

From One Point Out

LOA Nomination #2
Exhibition 31 May – 6 June 2019. Nomination/ text by Yu'an Huang

In May 2018, the Australian artist Alasdair Asmussen Doyle set out to travel to the point furthest away from his birth place, the antipode (35° 4’ 51.3” N, 41° 8’ 11.5” W).

One year on, From One Point Out is a collection of traces from the failed expedition.

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A map is a human artefact that has defined the boundaries of identities that are both physical and cultural. Evolving from the old Eurocentric drawings to user-generated digital entities, the inadequacy of maps sparks our wonder at the never-ending politics of human space.

In Where I Am Not (2018), shortly after the journey, the artist exhibits four frames of destined antipodes embossed onto the white photography alongside a logbook marked with pencils. The fragility of the evidence and the absence of imagery leaves the viewer with only a story to imagine. What does distance taste like; does time thicken as the trip goes on; what does solitude smell like on the borderless horizon? Parting from the Portuguese coast, the artist was at the beginning of a journey where he developed a new relationship between distance and time. In Doyle’s piece The Other Island (2017) where Australian animals wallabies were sighted inhabiting a British landscape, the artist brought out commonly untold colonial and migration histories through the lens of the ‘innocent’ biophysical environment.

Doyle’s practice employs film and documentary strategies within a research-as-practice methodology, to analyse places and their changing nature. He works with anachronistic shooting instruments and engages a calculated ambiguity of location. The solo exhibition From One Point Out, will include a three part work led by the artist’s fascination with cartography which examines the invisible sense of limitations and conquest. ■

Alasdair Asmussen Doyle

Graduating from the Royal College of Art in 2018, Doyle has undertaken residencies at La Cite des Arts in Paris and Popp’s Packing in Detroit, is the recipient of Australia Council, Art Tasmania, Tasmanian Regional Arts, Creative Partnerships Australia and Hobart City grants, and the winner of the 2015 Tasmanian Portraiture Prize. From October 2019, he will undertake a PhD at Belfast School of Art, in collaboration with aemi (Dublin), working with early film-making strategies, photochemical technologies and on-location approaches, as the basis of a practice that negotiates the representation and materiality of place, to explore the possibilities of dislocation and duality.

www.alasdairdoyle.com

Leave Of Absence Gallery (LOA_London)

is an art space curated by a nomination system. Each exhibiting artist will be asked to nominate three artists to consider making work for the space. One who they know of in person, one who they do not and one that does not have the right to live and work in the UK. LOA exists to explore the relationship between art works and the societal context in an age of dematerialized culture and transient movement.

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Remnants he calls them, as if they’d washed ashore. Salvage. Perhaps this prompted my approach, regarding these objects as an inventory, courtroom exhibits. Moving in pursuit of his antipode, the point furthest from his birthplace (coordinates cast in the North Atlantic), these were to serve as evidence for absence, for the artist’s efforts at effacing. To arrive where he might be thought to be least. Where he is not.

Before he got there, the wind left him. He wouldn’t make it. [...] How could he report, whether in images or words, on its attainment, when the workings would always have annulled the result? How to show that you’ve got there, when the there, the getting, would each preclude the you?

It seems fitting that his map of the world has the point pricked out, his antipode a vortex unreachable except by falling through; apt that this might suggest the approach is as an asymptote, not-being a trajectory. Not a place achieved, but a staggered displacing. The effect is to warp even what might feel least doubtful, most established: his birth certificate, in this context, takes on qualities of roots unearthed — blanched and meagre, a little silly, grasping for nothing.

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He had made it seem so easy, like something slipped into, the way he recast himself as No One. As if all it took were poor enunciation, a fumbling of the tongue, a cup too much wine, and Odysseus would become Outis. He selected nothing for himself, a name with which he could worm his way from incident — out of caves, away from danger; out of obligation — non-identity applied like a mask, shrunk into like a coat. As if it weren’t the twenty years passed that had apparelled him as stranger — drifter, vagrant, an alien at home — personhood licked by sea-spray, gnawed by salt. It explains his surprise though, his anger when he’s not recognised: this had felt like a choice, a trick he’d played, a spell of the gods. But now the mask was stuck, compelling No One to disprove his none-ness, disclose old marks of his is (trace the scar on his thigh, re-craft his conjugal bed), hoping, furiously, to unwork the effect of this not.

In such manner, I had thought it might be fitting to parade my reading. There were so many other journeys one could consider parallel. Where not-being is an end of travelling. Thus Odysseus’s becoming No One, somehow both adopted and inadvertent. But each antecedent felt misappropriated; Odysseus’s arc is always homeward, his aim restitution of family, property, of self. To have Alasdair Asmussen Doyle’s work inherit meaning came to strike me as misguided; the voyage out elicited a shedding. The Azores left behind, I didn’t want to dredge Coleridge or Conrad, Melville or Mandeville, to re-bed his film in literature; wanted instead to account for the work’s slowing, its tending-towards-stillness, the elision of elements; describe the vitreous, molten, rippling surface, the billowing of the waves, their tempered restlessness, the uneasy calm; and regard the final shot — still sea, blank sky, the crease of the horizon — as the extent, this time, of an unlearning. No return is scheduled (we won’t conclude at port); Doyle’s film intends to remain at sea, to persist adrift — no longer wholly something, if not nothing, not yet.

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Unmoor. Cast off, cast out. Dislodge.

— This text is extracted from Kit Webb’s ‘Dislodgings’ (2018).

