

Equivalence



'Equivalence XV'

Lloyd Godman 2006

Lloyd Godman

Photo - drawings works 2006

High resolution interactive version

Equivalence is published in two versions

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Equivalence

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Equivalence

Lloyd Godman

Mixed media – Pigmented prints – charcoal drawings

based on the regeneration after the 2005 fire at Wilson's Promontory Australia

Introduction

In February 2005, I moved to Melbourne to live at the Baldessin Press with my new partner Tess Edwards. I had sold all my Bromeliads and during this year began the slow task of establishing another collection in a very different climate. This greatly impacted on my work with these signature plants where the creative work effectively stalled for a few years. In the meantime, I looked for old loose threads to pick up and continue working. Light and photosynthesis were still present and a search began for a way forward with this.

During a camping trip in December 2005 to Wilson's Promontory, which is the southernmost point of the Australian continent, I encountered the vibrancy of the green regrowth under the burnt forest trunks and branches. I was stunned by the contrast of green and black.

Despite the fire, this was photosynthesis in all its might. It was like a green luminous creature that had emerged from beneath the earth to cover the naked ground. Here, amongst the growing cloak of green were the stark, black bones of the old forest frozen in black, charcoal still reaching for the light. The charred remains of the trees that once dominated the landscape stood as a legacy to an age before the fire. The regrowth was result of a controlled burn off that had got out of hand, earlier in the year by Parks Victoria. Essentially the land was scorched to bare earth and ash.

I was struck by the overpowering greenness of the new growth, and in places how quickly nature had begun the process of renewal.

The period marked a significant shift from analogue photography to digital, where one could shoot a huge number of frames compared to film.

Every so often, I worked on the digital images in pho-

toshop enhancing the luminosity towards a painterly effect green and made a few small prints. In April 2006 I was in an art supply shop with some friends and browsed through the various materials eventually coming across a stash of charcoal pencils. The black charcoal brought back memories of the charred remains of the tree trunks at Wilson's Prom and the idea came to combine charcoal drawing with the pigment prints.

I made a series of A3+ prints from the digital photographs and began to draw on them with charcoal (carbon), extending out from the tree trunks in the way I had with the *Drawing from Nature* series of 1992. Eventually I decided to scale the work up - to tile the image up to 9 X A3 prints, becoming a little freer with the pencil. In this work a few prints had no drawing and I decided to experiment with embossing photosynthesis formula into the spaces.

The use of charcoal is a direct link to carbon as a material implicated in burning fossil fuels and this also appeared in a subsequent work in 2007, *Carbon Obscura*.

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The Force that Feeds Us - 2005

Like the form of a body unclothed, light is quintessential, in every manifestation elegance is drawn from a dark void.

Photographers are acquiescent to this ultimate force. From a profusion of energy speeding past a planet suspended in a vast space, these small, humble creatures - photographers - use recording devices to capture infinitesimal degrees of electromagnetic radiation and create images of their world. There is ritual in their methods - of looking at light, of waiting for light, of chasing light, of constructing with light – and even cursing the light. Their medium demands looking critically with an eye of sensitivity to the force that propels the medium.

tile physical dimension of subject and its loss of this dimension in a visual representation.

For centuries, light has intrigued artists. While painters use various strategies to simulate light photographers work directly with the source. For photographers variations in the quality, colour, intensity and direction of light are the essence of their medium - a rich, thick pigment in a tube waiting to be squeezed out. When we look to the history of photography, light has been used not only to reveal a subject but as subject in itself.

Fox Talbot's statement to the Royal Society on 31 January 1839 ... I do not profess to have perfected an art but to have commenced one, the limits of which it is not possible at present exactly to ascertain. I only claim to have based this art on a secure foundation. suggests the boundaries of the medium may always be open.

Besides the photographs we produce, light feeds an inimitable force.

In this statement - *Now - light where it exists - can exert an action, and in certain circumstances does exert one sufficient to cause changes in material bodies.* Fox Talbot 1834 - he suggests there are processes with even greater gravity than the potent photographic medium we take for granted. This carefully worded statement is beyond both Fox Talbot the artist and scientist – it is all encompassing - it steps beyond the Art he helped invent, and references material bodies greater than thin sheets of film or paper.

Of course a greater gravity is photosynthesis - the utilization of light by plants to expand their cells and grow into the most extraordinary forms we often take for granted. The elegance of the photosynthetic process is veiled by the visual – the diversity of textures, forms, colours etc. they have evolved to take.

There are structures behind the facade sense of beauty in nature - it is plants that are responsible for all the food we eat, many of the natural resources we consume and the processes that keep the planet sustained.

While finely crafted photographs encompass an inspiring aesthetic sense of beauty - the subtle delicacy of tones in a silver gelatin print, the vibrant rich colours of C-types and Cibachrome, the seductive velvet of pigment prints etc. - plants and photosynthesis are consummate in elegance, grace, and style - the process is simply inexplicable in its delicacy, intricacy and wonder.

Surprisingly, the process of photosynthesis, where by plants utilize the energy from the sun to grow is not dissimilar to the way silver halide particles grow when exposed to light and are then developed. Imagine the sensor of a digital camera where there are millions of individual sensors (pixels) that respond to light in the way a plant might. Over time some of these pixels fail and die. It is similar to the the plant cover on the surface of the planet, when we cover a surface with concrete and that area becomes a dead pixel.

The ancients worshiped light and the life it brought; they understood the relationship of light from the sun, the seasons and the relationship with plants. For them the summer solstice was time when light reached a zenith - the winter solstice referenced the azimuth.

Archimedes first noted aspects of the pigmentation change in plant tissue due to exposure to sunlight and made the first reference to both photosynthesis and the idea of marks (images) formed through light – photography. Since then both photosynthesis and light have been the centre of much speculative and scientific investigation.

The exquisite form, structure, pattern and texture of

plants as subject matter have fascinated photographers since the invention of the medium. The book, Flora Photographica by William A. Ewing, presents stunning tribute of plant images by Ansel Adams, Eugene Atget, Hippolyte Bayard, Cecil Beaton, Julia Margaret Cameron, William Henry Fox Talbot, Lee Friedlander, Yasuhiro Ishimoto, André Kertész, Robert Mapplethorpe, Sheila Metzner, Joel Meyerowitz, Duane Michals, Paul Outerbridge, George Platt Lynes, Lucas Samaras, Edwin Smith, Edward Steichen, Josef Sudek – to name a few.

Like the photographic medium, photographs of plants speak of universality – they evoke a response in people that cuts across the politics of human constructs. From, Fox Talbot's simple but delicate salt prints of leaves in 1838, though the global archetypes of Imogen Cunningham's sensual forms of the 1940s, to the more recent and local work by Silvi Glattauer and Julie Millowick, plants are an omnipresent subject. Glattauer's works are metamorphic studies of plants investigating notions of beauty in those transient epochs between life and death. Millowick's photograms, evocative and ghost-like, explore the vestiges of abandoned colonial gardens. As subject, plants remain ever elusive and intriguing.

Perhaps our forests are images of our planet dreaming? However during the past century this organic emulsion has suffered a huge human intervention, like a thick sticky dust layer, and deep gouged scratches on the most perfect negative, the biotic emulsion of the planet has been damaged.

Has the dream turned to nightmare?

In fact, plants are in themselves photographs. The largest photosensitive emulsion that we know of is actually the planet itself. The fabric of intricate foliage which covers areas of the globe is an ever developing image on the surface of the planet - a giant photographic abstraction. With my eye peering from the window of an aircraft high above the ground, through the hazy atmosphere, the patterns of foliage across the land evoke a sense of a planet dreaming – the mosaic is in effect giant diffuse photogram grown from the seeds of evolution. Sometimes - it reminds me of how Tristan Tzara described Man Ray's photograms - " Projections .. of objects that dream and talk in their sleep".

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Has the dream turned to nightmare?

utilize light to create marks.

I began using the photosensitive nature of plants to create images on the leaves of Bromeliad plants. Achema, Neoregelia, Virisea, Tillandsia - bromeliads are a family of South American plants - many are epiphytes, and for me they represent sustainability. Many use the branches of trees for support but take no nourishment from them, they have developed a special cell that allows them to absorb water into the leaf structure – some form vases that hold a reservoir of water and provide environments for other creatures.

Before quantum chemistry there was the mystique of alchemy. Through the periodic table, and methodical practice the new science proposed to define materials, causes and effects. But technology is a global religion that drives an arrogant science. Inadvertently we release chemicals into the environment and do not fully understand their effect. Like alchemy, there is still a sense of vagueness in what we do.

Since 1989, my work had involved camera less photography - photograms. With objects laid directly onto the emulsion, the process is seductive, the results always a disclosure of an inherent energy the objects possesses that can never be seen with the naked eye. My work progressed from small silver gelatin prints, through huge colour works to free form alternative processes works where the emulsion was painted on as motifs. In a somewhat similar manner to the photogram I worked directly onto the plants photosensitive emulsion – I masked off areas of the plant tissue with opaque **tape in the form of a series of alchemic symbols. By incorporating the vibrancy of the plants inflorescent cycle at flowering time and exposing the plant to sunlight for up to 4 months, vibrant photosynthetic images with vivid greens and reds were created in the very tissue of the plants.**

However once the tape was removed the action that formed the image caused the cells react again. The image faded into obscurity and the only reference was the photographs I took of these ephemeral photosynthetic inscriptions.

The work transmutes from photographs of plants to plants as photograph.

Equivalence - is a project based on the elegant power of photo-synthesis. Through the rapid and dramatic re-growth of the small area of forest at Wilsons Prom, it is a microcosm that reflects how the photo-sensitive emulsion that is the foliated zones of the living planet exacts an innate ability to regenerate.

The work transmutes from photographs of plants to plants as photograph.

I began gardening about the same time I started taking photographs – these two activities have always occupied a large part of my life and psyche – I approach both with passion. Ever in convergence - over a period of 28 years the activities developed from distant star-like points. Unlike the converging perspective lines in a photograph there was no vanishing point where they faded into an unseen dimension. In 1996 there was a collision – a realization that to two activities were actually one in the same. They both

Equivalence

Photo-print - drawings works



Equivalence I - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence II - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence III - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence IV - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



'Equivalence V'

Lloyd Jones 2006

Equivalence V - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



'Equivalence VI'

Lloyd Jones 2006

Equivalence VI - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence VII - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence VIII - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XI - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XII - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XIII

Ngũgĩ 2006

Equivalence XIII - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XIII

Ngũgĩ 2006

Equivalence XIV - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XV - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XVI - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XVII

C. J. 2006

Equivalence XVII - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XVIII

C. J. 2006

Equivalence XVIII - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



'Equivalence XIX'

Equivalence XIX - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



'Equivalence XX'

Equivalence XX - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XXI - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XXII - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XXIII

Equivalence XXIII - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XXIV

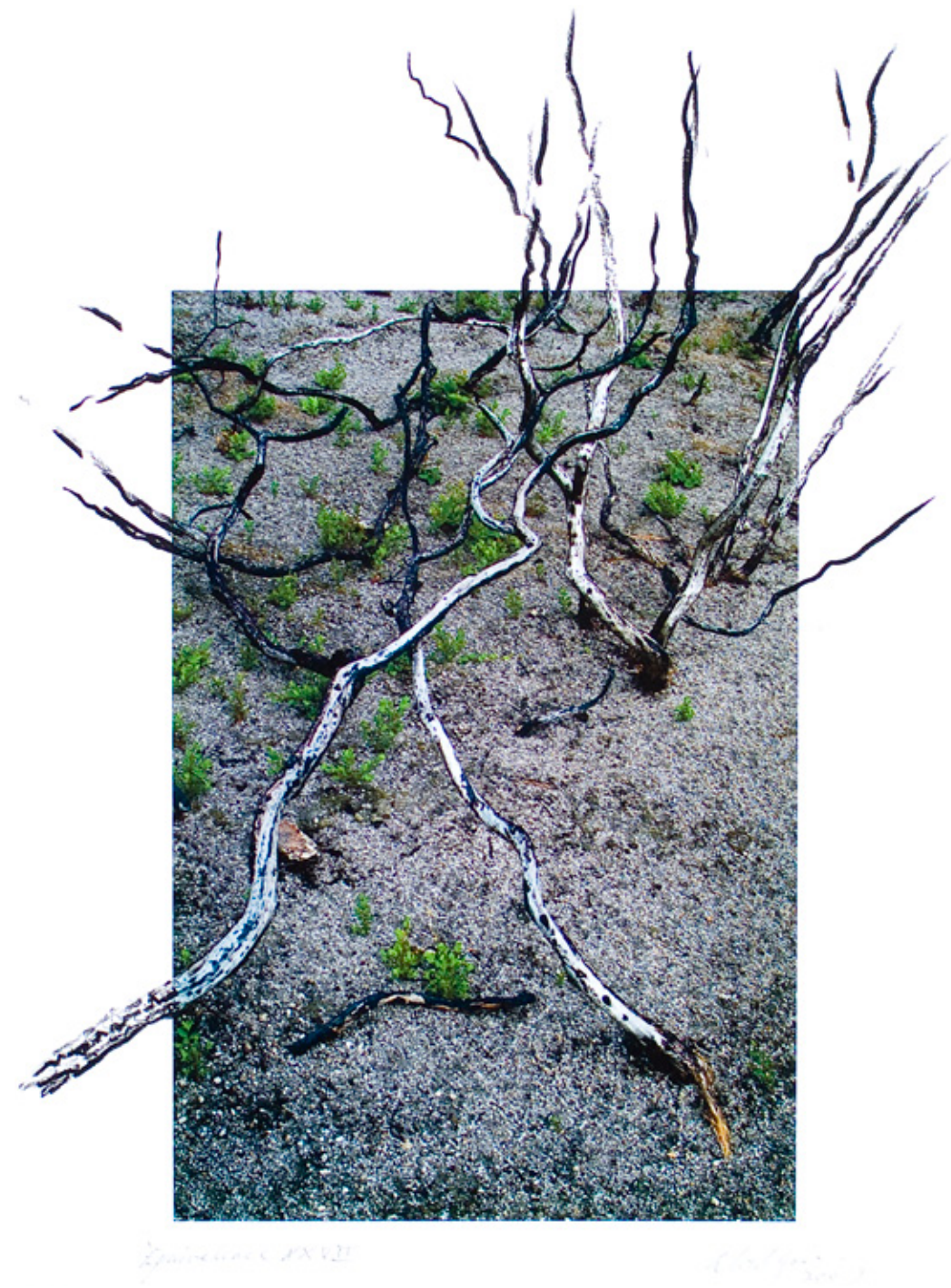
Equivalence XXIV - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XXV - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XXVI - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XXVII - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XXVIII - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Equivalence XXIX

2006

Equivalence XXIX - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



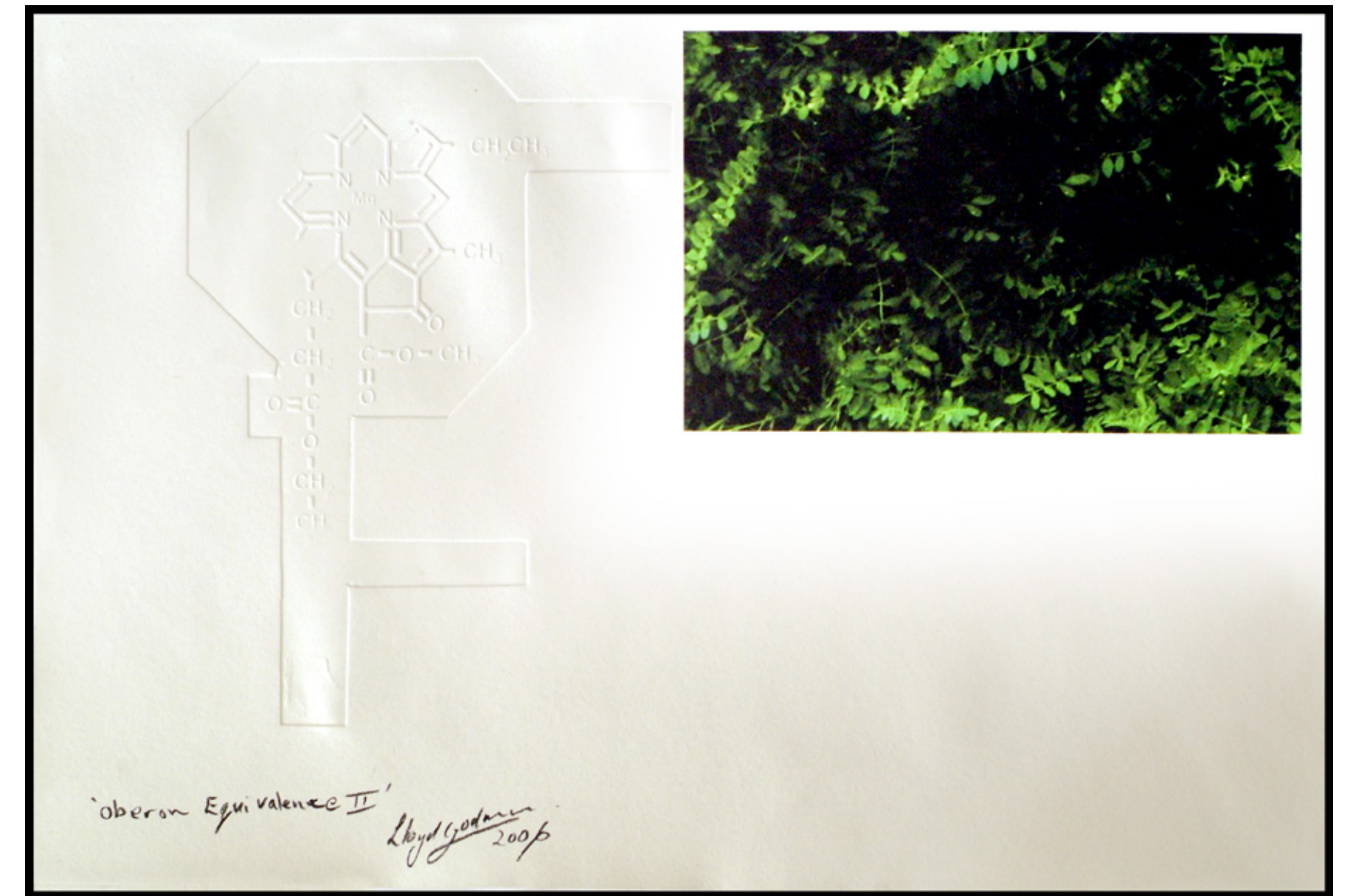
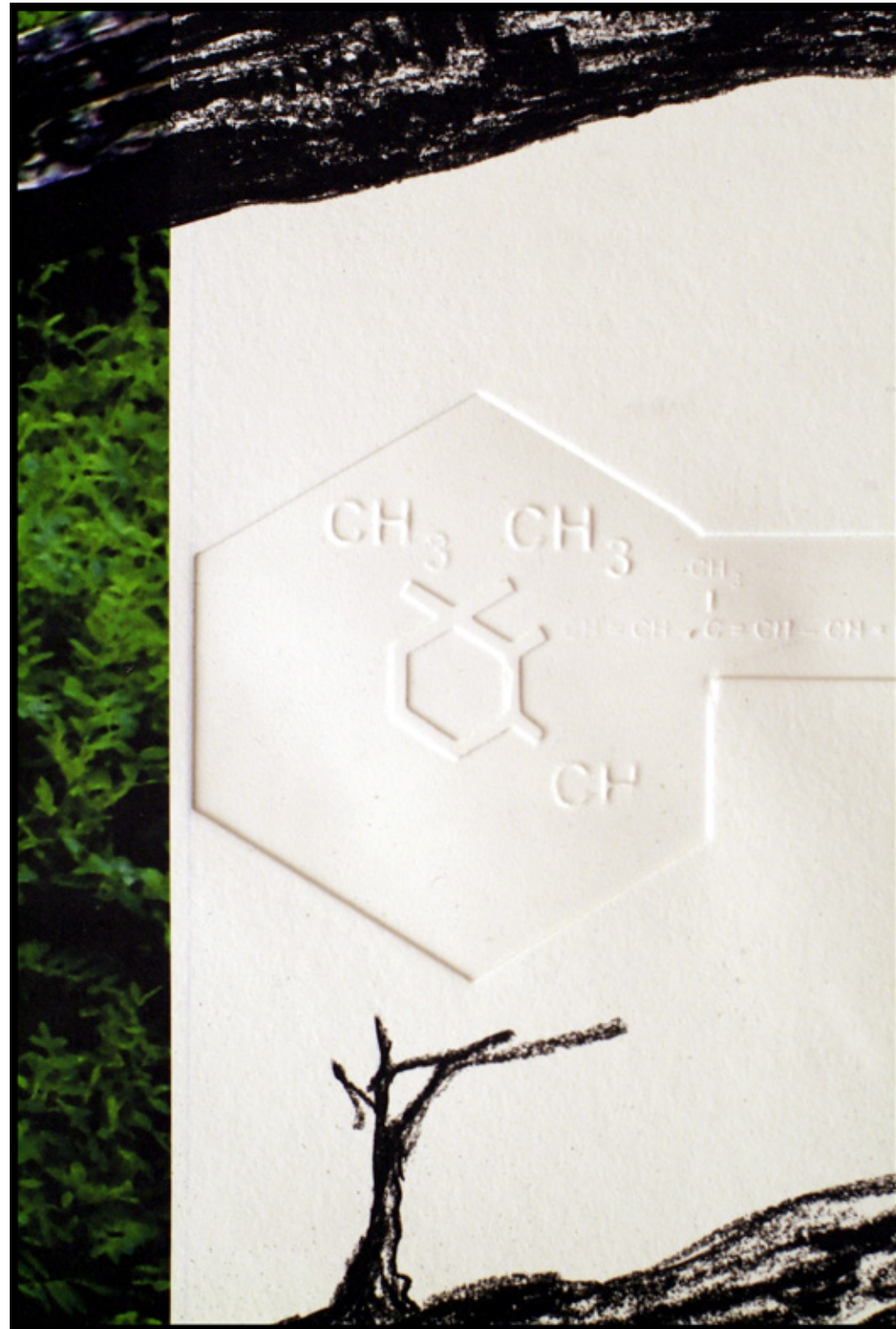
Equivalence XXIX

2006

Equivalence XXIX - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - 2006 - 330mm x 483mm



Oberon Equivalence II - Mixed media - Pigmented print - charcoal drawing - embossing - 2006



Equivalence

Selected exhibition installations



Lloyd with exhibition installation of *Equivalence*, combination photographs/ charcoal drawings
Union Bank Arts Centre, Clunes, Victoria Australia - as part of the Daylesford foto Biennale - 2007



Exhibition installation of *Equivalence*, combination photographs/ charcoal drawings
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Exhibition installation of *Equivalence* - Mixed media - Pigmented prints - charcoal drawings
 enLIGHTen - a survey show curated by Ross Farnell - Burringin Gallery, Melbourne, Australia -2008



Installation of *Equivalence* - Mixed media - Pigmented prints - charcoal drawings
 Exhibition installtion Photospace gallery ANU - Lloyd contributed to VIVID, the National Photography Festival, held in Canberra from 11 July to 12 October 2008.



Deakin University Art Gallery Melbourne, Australia -2014
 Lloyd Godman: A PHOTO: synthetic pathway
 selected works including three works from the Equivalence serie Curated by Leanne Willis



Lloyd Godman's interest in photosynthesis and regeneration of the bush after fire grew from his engagement in photography and intrigue with photosensitivity. His work with his signature plant family, Bromeliads, stalled in 2005 when he had to sell the plants in New Zealand and begin collecting again in a Australia. On a camping trip to Wilsons Prom, Victoria, he was captivated by the juxtaposition of vibrant green regrowth against the stark blackened burned tree trunks. The photographs he took provided a visual base that he then extended from with charcoal drawings similar to the Drawing from Nature project of the early 1990s where he mixed photography and drawing.

Equivalence is a transition project that stems from his focus to keep exploring ideas of light and photosynthesis.

It is doubtful if Australasia has a more protean, visionary and ecologically committed artist than Lloyd Godman. Born in Dunedin, New Zealand in 1952, and now living in Melbourne, Australia, he has been exploring environmental issues through photography (in combination with sculpture, painting and installations) since the early 1980s. He began taking more or less traditional landscape pictures in the late 1960s, but exposure to iconoclastic artists like Man Ray, Kurt Schwitters, and Joseph Beuys inspired him to begin chipping at the edges of photography in the interest of breaking down boundaries.

Black and White magazine USA issue 57 2008