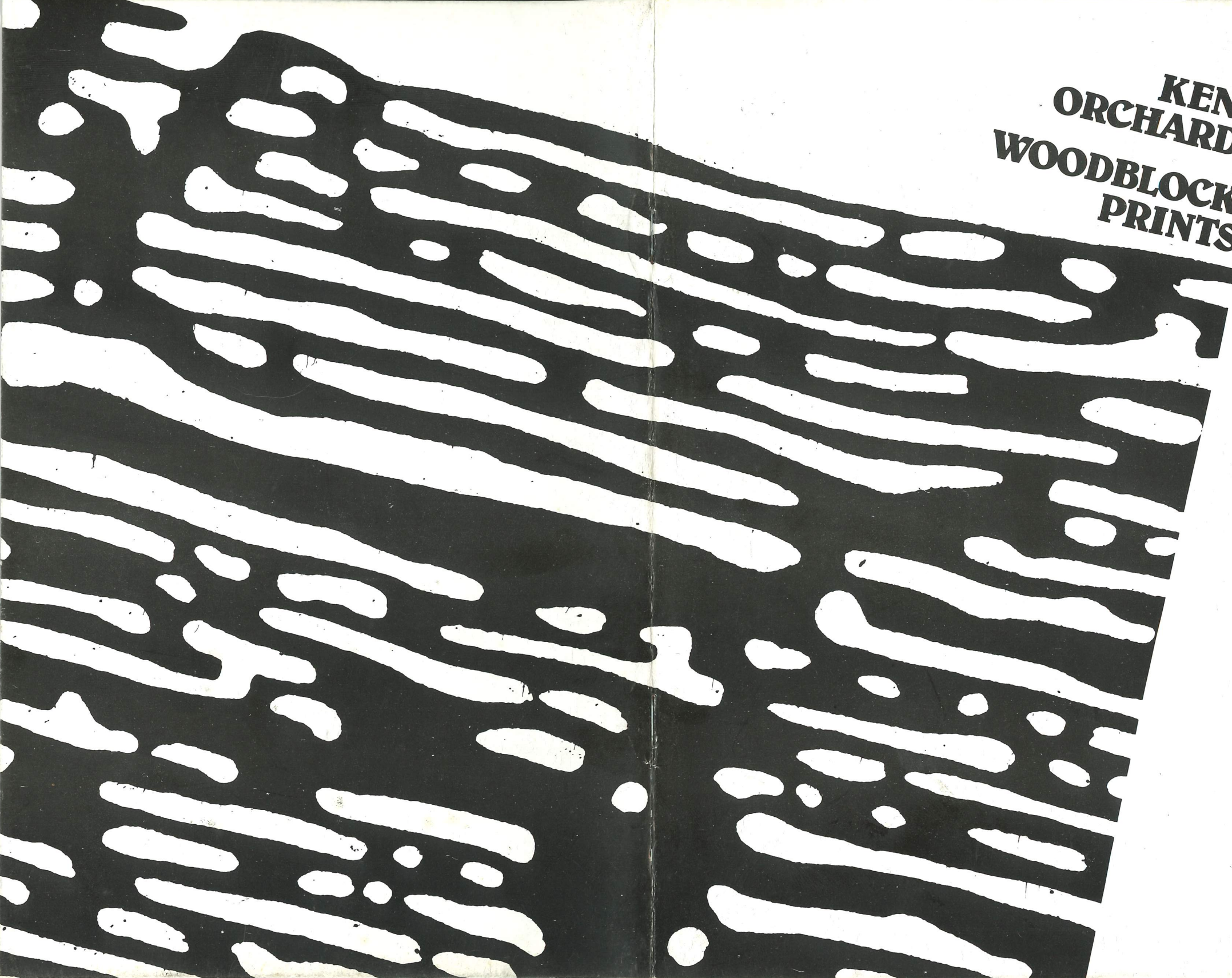


**KEN
ORCHARD
WOODBLOCK
PRINTS**



Acknowledgements.

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*One might generalize by saying:
the technique of reproduction
detaches the reproduced object
from the domain of tradition.
Walter Benjamin: The Work of
Art in the Age of Mechanical
Reproduction.*

INTRODUCTION

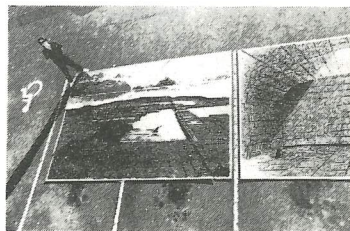
"...then the conversation jumped, veered off in several directions, and reversed itself, and I began to understand the use to which he put all those pieces of cardboard which spread out before us the knowledge of the century. All of us keep a fairly extensive collection of ... diagrams and inscriptions in our heads; and we have the illusion we are 'thinking' the loftiest philosophic and scientific thoughts when, by chance, a few of them fall into a pattern which seems neither too conventional nor too novel... Here all this material was visibly outside us; we could not confuse it with ourselves. As a garland is strung from hooks, we hung our conversation on these little images, and each of us could see the mechanism of the other's mind and of his own..."

Mount Analogue: René Daumal. Penguin Trans. ©1959. p.38

Like Father Sogol in Daumal's **Mount Analogue**, Ken Orchard deliberately externalizes the sources of the imagery and the ideas in his work, thus throwing into relief their patterns of operation and mechanisms of construction.

His woodblock prints and paintings are all based on a careful and often intellectually self-conscious selection of "found images"; images which themselves operate within the discourses of art history; of cultural myth; of photographic reproduction; of scientific or cartographical illustration. Any construction of meaning we might make around the works can be located not just in this overlay of associations, and of visual codes and conventions, but in the ambiguous space between this and the works clear processes of production, and insistent physicality.

In the spirit of the postmodernist obsession with the reproduction and re-presentation of representations, and the parallel devaluing of hand-crafting, of notions of authorship, of original presence and "Truth", Orchard's selected images, be they original drawings, by, for instance, Eugène von Guérard in



DGB 16 f.54-55 (Vol.12), or anonymous book illustrations like the engravings used in **network: the prison of vision**, are filtered through the simplifying and homogenizing process of photocopying, then further depleted of information by their massive enlargement. Paradoxically, they are then subjected to an obsessive, detailed, intricate crafting process - wood carving and finally printing. Thus, in an historical feed back loop, they are returned to the earliest method of reproducing images.

The inclusion of the woodblocks in the exhibition as mirror images of the prints highlights this process, and also the duality yet conflation of their mechanical reproduction and hand crafting, of their user-friendly technology and their time consuming manual skill, of their two dimensional tracing and the formal play and physicality of the relief sculpture.

The overwhelming scale of the recent works, as well as the graphic intensity characteristic of woodblock printing, reinforces this physical and conceptual conjunction of meaning, by demanding the physical engagement of the viewer. One must necessarily move about to read these works, reinforcing one's sense of embodiment in the natural world yet dependence on visual and cultural conventions in perceiving it.

In **network** the convergent perspective lines, in one produced "naturally" (the tessellated pavement), in the other produced culturally (the prison), both mediated culturally as book engravings and having personal reference for the artist, manipulate and entrap vision, moving through spatial illusion to a grid-like formal surface. Their sense of resounding emptiness and "silence" is a result of their scale in relation to the human body, as well as the symbolism of isolated space and light.

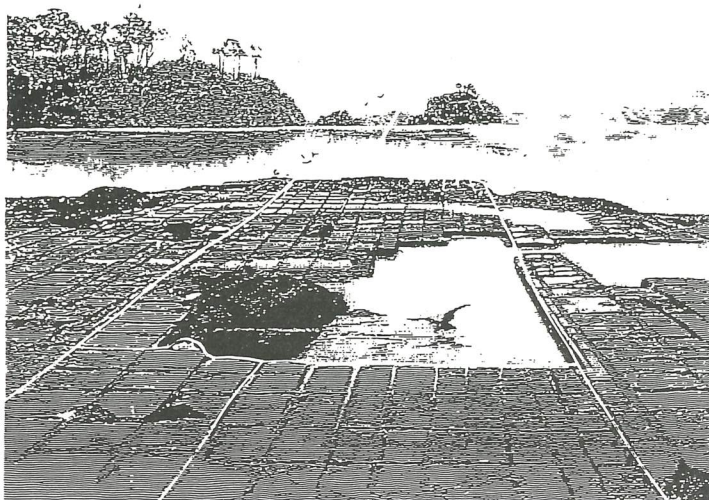
In **DGB 16**, the grids are actually parts of the work, each piece produced individually as is Imants Tiller's **Mount Analogue** to which it refers. Tiller's grid fragments and dislocates von Guérard's sublime vision of Terra Australis. Orchard's, on the other hand, subverts this vision by juxtaposing diverse visual codes and setting up a tension between the formalist surface and the illusionistic perspective of the drawing, between the ontic and self-referential nature of the artwork and the possibility of natural reference. This is highlighted by his use of von Guérard's working drawing, unlike Tiller's use of the painting, (albeit in reproduction). Orchard investigates the archive, literally and figuratively, exposing, as it were, the image's plotting and encoding of nature.

While the concepts behind many of these works were established prior to Ken Orchard's coming to Brisbane, all the works dated 1987 were produced during his six months as Artist-in-Residence at the Queensland Film and Drama Centre at Griffith University - by any standards a massive undertaking.

The residency provided Ken Orchard with the space, time and financial security to address the risks inherent in realizing these very ambitious works, and to engage fully in the dialogue between theory and practice.



Sarah Follent.
August 1987.



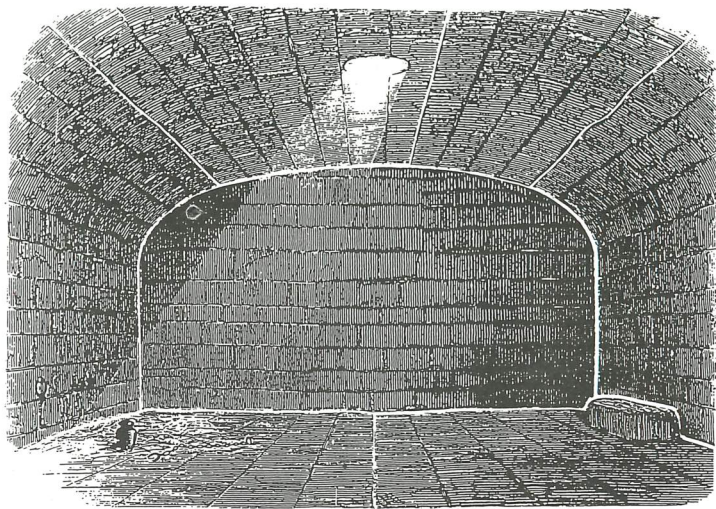
net-work : the prison of vision. 1987.
Seven panelled woodblock
330 x 450 cms.

*I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that behind every twentieth century grid there lies, like a trauma that must be repressed - a symbolist window parading in the guise of a treatise on optics.**

net-work : the prison of vision.

net-work, n. 1. a work of art, comprised of two woodblock panels, each 3.3 x 4.5 metres, and each divided into seven sections, into which numerous lines have been gouged; this scarred surface. 2. two reproductions after engravings, of the Tessellated pavement, Tasmania (43.0° S , 147° 26' E), taken from Garra's Picturesque Atlas of Australasia, Vol. 2, 1886, p.503; and an interior view of the upper cell of the Marmertine Prison, Rome (41° 53' N , 12° 30' E), taken from Cassell's Illustrated Family Bible, c.1845, p.348, New Testament. 3. a relationship between various forms of reproductive media, namely engraving, photomechanical reproduction and woodblock carving. 4. a graphic correspondence between interior architectural masonry and tessellation disclosed by natural reductive processes; a visual concordance between these two structures. 5. an opposition of two one point perspectives, arranged in such a manner as to effect psychological responses in a viewer; an implied relationship between these two works and a third party. 6. an inversion of the traditional value accorded to the mediating substance (i.e. its persistent reduction to the status of artefact) by labour investment in the primary surface. 7. the total sum of labour, exclusive of deductions.

* The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths:
Rosalind E. Krauss. M.I.T. Press.©1985.



net-work : the prison of vision. 1987.
Seven panelled woodblock
330 x 450 cms.

Degeneration is an inherent quality of the photocopy process. The bleaching out of the original texture of an image is analogous to the evaporation of a muddy pool of water on a summer's day ; both leave only residues, in the form of peripheral traces, of a former state. Photocopy enlargement accelerates this process of image depletion, and if pursued, the image fades beyond the point of recognition, towards visual oblivion.

In the case of **net-work** the decision of where to stop the depletion of the images was dictated by the need to maintain a certain density in the oblique grid structures that steal the eyes along their lattice works. Otherwise the sight would optically penetrate, rather than be carried along their convergences.

A second decision, regarding the scale of the final works, involved an act of resignation as much as it did a resolution. A friend recently writing that one print reminded him of a torture chamber went on to say that although "there are no visible means of punishment, the effort that went into producing the [canvas] prints makes any figuration superfluous". This absence of figuration in connection to the scale and arrangement of the work is one of its most important formal aspects. The implication here is that the viewer, necessarily present to literally view the work, occupies this vacancy, becomes, by the act of physical placement, the figurative element.

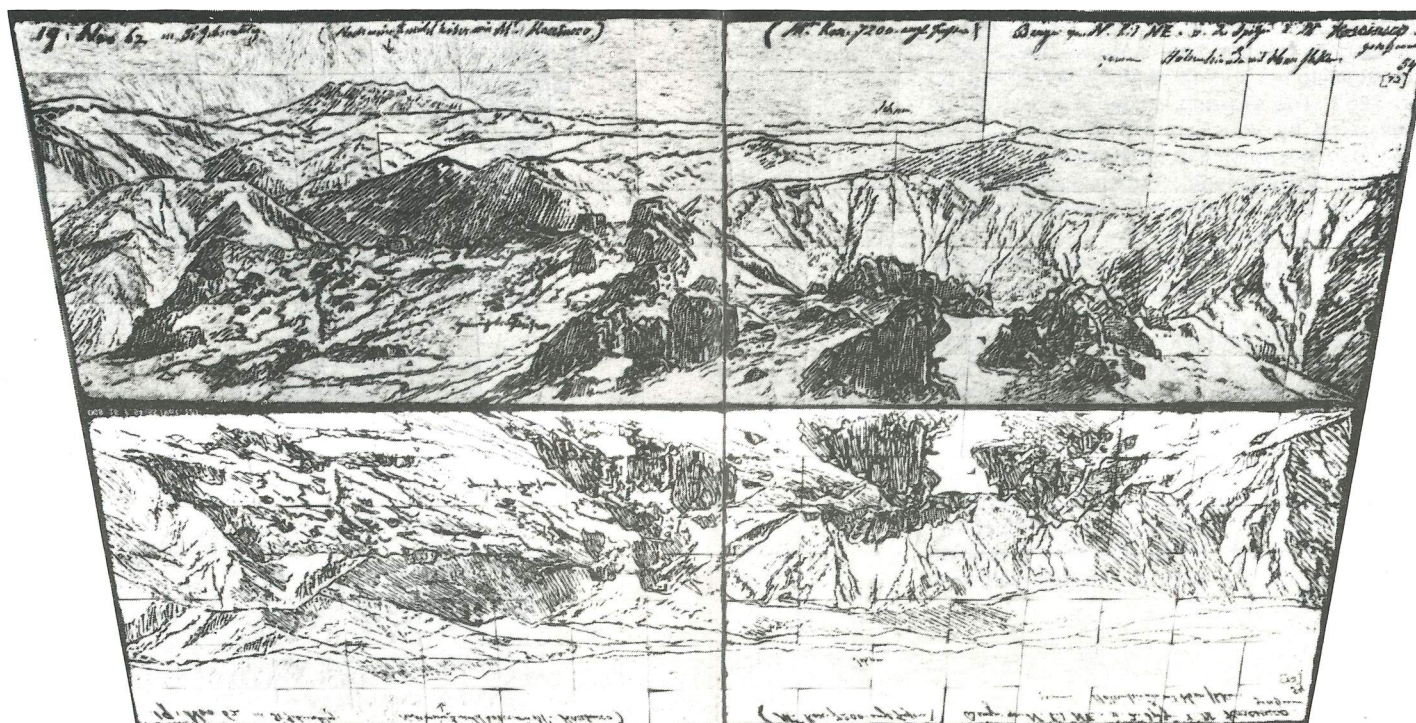
I asked him, 'What do you mean by "analogical mountain climbing"?'

- *It's the art of...*
- *What is an art?*
- *The value of danger :*
 - temerity → suicide*
 - Short of it, no satisfaction.*
- *What is danger?*
- *What is prudence?*
- *What is a mountain? 1.*

To teach anatomy, conventional diagrams rather than photographs are used, and from every point of view these diagrams are different from the object of study, except that certain relationships - precisely those forming the thing to be known - are preserved. I have done the same thing here. 2.

1. **Mount Analogue: A Novel of Symbolic Authentic Non-Euclidian Adventures in Mountain Climbing:** René Daumal.
©. Librairie Gallimard, 1952. ©.Penguin Trans.,1959.
pp.110-11, working notes.

2. *ibid.* p 114.

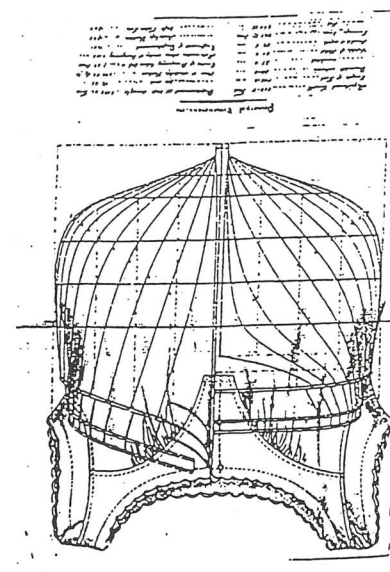
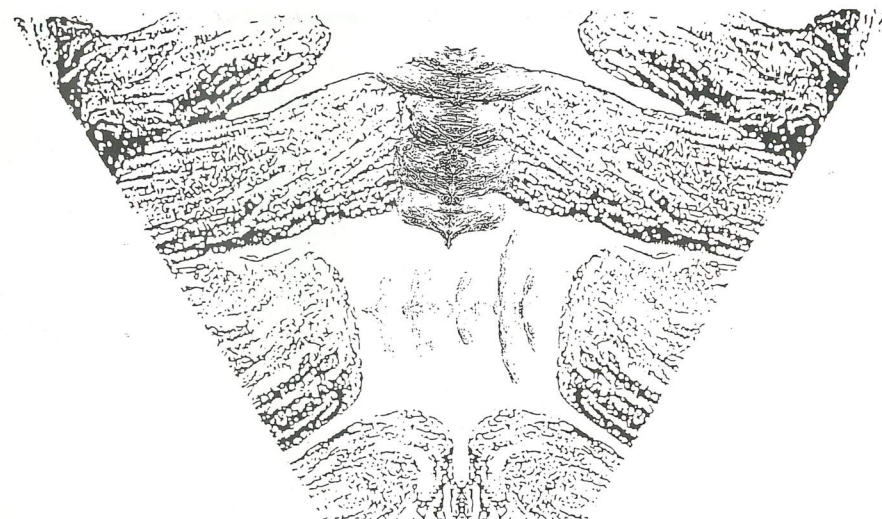


DGB 16 f.54-55 (Vol.12). 1987.
112 panelled woodblock print on Arches paper.
180 x 610 cms.

DGB 16 f. 54-55 (Vol.12) is a woodblock print based on an original double folio drawing by Eugène von Guérard, the drawing having been made after attaining the summit of Mount Kosciusko on the 19th of November, 1862. The drawing is one of a number of topographical sketches used by von Guérard to construct his painting, South East view from the summit of Mt. Kosciusko. The title **DGB 16 f.54-55 (Vol.12)** is the archives location number of the original item; a code which identifies its position for retrieval from the subterranean stores of the Mitchell Library, N.S.W.

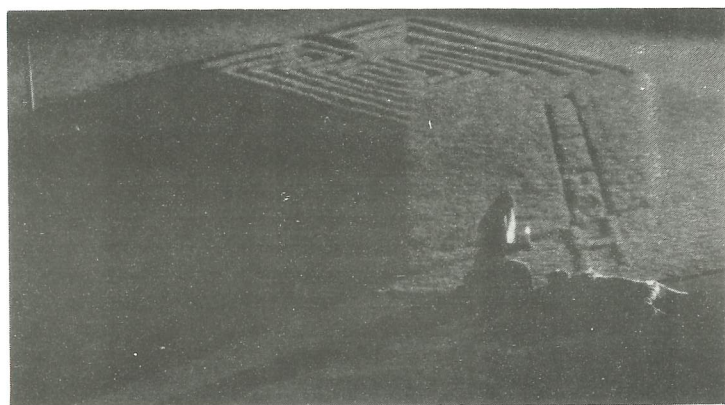
The stimulus for **DGB 16^S** execution is located elsewhere; in the memory (trace) of viewing the original painting by Imants Tillers, entitled **Mount Analogue** (1985), and the reading, in English translation of a novel by René Daumal called **Mount Analogue**. The subject matter of Tillers' painting is von Guérard's S.E. view from the summit of Mt. Kosciusko. Daumal's novel maps a pataphysical expedition to *terra sublimis*.

DGB 16 seeks to function like an x-ray, plotting out a hidden substratum. The deployment of the Tillers' grid proportion (10x15"), like a symbol in the legend, is an aid to enable a viewer, once having become a climber, to use the map. Just as members of von Guérard's party may have listened to the sound of their own voices coming back to them in this remote region, the work is a terrain filled with echoes returning from the distance.



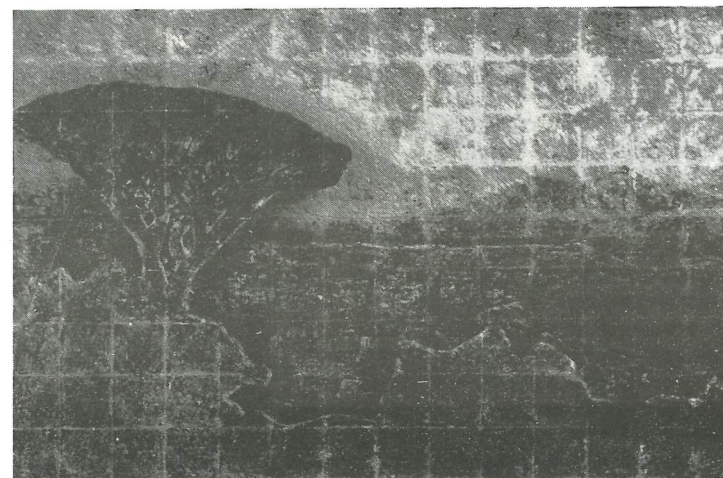
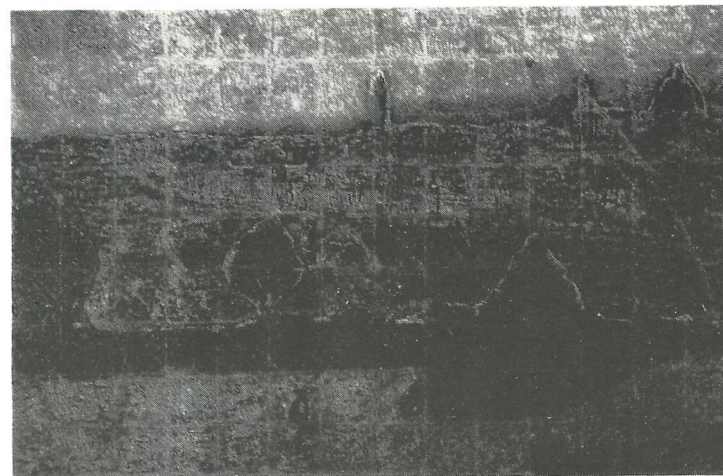
Heart of Stone. 1987.
Woodblock print on cotton duck. (First state).
115 x 200 cms.

Cutty Sark. 1987.
Woodblock print on cotton duck.
122 x 81 cms.

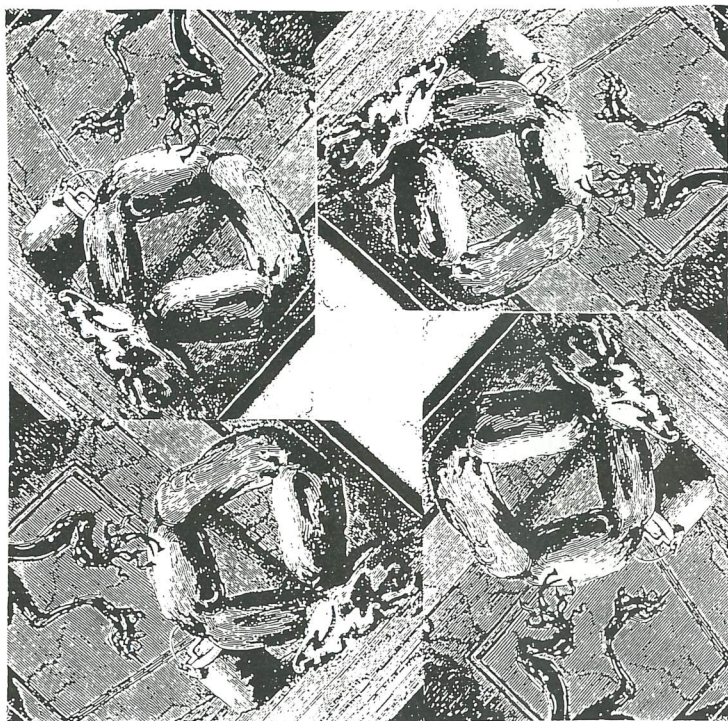


Three Textures. 1986.
Three woodblock prints on Stonehenge paper.
244 x 366 cms.

Labyrinth. 1981.
Photograph.
54.5 x 99 cms.



Two Views. 1982-6.
Two paintings on glass panels.
Each 43.5 x 63 cms.



Transformation. 1987.
16 panelled woodblock print on cotton duck.
375 x 375 cms.

Curriculum Vitae

Born Adelaide, S.A., 1959

Education

South Australian College of Arts and Education 1978-82.
Awarded B.A.F.A.(Sculpture)
Miscellaneous student, Sydney College of the Arts 1984.
Second Year (p/t) Masters candidate (Sculpture), S.C.A. 1986.

Group Exhibitions

- 1981 Student Survey Exhibition, Education Dept. Gallery, Adelaide.
SAS Channel 10 Young Artist's Award Exhibition, Festival Theatre, Adelaide.
- 1982 "*There at the time*", S.A. Workshop members Exhibition, Roundspace Gallery, Adelaide.
- 1983 "*Recent South Australian Sculpture*" Survey Exhibition, South Australian Art Gallery.
- 1984 Christmas Art Workers Union Fund Raiser Exhibition, Artspace, Sydney.
- 1986 "*Hungry*", Sydney College of the Arts Sculpture Dept. Exhibition, Performance Space, Sydney.
"*Exiles or Expatriates?*" Exhibition, Festival Theatre foyer, Adelaide.
- 1987 "*Woodblock Prints*", Central Theatres Gallery, Griffith University, Brisbane.
"*The Ark*", ARX 87, Distance project, Perth.
Group Exhibition, Gallery 52, Perth.
"*net-work*", Two person Exhibition, Artspace, Sydney.
"*net-work*", Solo Exhibition, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne.

Works in Public Collections

South Australian Art Gallery, 1982.

Publications

Artlink, Sept. 1981.
S.A. Art Gallery Broadsheet, March, 1983.
Contributor- *Fade To Black* magazine, S.C.A. film group, 1985.
Contributor- "*Hungry*" exhibition catalogue, May, 1986.
Artlink, Dec.-Feb 1987.

Prizes/Grants

SAS Channel 10 Young Artist's Award, 1981.
Occupied V.A.B. New York Studio, Soho, N.Y.C., 1983.
South Australian Arts Grants Commission grant, 1983.

Currently Artist in Residence (Printmaking) at Griffith University, Brisbane, from April to Sept. 1987. Exhibition- "*Woodblocks 1987*", Central Theatres Gallery, Griffith University, Brisbane, Sept. 1987.