

## Poorer than our parents

As a country, we fetishise the quarter-acre block and the Hills Hoist. Ours is a nation divided into 'homeowners' and 'people desperate to become homeowners'. In a culture defined by economic crisis, most of the homes built are designed for a standardized citizen: box apartments; project homes.

In *Seeing Like A State*, James Scott describes 'high modernism', a system of beliefs that arose in the nineteenth century which saw urban development and social planning as governable according to scientific laws. Scott describes the ways in which "officials took exceptionally complex, illegible, and local social practices... and created a standard grid whereby it could be centrally recorded and monitored" (2). The effect of this development program was the massive destruction of the multifaceted, multicultural, and multigenerational complexity of real human lives. To make cities and their inhabitants easier to quantify and govern, developers posited "standardized citizens" that, "for the purposes of the planning exercise," had "no gender, no tastes, no history, no values, no opinions or original ideas, no traditions, and no distinctive personalities" (346).

It is within this context that Steven Bellosguardo's *CULTCHAFUKER* emerges. Here in the Western suburbs — a historically industrial, affordable, and proudly working-class region — the city is changing. First the artists and the poor students, then the developers. We are poorer than our parents. This drives the demand for cheap housing and feeds the developers levelling the western suburbs to make way for the new.

Here on Kauria land — land that was stolen but never ceded — James Scott's critique is apt. When we think of Adelaide, with its parklands and city square, we think of Colonel Light standing at Montefiore Hill. The statue, *Light's Vision* (1906) by Birnie Rhind, is the quintessential image we hold in our minds.

Light looks down towards the River Torrens and lays out the grid that will become the city of Adelaide.

He takes a multilayered landscape of history, tradition, and cultural complexity; renders it 'structured', 'simple', 'quantifiable'. Erasure, first, and then the drawing of lines. This pattern for a city was later transplanted to Aotearoa and used to build the city of Christchurch. There, as in Adelaide, the First Nations Peoples, and their relationships to country and culture, were displaced.

Bellosguardo develops a visual language of construction, development, and gentrification. Presenting two large-scale works, *Median Strip* and *Crane*, *CULTCHAFUKER* invites you to reflect on your relationship to ongoing colonisation and environmental destruction. Born in Adelaide in 1988, his own history is tied up in this complex legacy of construction. Trained as a Stonemason, Bellosguardo was the third generation of his family to apprentice in the trade. He brings an intimate experience of the construction industry to this critique of rapid, disposable development.

Bellosguardo completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Sculpture) at the University of South Australia in 2016, and this new body of work is a departure from the steel public artworks for which he is best known. The aesthetic shift reflects the artist's growing concern for the state of the planet in the face of the climate crisis, as well as deep concerns for people left behind in

the name of 'progress' and 'development'. In CULTCHAFUKER, we confront the issues directly. We find ourselves in a crisis. Bellosguardo's language — both symbolic and actual — is necessarily candid.

*Median Strip* is an assembly of waste, tetris-ed together to form a half a metre-high plinth from which dead ornamental plum and pear trees 'grow'. The introduced plants were chosen for their widespread use as decorative green space in the development projects Bellosguardo worked on across Adelaide.

*Median Strip* draws attention to the cost and residue of our perpetual pursuit of newness, upgrades, and development.

In *Crane*, Bellosguardo tackles the cultural concerns tied up with fast-paced construction and development in Adelaide's West. A black steel crane arcs up from the Gallery floor, bursting forth from the mound of soil it excavates. A circular reference to our reciprocal relationship with the natural world, as well as the cycles of construction and destruction in an industry unconcerned with longevity, sustainability, or quality, governed only by a legal minimum standard.

Both works blur the boundaries between the 'natural' and the 'constructed'. Bellosguardo demands that we recognise the extent to which the logic of cookie-cutter planning and development extends across all domains: colonising, transforming, and destroying natural and cultural worlds.

- Saskia Scott

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I acknowledge the Kurna people as the traditional owners and custodians of the Adelaide Plains. This land was, and always will be, Kurna Land. I pay my respect to Kurna Elders past, present and emerging.