

Midland Junction Arts Centre

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EMMA JOLLEY

SHERIDAN'S

15 FEB - 11 APR 2020

THE HOUSE OF CLUBS

For more than a hundred years, the name 'Sheridan's' was painted in crimson newspaper-Gothic lettering outside a small badge and engraving factory, converted from a 1913 homestead, in West Perth. By its third generation, the family business was operating amidst decades of accumulated machinery, records and templates until 2018, when the factory was decommissioned and knocked down. Its substantial archive of dies and plates - the metal templates used to produce lapel-pins - was sold off. Items of state, military and governmental significance were cherry-picked by the WA Museum. Then, over the final few Saturdays of business, passers-by purchased dies and plates from an ad-hoc display table at a dollar or two apiece. So began Perth printmaker Emma Jolley's bittersweet chronicle of the end of a workshop and an era of social history.

Jolley's curious selection of plates and dies tells a familiar civilian history: from Pilbara District Rugby Football League to WA Trotting Association, The Gliding Club of WA, Azzuri Soccer Club, Ballidu Bowls Club, Claremont Bowling Club and even Jolley's old high school leavers' pin. Many of the clubs have since updated their insignia or even closed down; badges struck from these mid-century

designs may only now exist in members' jewellery boxes or dusty trophy cabinets.

Each of the 5x5cm machined metal dies is a palimpsest of community culture. Take this one: pale green roundels encircle a sable mare to signify the WA Palomino Association, which has a 70-year history. Its pin emblemises not only several hundred members, but the life of the club: afternoon rides, cake stalls, horse feed, animal care, safety demonstrations, cups of tea, volunteer judges, ribbons, AGMs and newsletters. For years, this die sat ready to be struck into countless badges, stored in an upright stack alongside hundreds of other emblems. The magnitude of community – people, activity, tradition – represented upon one dusty rack at Sheridan's is something to be marvelled at.

Pins, trophies and patches are quintessential in club and association culture, lending ceremony to what can be quite small, specialised or obscure group activities. Pins which recognise life membership, skill improvement, secretarial positions, long service and 'wooden spoons' testify to the primacy of membership rather than achievement as the lifeblood of many of these clubs. Outward insignia is also a way to make new connections: *Is that a*



Claremont Cricket Club pin? Perhaps you know my friend Helen; she coaches the under-12s.

The decommissioned plates are larger, around 20 cm, and were used to engrave an accurate 'original', which a specialised machine transcribed into other, smaller templates. One side is inscribed with banners, shields and club names amongst a cacophony of surface markings, amassed while the plates were in use in offset printing at the West Australian, before Sheridan's purchased them as scrap. The reverse bears imagery from bygone newspaper articles.

14 Florence Street is the result of hours of experimentation, as Jolley tried to get the plates to speak, revealing their singular, unintended surface history. Like regalia production, printmaking is an enigmatically technical discipline, demanding patience and specialised tools. Each plate was printed twice, one side intaglio and the other relief, each precisely inked, registered and pressed. A long-time water polo player, Jolley's careful work reveals her admiration for club culture and her melancholy over the parochial tendency to let go of buildings and objects before they have a chance to inform our collective heritage.

Before demolition day, Sheridan's general manager (and grandson) Chas photographed the factory site. His images reverberate through Jolley's prints. Anonymous handwritten serial codes and shorthand notes introduce us to past workers who would quip ("sad pool!" design) and err ("Socker Club") as they operated machines, consulted with clients and took tea breaks. His photograph of the post-demolition rubble is given a stark, mournful texture in Jolley's four colour screen print.

It should be noted that Sheridan's is still running, family owned, from a new location in Jolimont. It is not the business, then, but the old workshop, laden with history, to which Jolley's elegy is addressed. In Perth, asbestos, out-of-favour architectural styles, council zoning and an indiscriminating demand for newness all contribute to a cycle of demolition that is short and unforgiving. In marking the razing of Sheridan's and the dispersal of its contents, Jolley reminds us how neatly community history can be stored in physical things: years from now, one little badge might be the very last remnant of the service and togetherness of a whole group of people.

Dr. Sheridan Hart



IMAGES

Cover: Emma Jolley, *The Stacks* (detail), 2019 - 2020, silkscreen, 2240 x 1600mm.

1. Emma Jolley, *Demo Day and As It Stands* (installation view), 2020, four colour silkscreen on BFK, 1020 x 765mm each.
2. Emma Jolley, *14 Florence St, West Perth* (installation view), 2019, relief, intaglio, stencil, silkscreen and paint marker on Somerset, 2285 x 760mm.

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**Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries**

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Midland Junction Arts Centre respectfully acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we operate, the Whadjuk people, as well as other First Australians connected with this land. We pay our respects to Elders both past and present.