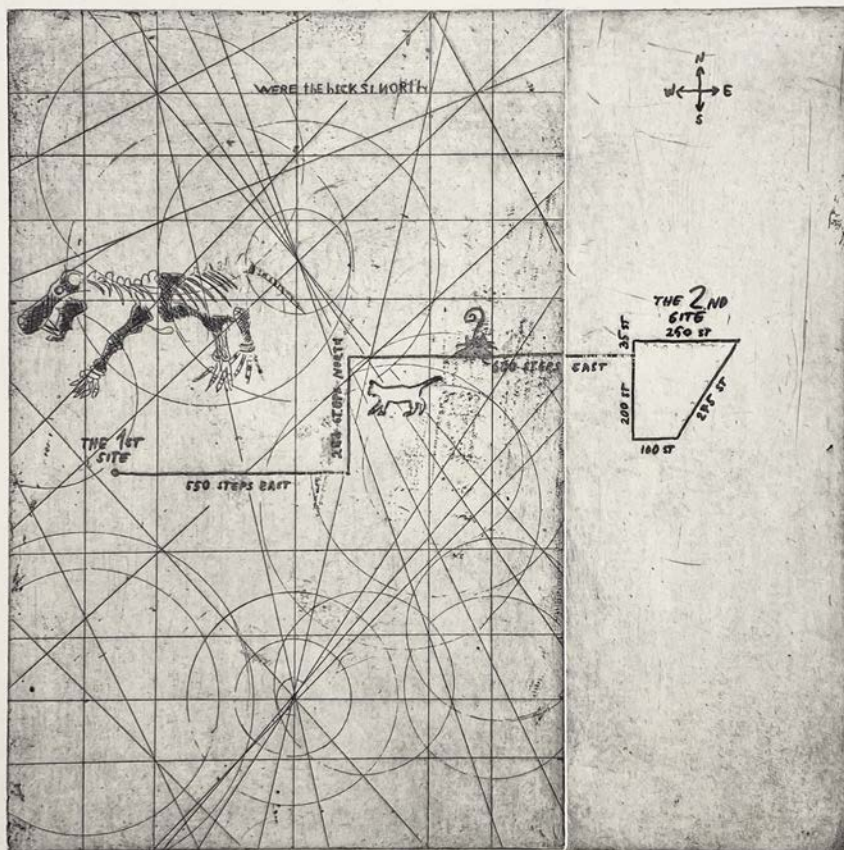
ES3 STATE III by Brendan

Thinking about the time it took for some convicts to reach this jail and the violence that occurred daily inside its walls, I decided to take the plate on a journey over stones and rough surfaces. In some ways, even the tree is violent, spreading its roots out over the stone wall and aggressively pushing its way into the cracks of the stone to anchor itself in place.

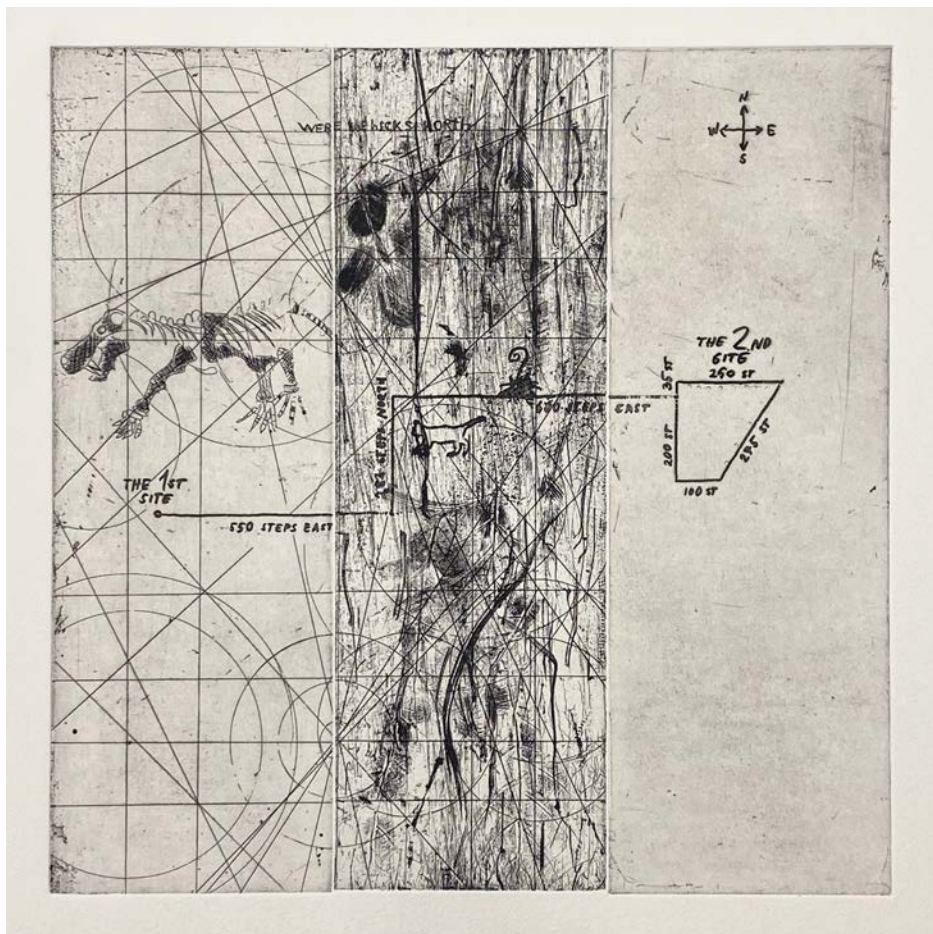
16 EXQUISITE SITE 4



Justas Pipinis
ES4 (CG) State I (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
40 x 40



Brendan Cooper (ft. Justas Pipinis)
ES4 (CG) State II (2024)
 Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
 40 x 40



Justas Pipinis (ft. Brendan Cooper)
 ES4 (CG) State III (2024)
 Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
 40 x 40

Location for the EXQUISITE SITE 4 selected by Justas:

Seeing in ES3 just a botanical feature of the university campus, while it represented the painful history of Old Melbourne Gaol for Brendan, made me consider the notion of site. Without further specifications, a site is just an empty frame for some potential future significance. I wanted to explore this thought further by introducing the last site without any prompt of identity or meaning. But how do I make an etching of a meaningless location?

ES4 STATE I by Justas

I drew a map to guide Brendan to the new site and outline its perimeter. For geographical reference, I chose the location of ES2 as a starting point and counted my steps and turns on my way to the new site, a random section of the Carlton Gardens outlined by me walking across the grass. On my way to the gardens, I passed a couple of shop signs featuring distinct cat designs that I copied to the map as landmarks.

ES4 STATE II by Brendan

Although I felt like strangling Justas because following his obscure map was difficult, I did enjoy the challenge of orienteering. Upon finding the area, I was drawn to the museum, where I drew a saber-toothed tiger's skeleton, as there were two cats on Justas's map. I also drew an old sea map grid, asking where the heck the north is. All in all, the two different responses blended to make for a very interesting print.

ES4 STATE III by Justas

I had an unexpected opportunity to etch my plate within the next hour, so I ran to the site, hoping to find something that could leave marks, preferably a cyclist willing to ride across my plate. But no cyclists were around, so I dragged the plate against the ground and some trees and pressed in some botanicals found on the ground.

Copper etching a feature at Art Trax new exhibition

By Jenny Coburn.

A VERY different style of art is on display at Art Trax Gallery in Beaufort with copper etching and then the resultant prints on paper.

Artists, Brendan Cooper and Justas Pipinis, met whilst studying their Masters of Fine Art at RMIT University and have collaborated on occasions since.

They share that Brendan, from Ballarat, is a printmaking, sculpture, landscape and journey artist, while Justas, from Melbourne and originally from Stockholm, aspires to make sense of the things that don't.

Their love of this process is inspiring as it is

very time consuming, complex and unforgiving in its method.

To celebrate the commencement of the exhibition, an Official Opening was held last Sunday at the gallery where an excellent crowd gathered to view and enjoy the exhibition. The artists shared their passion for the printmaking process while offering the opportunity to join their game on "Exquisite Sites".

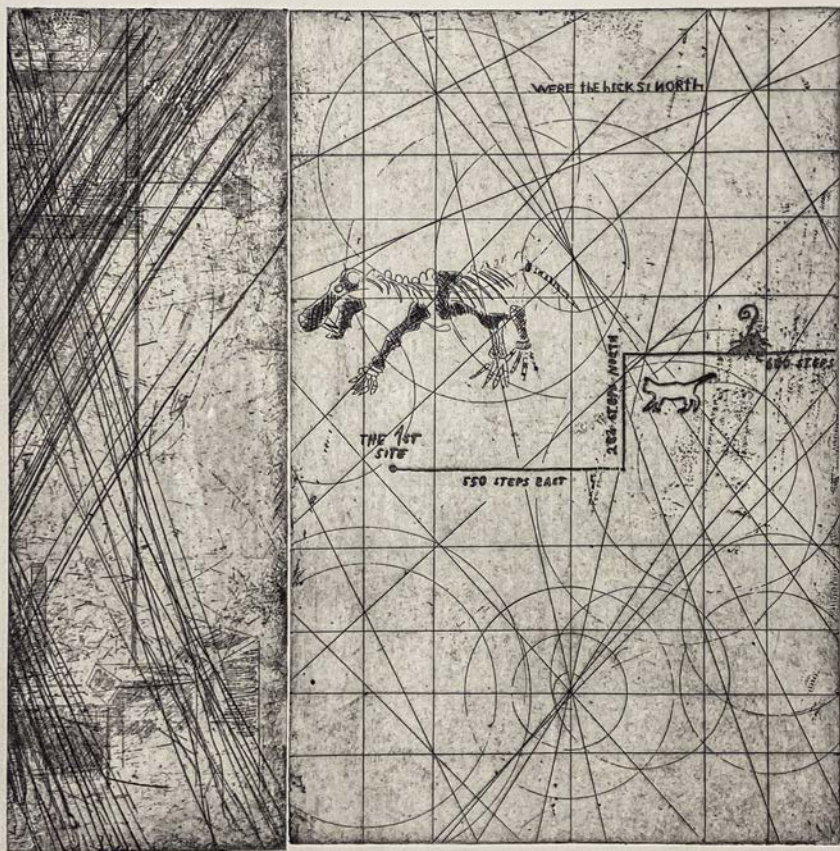
The exhibition will be on display through to September 16. Art Trax Gallery is located at the Railway Station, 23-25 Pratt Street, Beaufort. Opening hours are 10am to 4pm on weekends and 11am to 3pm on Fridays and Mondays. Closed Tuesday to Thursday. Enquiries can be made on 0431 932 480.



The artists collaborating for this exhibition; Justas Pipinis and Brendan Cooper.
Photo provided by Judy Beaton.



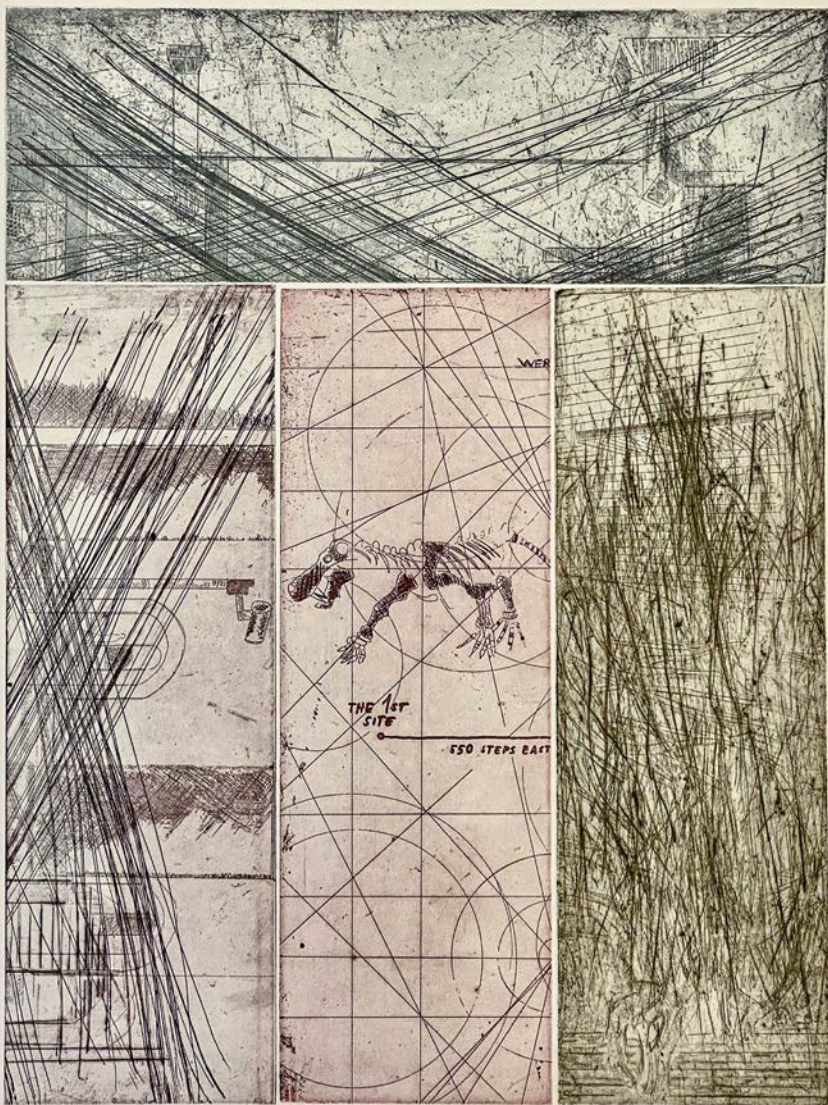
Brendan Cooper (ft. Justas Pipinis)
ES Variations 4 (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
40 x 40



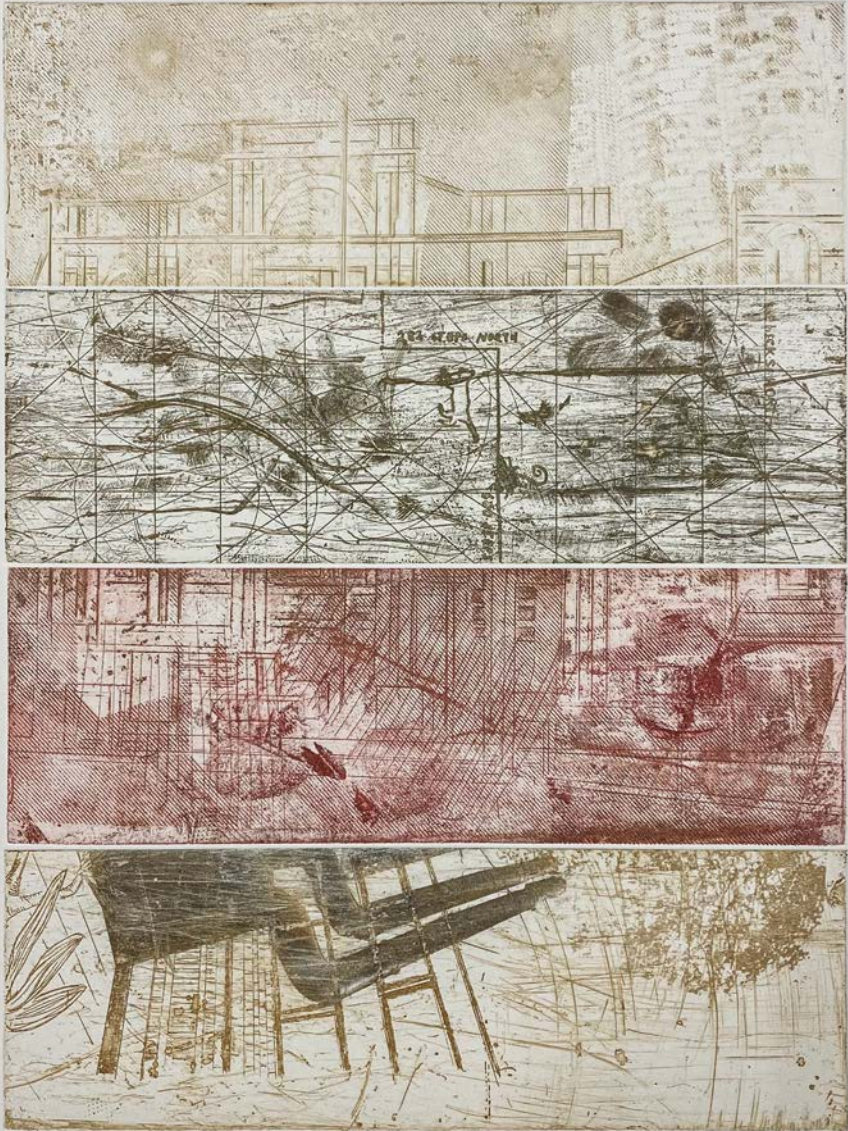
Brendan Cooper (ft. Justas Pipinis)
ES Variations 1 (2024)
 Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
 40 x 40



Brendan Cooper (ft. Justas Pipinis)
ES Variations 3 (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
40 x 40



Justas Pipinis (ft. Brendan Cooper)
ES Variations 8 (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
53 x 40



Justas Pipinis (ft. Brendan Cooper)
ES Variations 9 (2024)
Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
53 x 40



Justas making marks for ES2 State III.



Justas etches the plate.

Printmaking always involves a balance of control and chance. The materials exhibit both sensitivity and resistance. When Justas attempted to let the vibrations from the Queens Bridge or the water features of the RMIT campus leave marks in the soft ground covering the plates, the material resisted. However, an accidental fingerprint, an extra minute in the acid bath, or a variation in the wiping back technique can become quite prominent. The leeway is defined by the medium: you cannot do too little, nor can you do too much.



te for for ES3 State II.



Brendan prints ES3 State III.

We raised the stakes by alternating techniques, artistic visions, and personal touches from two artists on the same plates. The outcome is concrete and abstract, flat and multilayered, predetermined and unpredictable, purposeful yet wide open to interpretation.



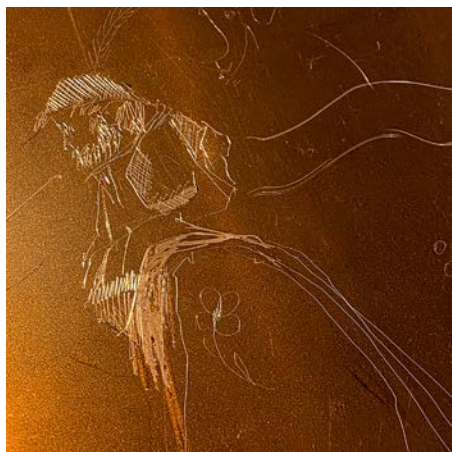
Art Trax
Beaufort, Victoria

August 2 – September 30, 2024



The exhibition at the beautiful old station building in Beaufort featured the four Exquisite Sites series, a selection of variation prints combining plates from various series, the plates themselves and an invitation to the audience to make their marks on two prepared copper plates.

30 AUDIENCE'S MARKS





Art Trax Audience

Exquisite Site 5 (2024)

Copper etching on Hahnemühle 350 gsm
50 x 25

Ergo ars est.
QED.



EMERGING QUESTIONS:

- What makes a site?
- What makes marks?
- Is artmaking an act of violence?

