



IAN WESTACOTT

Cromarty Tree

MEDIA RELEASE

Exhibition Dates: 1 - 20 May 2018
35 Derby Street Collingwood VIC 3066
Open 7 days 10am to 6pm

Australian Galleries is delighted to present this exhibition of etchings by renowned master printmaker Ian Westacott, which chronicles the magnificent ancient Elm trees and Sweet Chestnuts that date back to the grand planting schemes around first Cromarty Castle and then Cromarty House in Scotland.

Over a two year period Westacott spent more than 50 days at this unique and historic site, working in the breathtaking and rugged landscape and getting to know intimately each and every tree that lives there. Westacott works en plein air, carrying his etching plates to his subjects to work from life. He observes his subjects with great reverence and sensitivity and translates this deep contemplation of each tree's individuality into detailed and poignant etchings. The works in this series portray the deteriorating condition of the ancient trees at Cromarty, which are sadly succumbing to Dutch Elm disease and old age. Also depicted in his etchings are Cromarty's Sweet Chestnut trees, some knocked over by harsh winds, their trunks gnarled and twisted but, radical in their ability to survive, sprouting new growth and growing ever upwards.

Ian Westacott is drawn to express through his artwork subjects which are on the edge of survival. Friend, collaborator and celebrated printmaker Raymond Arnold says, '*Ian's careful and deliberate line etchings of ancient natural objects, drawn with love and great skill, are ciphers of worlds on the point of disappearance. They have the aura of 19th century illustrations we see in natural history museums of now extinct plants and animals. This makes them a type of counter image at odds with the status quo and something rare and special.*'

This exhibition also presents a series of works made in collaboration between Arnold and Westacott, which began as part of the Lake Mungo Project in outback Victoria and were completed by the artists together in early 2018 at Ian's home in Scotland. These prints will be displayed as part of a major exhibition for the 2018 Australian Print Triennial.

Cromarty Tree showcases Westacott's deep connection to the subjects he portrays and his deft technical skills as a printmaker and draughtsman. This exhibition is current until 20 May 2018.

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