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Border Crossing: An Introduction and Poems

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Border Crossing: An Introduction and Poems

Abstract

Border Crossings began as an idea for a photographic installation which premiered in 2002 at the Wollongong City Gallery, in Wollongong, Australia. A merging of print and filmic texts, the show worked as a meditation on migration, through images and poems that travelled between Canada and Australia, though it also moved through other landscapes, from Switzerland to Turkey. The show attempted to challenge the way photographs were typically presented as well. Many of the Canadian works of dilapidated buildings, for example, were framed using recycled Australian materials: paling fences, decomposing sleepers, and rusted metals. Australian images were surrounded by Canadian timbers, so that the frames themselves spoke about a cross-culturality, a contamination of place and space, which arguably reframed and represented the images themselves.

GERRY TURCOTTE

Border Crossing: An Introduction

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The selection of images here are drawn from a forthcoming book which, like the photographic installation itself, explores the theme of reconstruction and deconstruction through photographs and texts that centre on buildings and places in growth and decay. In a way, then, the words and images are haunted by each other. And as in any relationship, the point of contact generates a different text, a scar that leaves its mark, that gestures towards another destination — a border crossing, in both the strictest, and the loosest, sense.

From the Introduction to *Border Crossings: Words & Images*
(Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger, forthcoming).

trace

and so the life you live forever in your mind
that you measure everything against
and hold up proudly to the world
is all reduced to this

the solid walls that held you in its arms
have withered in the field
the lock has rusted shut
on doors that children's hands
could fold and take away

the stone crumbles like stale bread
and only darkness
figures forth

yet there is comfort here
a certain tangibility
in all that fragile
temporary
frame

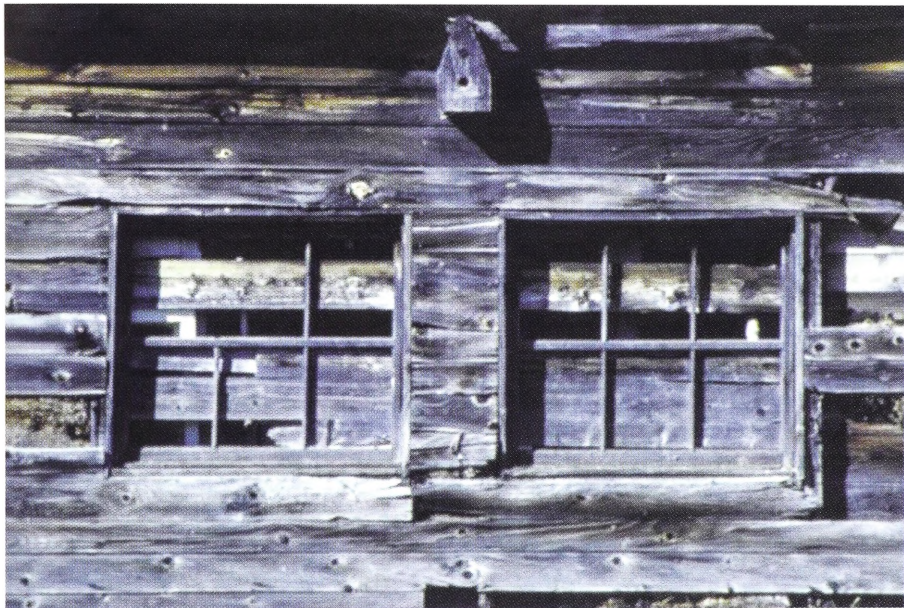
as though decay
at least
is something
you can witness
and assess



scars

every job leaves its marks on you. some are just
memories below the skin, bruises that leave an echo of a blow.
others are more substantial — a nail permanently removed,
a sutured snake, or a train track running up an arm,
where surgeons held life and limb together.
a splinter piercing through the skin
in search of blood and aiming for the heart.

just as a house is testament to the builder,
so the skin bears witness to the work.



the skeleton as palimpsest

you peel me open like a grape
porous tissues surrendering to fragile flesh
until I stand revealed
bleached white sternum
an exclamation mark inside an embodied phrase
hollow eyes stare back
I've grown horns, now, in anticipation
I've fused with this new landscape
but my former earth still lies embedded in these bones
the skeleton as palimpsest
trace elements
prehistory
it's all there
waiting to be mapped

