
Huw Davies Gallery
2 - 26 February 2017

Move up to the Views
David Flanagan



Image: David Flanagan, *Untitled #23* (detail), 2016, C type print, 920 x 660mm

Expanded Horizons: David Flanagan's *Move up to the Views*

There is a mid-century travel poster promoting Canberra that I have always loved. It features an artistic impression of Canberra promoting it as the bush capital. Designed by John Telfer Gray, it shows an aerial view over the Parliamentary Triangle, towards Black Mountain, with the phrase 'Canberra, visit your national capital' printed beneath. The few buildings depicted (as there were not many then, nor was there a lake) are dwarfed by inviting parks and trees. It is an image of possibility. One that leaves out the interventions with the landscape that enabled farmland to be transformed into a capital city in just a few decades.

I was reminded of the poster when looking at David Flanagan's new series of work *Move up to the Views* (2017) at PhotoAccess' Huw Davies Gallery. Flanagan's selection of fourteen colour photographs from a

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larger body of work offer a counterpoint to the advertisement. They depict construction sites of new Canberra suburbs in the city's north. The images confront the reality of an ever-expanding city and also show compelling aspects of the developments that are easily missed. The large, crisp photographs elevate otherwise banal scenes to things of drama and intrigue.

Move up to the Views is Flanagan's ninth solo show, and his first in over a decade to feature colour photography. After graduating from the Canberra Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Design Photography in 2005, he relocated to Sydney. There he concentrated on aerial landscape photography and developed a practice using traditional film-based methods. The international award-winning photographer has been intrigued by the suburban sprawl of Canberra since moving back to his hometown several years ago.

Throughout the series Flanagan's celebration of the alluring qualities of the landscape – particularly the sky – merge with focussed observation of construction sites. They express his desire to 'try and find the beauty' in urban developments. The scale of the works (at over a metre wide) and their sophisticated presentation separate them from commercial images used to sell home and land packages.

This is seen in works such as *Untitled # 21* (2015), which depicts a billboard for the suburb of Moncrieff featuring the slogan 'full of possibility'. The blanket of fog covering the upper half of the image adds an ethereal quality to the work and also locates it in Canberra. At first glance I thought Flanagan was being ironic, given the sign is positioned on a large section of uninspiring cleared land, and the site itself is concealed by the fog. After pausing I began to appreciate the point he was trying to make; perhaps it is a cliché, but everything is full of possibility, not least a suburb under construction.

Flanagan's working method deliberately emphasises the intersection of light and the landscape. He shoots at dawn and sunset on weekends, times when the sites are vacant. This allows light to dominate and become what I think to be true subjects of the series. In *Untitled # 19* (2015), for example, the glistening reflections from rain recently fallen on a carless, untouched street draw my eyes across the work.

Flanagan is interested in photography that 'includes the things others leave out'. The series has an affinity with images of the American West captured by landscape photographer Robert Adams in the 1970s, one of his many influences. Others include Australian modernist photographer Olive Cotton and the German conceptual duo Bernd and Hilla Becher. These influences are felt in Flanagan's subject matter as well as in the stillness and monumental scale of his photographs. The presence of broken fencing and vandalised temporary offices in *Untitled # 16* (2015) and the orange road markers just discernible from the earth in *Untitled # 23* (2016) demonstrate his commitment to photographing construction sites as they appear to him.

In *Move up to the Views* Flanagan invites us to pay attention to places we pass by. The series evokes Adams' belief that landscape photography offers the viewer 'three verities—geography, autobiography, and metaphor'. Rather than presenting an idealized image of suburbs in development, Flanagan shows them in a raw period of transition. The series has made me question whether this phase is as significant as the finished suburbs they will (and in some cases already have) become.

Grace Blakeley-Carroll, Januaray 2017

Grace Blakeley-Carroll is an emerging art historian and curator

David Flanagan | Artist statement

Since returning to Canberra in 2012, after seven years living in Sydney, I have been fascinated with the amount of urban growth that is appearing in the town where I grew up.

These images explore the outer areas of Northern Canberra that are destined to become new suburbs. As the demand for housing continues to increase in our cities, more and more land is being sacrificed to suburbia. Land is cleared and trees are removed as the areas transition from rural landscape to medium density housing estates. In these photographs I attempt to find something extraordinary in these

unremarkable, unromantic landscapes. I photograph the spaces early in the morning or late in the day, when only the machines are left to watch over the sites. There is a silence and strange beauty in the land at this time during its state of flux. The reality is not so alluring.

David Flanagan | About the artist

David Flanagan is a Canberra based photographer specialising in landscape photography. After graduating from the Canberra Institute of Technology with a BA Design (Photography) in 2005 Flanagan relocated to Sydney and established himself as a successful commercial photographer and acclaimed exhibiting landscape photographer.

In August 2012 Flanagan moved with his family back home to Canberra where he currently works at the Australian National Archives as Exhibitions Coordinator. Flanagan was the PhotoAccess inaugural *Dark Matter* resident in 2015, where he spent six months creating work in the PhotoAccess darkroom for his exhibition *Silver and Gold*.

Image List

1.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 3</i> , 2013, C type print, 660 x 925mm, edition of 5	\$600 unframed	\$820 framed
2.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 19</i> , 2015, C type print, 660 x 825mm, edition of 5	\$550 unframed	\$750 framed
3.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 9</i> , 2015, C type print, 660 x 2000mm, edition of 5	\$1,220 unframed	\$1,640 framed
4.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 13</i> , 2015, C type print, 660 x 825mm, edition of 5	\$550 unframed	\$750 framed
5.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 37</i> , 2016, C type print, 660 x 1170mm, edition of 5	\$740 unframed	\$990 framed
6.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 26</i> , 2016, C type print, 660 x 825mm, edition of 5	\$550 unframed	\$750 framed
7.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 21</i> , 2015, C type print, 660 x 825mm, edition of 5	\$550 unframed	\$750 framed
8.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 12</i> , 2015, C type print, 660 x 2000mm, edition of 5	\$1,220 unframed	\$1,640 framed
9.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 32</i> , 2016, C type print, 660 x 925mm, edition of 5	\$600 unframed	\$820 framed
10.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 18</i> , 2015, C type print, 660 x 2000mm, edition of 5	\$1,220 unframed	\$1,640 framed
11.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 23</i> , 2016, C type print, 660 x 925mm, edition of 5	\$600 unframed	\$820 framed
12.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 31</i> , 2016, C type print, 660 x 1170mm, edition of 5	\$740 unframed	\$990 framed
13.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 16</i> , 2015, C type print, 660 x 825mm, edition of 5	\$550 unframed	\$750 framed
14.	David Flanagan, <i>Untitled # 41</i> , 2015, C type print, 660 x 825mm, edition of 5	\$550 unframed	\$750 framed



Image: David Flanagan, *Untitled #23* (detail), 2016, C type print, 920 x 660mm

Public program

Join David Flanagan and Anja Loughhead for an artists in conversation event on Sunday 26 February at 2pm in the Huw Davies Gallery. Free event. All welcome.