

CLAYTON TREMLETT

**Beard** AND *Influence*





CLAYTON TREMLETT

# Beard Influence



Castlemaine Art Gallery  
and Historical Museum



James McArdle  
*Portrait of the artist Clayton Tremlett with life mask* 2016  
photograph  
© Carrington McArdle

# Foreword

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Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum is proud to present *Beard and Influence* (10 July - 15 August 2016), an exhibition by artist Clayton Tremlett. Tremlett was born in 1964, and lives in Castlemaine, Victoria. A printmaker and arts educator, his work has been exhibited throughout Australia, and in Austria, Scotland and England. He is represented in the National Gallery of Australia, Geelong Gallery, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Bendigo Art Gallery and other regional, public and private collections nationally and internationally.

*Beard and Influence* explores portraiture and the performative nature of the Australian bushranger. The imagery and mythology of bushranging are never too far from the surface of the post 1788 Australian story. For almost 100 years, bushrangers were viewed as violent criminals and concomitantly, as populist heroes. A bushranger's life had a dramatic arc, and there was a performative element to their anti-authoritarian bravado, exemplified in contemporary carte de visite images. Historical images of Ned Kelly, John and Thomas Clarke and Captain Moonlite are reproduced in this catalogue, with thanks to the State Library of Victoria, the State Library of New South Wales, the Public Record Office Victoria and the Victoria Police Museum.

Over the past three years Tremlett has conducted extensive research into this fascinating period of Australian history and in particular, the performative flair of bushrangers. The artist has recreated original photographs of twelve bushrangers, and from this documentation he has developed twelve self-portrait linocuts and a series of twelve laser resist etchings. The importance of Tremlett's exploration of epic heroism and masculinity through his performative manifestations is captured in Joanna Gilmour's excellent essay in this catalogue.

Bushranging was a dangerous and mortal pursuit. As a consequence of their crimes and the fear that followed, bushrangers deaths were seldom met with remorse by the general public. Rather, the morbidly curious were preoccupied with the earthly demise of those notorious outlaws. Many executions were publicly attended and posthumous photographs and death masks were made of bushrangers cadavers, partly as a consequence of the problematic pseudoscience of phrenology, a ghoulish desire to identify criminality through skull structure. The inclusion of the artist's life mask as a contrast to the death mask of Dan 'Mad Dog' Morgan in this exhibition brings the longevity of this practice of making impressions of visages into sharp focus.

On behalf of the Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum, I thank the lenders to the exhibition for their generosity. I thank the artist Clayton Tremlett for this remarkable exhibition, which brings to light an intriguing development in the laser resist etching printmaking technique, and a contemporary approach to this compelling subject matter.

Jennifer Kalionis

**Director**



Above:

Clayton Tremlett

*Self portrait as the bushranger Harry Power* 2016  
linocut, 77 × 55 cm (image), 100 × 70 cm (sheet)

Opposite page:

Charles Nettleton

*Power the Bushranger* 1870  
albumen silver photograph, 10 × 6 cm  
Picture collection, State Library of Victoria

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# Clayton Tremlett: Beard and Influence

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Our Victorian-era forebears had some strange habits when it came to hair – especially when it came to the hair of the dearly departed. They made jewellery and ornaments out of it, weaving it into bracelets and necklaces and rings. Prized as tokens of mourning, samples of hair were collected to be sealed inside brooches and locketts, or often simply kept for posterity as a memento or talisman, a physical trace of a lost and much lamented loved-one. It's common to find locks and ringlets and whiskers encased behind portrait miniatures and photographs from the period, and various historical collections house specimens of the hair of notable people, the State Library of Victoria's holdings, for instance, including a tuft clipped from Robert O'Hara Burke, the ill-fated explorer and erstwhile Castlemaine police superintendent who perished at Cooper Creek in mid-1861 after leading a hellish and calamitous foray across the continent from Melbourne to the Gulf and back.

Although such practices may seem alternately maudlin or morbid or just plain odd to us, there was perhaps more than sentimentality at play in the custom of collecting hair for relics. Indeed, in the case of beards such as that worn by Burke, some would suggest that certain nineteenth-century notions about 'manliness' as evidenced by facial hair – duty, dependability and courage as well as leadership, virility and appropriately directed aggression – were factors in its souveniring and preservation.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, when the news reached Melbourne in November 1861 that Burke's expedition had ended in awful circumstances and the deaths of several men, he and his deputy William John Wills were instantly elevated to hero status, the tragedy of the venture thrown into greater relief by the outwardly bold, brave and manly man at its centre. Printers instantly responded to the demand for souvenir portraits, with earlier photographs of the bearded visages of Burke and Wills becoming the template for various posthumous depictions.<sup>2</sup>



But if ideas about tragic, epic heroism and thwarted manliness and bravery can help explain the appeal of likenesses of dead explorers to everyday folk, what might explain the equally avid manner in which they collected images and souvenirs of the hero's antithesis – the villain? What ideas about immorality, 'criminal types' and masculine identity were seen to be expressed in the vigorous beards or raffish moustaches adopted by bushrangers Ned Kelly, Daniel Morgan and Frank Gardiner? Did they and their counterparts wear their beards as badges of honour and individuality, and was their facial hair interpreted by others as proof of the dangerous flipside of maleness: baseness, violence, lust, dissipation? Was it the tantalising presence of these characteristics that drove 'streams of people' to view Ben Hall's 'ghastly and bullet-torn body' in May 1865, or to gawp at Morgan (and help themselves to samples of his 'long and shaggy beard') during the several hours he lay dying?<sup>3</sup> Why did photographers see fit to document such scenes, and why did respectable people include cartes de visite of criminals in their family albums?

These are some of the questions behind Clayton Tremlett's *Beard and Influence*, a series of self-portraits wherein the artist has not only portrayed himself in the guise of Australian bushrangers, but has done so having over a three-year period researched their individual stories and cultivated the diverse styles of beard, mutton-chop, moustache and whisker documented in the best-known portraits of these felons. The Abraham Lincoln-style chinstrap seen fringing Hall's bottom jaw in an ambrotype taken around 1861; the spruce beard and well-groomed hair of Andrew George Scott, aka Captain Moonlite, photographed at Pentridge in March 1879; and the remarkably kempt, long dark beard worn with pride by Kelly in the portrait taken by Charles Nettleton in Melbourne Gaol the day before the outlaw's hanging in November 1880.





Opposite page:

Henry Pohl

*Post-mortem photograph of Daniel Morgan* 1865

albumen paper photograph on carte de visite 9 × 5.8cm

Collection of the State Library of New South Wales

Above:

Clayton Tremlett

*Study for self portrait as the corpse of Dan 'Mad Dog' Morgan* 2016

laser resist etching, 14 X 10 cm (image)



THOMAS & JOHN

Recalling some of the ideas explored in previous work including *Crime and Punishment* (2013) and *The Unissued stamps of Australian history* (2012), Tremlett, in collaboration with photographer Denise Martin, Davide Michielin (lighting) and stylist Kathryn Davies, has created for *Beard and Influence* linocuts in which he appears as Kelly, Hall, Morgan, Moonlite, Gardiner and other notorious rogues. The resultant twelve linocuts are accompanied by studies in the form of laser resist etchings – a process in which Tremlett ‘allows imperfections to flourish’ and which results in portraits evoking the hard, wretched lives of the bushrangers themselves and the correspondingly rough treatment of their portraits. The scratches and blemishes; the fading; the blunt or perfunctory inscriptions; their production, reproduction and circulation; their status as images caught at the intersections of commercialism, celebrity and cold documentation. As art historian Helen Ennis has written, the original bushranger photographs exhibit ‘significant physical characteristics emanating from their personal and broader social histories. ... The distressed state of these objects – their stains, tears, cuts and so on – speak of neglect or even vandalism.’<sup>14</sup> Fittingly, Tremlett’s *Self-portrait as the bushranger Ben Hall*, for example, mimics the same scars borne by the original portrait of the dapper brigand who met a desperate, violent end, and the subsequent carte de visite copy distributed to police outposts in New South Wales with descriptions of Hall’s ‘short light beard’ and ‘pleasing expression of countenance.’<sup>15</sup>

Opposite page:

Unknown

*Thomas and John Clarke, bushrangers, from a photograph taken in Braidwood Gaol. (Thomas was shot in the arm) c. 1900*  
reprint of 1867 photograph  
Collection of the State Library of New South Wales

Invoking the definition of the verb to *beard* – ‘to oppose face to face, set at defiance or to boldly confront or challenge’ – Tremlett’s self-portraits provoke consideration about resistance to authority and other historical factors which are popularly thought to have shaped Australian identity and which are central to bushranging folklore. At the same time, in reconstructing himself as these figures – part men, part myth – Tremlett asks what it is that different styles of beard might signify today, and what elements of masculinity are modern-day wearers seeking to express or project in donning them. ‘A beard says a lot about its owner’, Tremlett says, and in reconstructing myself in the guise of these personalities the question is posed: how would these guys be judged by their appearance today?

Though Robert O’Hara Burke exhibited the model of beard that marked him as an exemplar of Victorian masculinity, he is arguably better remembered as a man whose rashness, inexperience and insecurities contributed to the deaths of his comrades and his own inglorious demise. It is the murderous Ned Kelly’s similarly bushy beard that, perversely, is now associated with traits like pluck, resilience, defiance and honour. Captain Moonlite, on the other hand, might have borne the bearded look of a hardened, brazen bandit, but ended up dying ignominiously at the hangman’s hand and wearing a ring woven from the hair of James Nesbitt, his dead mate and, some say, lover. When it all boils down to it, beards have perhaps always been unreliable and ambiguous as gauges of temperament and identity, no matter how much they’ve enticed us to think otherwise.

Joanna Gilmour

**Curator**

**National Portrait Gallery**

1. Christopher Oldstone-Moore, 'The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain', *Victorian Studies* Vol. 48, No. 1, Autumn 2005, 7–34
2. Tim Bonyhady, *Burke and Wills: From Melbourne to Myth*. Balmain, NSW: David Ell Press, 1991, 184
3. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 May 1865, 5; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 April 1865, 8
4. Helen Ennis, 'Portraiture in Extremis' in Daniel Palmer [ed.], *Photogenic: essays / photography / CCP 2000–2004*. Fitzroy, VIC: Centre for Contemporary Photography and Ellikon Press, 2005, 23
5. *New South Wales Police Gazette and Weekly Record of Crime*, No. 46, 18 November 1863, 350



Dead -

Ward or Thundersbolt  
Basham's





Opposite page:

Andrew Cunningham

*Post-mortem photograph of Frederick Ward, alias Thunderbolt; in 'Albums of Photographs of Actors, Actresses, Singers, Music Hall, Artists and Others 1854 - c.1910' 1870*

albumen silver photograph on carte de visite

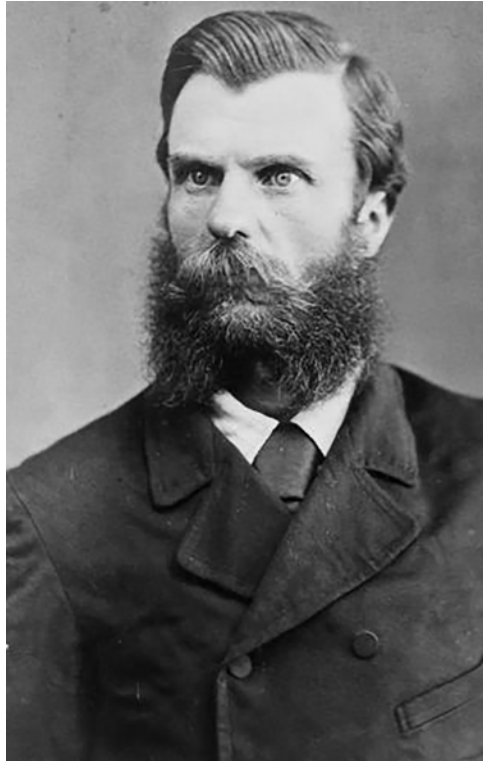
Collection of the State Library of New South Wales

Above:

Clayton Tremlett

*Self portrait as the corpse of Captain Thunderbolt 2016*

linocut 77 × 55cm (image), 100 × 70 cm (paper)



Unknown photographer (attributed to Charles Nettleton)  
*Andrew G Scott, alias Moonlite. The leader of the Wantabadgery gang of bushrangers c.1879*  
albumen silver photograph on carte de visite  
Victoria Police Museum Collection







Clayton Tremlett  
*Study for self portrait as the bushranger Owen Suffolk* 2016  
laser resist etching, 14 × 10 cm (image)

# Exhibition checklist

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Clayton Tremlett

*Self portrait as the bushranger John Clarke* 2016  
linocut 77 × 55 cm (image), 100 × 70 cm (paper)

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linocut 77 × 55 cm (image), 100 × 70 cm (paper)

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*Self portrait as the corpse of Dan 'Mad Dog' Morgan*  
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*Self portrait as the bushranger Owen Suffolk* 2016  
linocut 77 × 55 cm (image), 100 × 70 cm (paper)

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linocut 77 × 55 cm (image), 100 × 70 cm (paper)

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*Self portrait as the bushranger Harry Power* 2016  
linocut 77 × 55 cm (image), 100 × 70 cm (paper)

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*Self portrait as the bushranger Isaiah Wild Wright*  
2016  
linocut 77 × 55 cm (image), 100 × 70 cm (paper)

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*Self portrait as the corpse of Captain Thunderbolt*  
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linocut 77 × 55 cm (image), 100 × 70 cm (paper)

Clayton Tremlett

*Self portrait as the bushranger Martin Cash* 2016  
linocut 77 × 55 cm (image), 100 × 70 cm (paper)

Clayton Tremlett

*Self portrait as the bushranger Frank Gardiner* 2016  
linocut 77 × 55 cm (image), 100 × 70 cm (paper)

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*Study for self portrait as the bushranger John Clarke*  
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laser resist etching 14 × 10 cm (image)

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Clayton Tremlett  
*Study for self portrait as the bushranger Frank Gardiner* 2016  
laser resist etching 14 × 10 cm (image)

Clayton Tremlett  
*Life mask of Clayton Tremlett* 2016  
plaster

Henry Power alias Johnson  
*Penal and Gaols Branch, Chief Secretary's Department*  
*VPRS 515/PO Central Register of Male Prisoners, Unit 13, 2643*  
Public Record Office Victoria

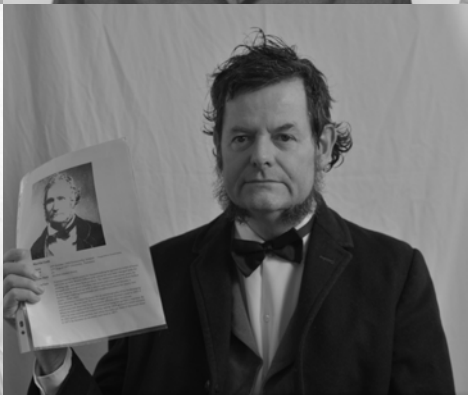
Isaiah Wright  
*Penal and Gaols Branch, Chief Secretary's Department*  
*VPRS 515/PO Central Register of Male Prisoners, Unit 20, 12313*  
Public Record Office Victoria

Unknown  
*Death mask of Daniel Morgan (replica)* 1865  
plaster  
University of Melbourne, Harry Brookes Allen  
Museum of Pathology and Anatomy

Unknown  
*Andrew G Scott, alias Moonlite. The leader of the Wantabadgery gang of bushrangers* c. 1879  
albumen silver photograph on carte de visite  
Victoria Police Museum Collection



William Insull Burman  
*Portrait of Ned Kelly* 1880  
albumen silver photograph, 9.8 × 14 cm  
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria





# Acknowledgements

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I would like to acknowledge the generous assistance of the Public Record Office Victoria, the State Library of Victoria, the State Library of New South Wales and the Harry Brookes Allen Museum of Pathology and Anatomy at the University of Melbourne for their generosity and assistance in the development of this exhibition.

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Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum wishes to thank the artist Clayton Tremlett. I would like to acknowledge the assistance and support of Craig MacDonald and the Garage Art Foundry and Cascade Print Room. I thank Denise Martin, Davide Michielin, Rhyl Plant and, in particular Kathryn Davies, for their significant role in the development of this project and for their ongoing support of the artist.

I wish to extend special thanks Joanna Gilmour Curator at the National Portrait Gallery for the excellent catalogue essay.

Jennifer Kalionis

**Director**

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CLAYTON TREMLETT

# Beard AND *Influence*



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