



MURTOA
Dedicated 1921
Monument Maker Huxley Parker & Co
(Melbourne)
Sculptor Unknown (Australian)

The Legacy

IT IS NOW just on a century since the dedication of the majority of Victoria's *Digger* memorials. At a time when monuments are under scrutiny, *Immortals* examines and reinterprets monumental portraiture of the 1920's and furthers our analysis of the Anzac identity as it was commemorated.

This typological study celebrates and connects a shared history

for regional communities. As a result of the project's considerable research, we discover that each *Digger* Cenotaph, generally considered as mass produced, is in fact unique, with individual peculiarities and a distinctive history.

The result is an extraordinary archive and a valuable resource for future reference and research.



WYCHEPROOF
Dedicated 1920
Monument Maker Standard Masonry Works
(Footscray)
Sculptor Cast taken from Alphington

Acknowledgments

CLAYTON TREMLETT WOULD like to acknowledge the Dja Dja Wurrung as traditional custodians of the land on which this exhibition is presented. He also acknowledges the Victoria Remembers Minor Grant Program, Regional Arts Victoria and the Regional Arts Fund for their generous support.

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the Benalla, Box Hill, Collingwood, Lancefield, Mildura, Murtoa, Nhill, Port Fairy and Wycheproof Historical Societies and members of the Berriwillock and Wedderburn RSL who assisted in providing information on the dedication of their local memorials.

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About The Artist



NUMURKAH
Dedicated 1929
Monument Maker Unknown
Sculptor Unknown

PRINTMAKER, CLAYTON TREMLETT produces works inspired by Australian History. He conducts extensive historical research to develop projects using a variety of print mediums. Renowned for his linocut portraiture, he also works with etching and serigraphy. His oeuvre includes wallpapers, artists' books, historical plaques and editioned prints.

In Australia, he is represented in the Australian National Gallery, Bendigo Art Gallery, Byron Shire Council, Castlemaine Art Museum, Charles Sturt University, Geelong Art Gallery, Monash University, Moreland City Council, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, State

Library of Victoria, Tweed River Art Gallery, Wangaratta Art Gallery and Warrnambool Art Gallery collections.



Studio portrait by James McArdle



Brochure design by Adrian Saunders



A portrait study of
Digger Memorials in the State of Victoria



BEEAC
Dedicated 1923
Monument Maker J Swain & Sons (Melbourne)
Sculptor Unknown (Australian)



BENALLA
Dedicated 1922
Monument Maker Dawe (Carlton)
Sculptor Unknown (Imported from Italy)

FRONT COVER
MORWELL
Dedicated 1921
Monument Maker Corben & Son (Clifton Hill)
Sculptor August Rietman

About The Project

CLAYTON TREMLETT IS an artist with extensive experience in the cleaning, restoration and relocation of historic monuments and fountains.

During his conservation work, the artist closely observed important historical figures. He recognised that monuments instil in us a sense of awe and wonder and that the public does not have the opportunity to view monuments so intimately. It was here that the idea for *Immortals* began.

The result of more than four years painstaking research, *Immortals* offers us a unique opportunity to reflect on Australian history through a single focus – a portrait study of the faces of Victoria's *Digger* memorials.

Immortals is a visual record and archive that has not been attempted before. For the first time, Victorian *Digger* memorials are accessible for study and comparative analysis.

Tremlett's photographic process was meticulous. Most of the monuments face east, so the artist was onsite at sunrise to access the early morning light illuminating the face and

the rising sun on each *Digger's* hat.

Each monument was digitally photographed between 80 and 120 times; from these, the best digital image was selected and transformed using Photoshop. These images were then converted into five distinct tonal (Grey) layers to create a finished screen print that resembles a WW1 studio portrait.

Community *Digger* Cenotaphs emerged because the Commonwealth Government of the day determined that Australian soldiers were volunteers. The government therefore decreed it was not obliged to repatriate the dead. Notably, Australians had voted down two conscription referendums in 1916 and 1917.

The series invites us to reflect on a time when Australia was a fledgling nation that answered a request to send troops to a war in foreign countries.

This project provides us with an opportunity to engage in a cultural conversation about the nation that created these monuments and their significance today.



MILDURA
Dedicated 1920
Monument Maker Alex D. Thompson A.R.V.I A.
Sculptor Unknown



MARYBOROUGH
Dedicated 1926
Monument Maker Unknown
Sculptor Margaret Baskerville

The Digger Memorials

IN THE CENTURY since they were dedicated, approximately 65 *Digger* memorials stand in regional Victorian communities with a few in Melbourne suburbs. These silent sentinels have experienced generational change in attitudes to war, memorials and commemoration. They sit generally in a highly visible location, near a post office or prominent intersection. In the early years, several were relocated because they became traffic hazards with the transition from horse-drawn to motorized traffic. Today they go largely unnoticed, except on Anzac Day.

Immortals is a comprehensive survey of Victorian *Digger* Memorials as they appear today. For the first time we can study the faces of these memorials. While they reflect a broader sense of mourning and symbolism, each figure has individual characteristics. Several depict the *Digger* as courageous, stoic or determined, others present an image of doubt, regret and despair. Some are boys, some are men and some are women. Viewed together, the portraits evoke an overwhelming sense of empathy.

The project documents and reveals damage, erosion and degradation to many of the figures. Today eroded noses, ears, missing fingers, lichen

encrustations or fissured faces reconfigure the statues to mirror injuries reminiscent of war.

A common misconception is that the *Digger* memorials were mass produced. As a comparative study, *Immortals* discloses that the majority of figures were produced by Italian artisans, often from Carrara marble. The project reveals that many of these figures have the appearance and accoutrements of Italian soldiers.

This project has also uncovered August Rietman as the most prolific Victorian sculptor of *Digger* statues. A pacifist of Swiss-German heritage, Rietman produced many figures for H.B. Corben and Son of Clifton Hill.

Rietman's *Digger* is generally considered the classic 'ANZAC' *Digger*. It was thought he produced between three to five figures, however Clayton Tremlett's research indicates that he produced at least twelve. These can be identified by the way Rietman sculpted the ears and the presence of an 'A' patch carved on the shoulders of many of the figures, as an artist's autograph.

In summary, most figures were carved from marble, four were carved from sandstone and four are bronzes sculpted by Margaret Baskerville and Charles Web Gilbert. Generally, the figures are characterised as infantry



August Rietman working at H.B. Corben & Sons, c1919-22 courtesy of Moorabbin Historical Society and the Rietman family.

soldiers, (privates), however there are four sergeants and four light horsemen. Six female figures are shown in a position of reflective remembrance.

The majority of figures stand 'at ease' with a significant number posed in the reversed arms position. Some stand at attention, six are buglers and two are poised in an advancing position.

H.B. Corben of Clifton Hill was the most prolific producer of Victoria's *Digger* Cenotaphs. Their Australian made figures and monuments were affordable to small communities at a

cost of £450. Larger monuments (with up to 300 names to be inscribed) often incorporated Italian marble imports.

Only two of the companies that produced *Digger* memorials in the 1920's, J.B. Wilson of Bendigo and Lodge Brothers of Melbourne still operate today.

Lodge Brothers established a quarry at Harcourt (which still bears their name) and they produced much of the granite for WW1 memorials. Virtually every *Digger* memorial incorporated Harcourt Granite as its central pedestal.



CLUNES
Dedicated 1921
Monument Maker Corben and Scott (Clifton Hill)
Sculptor August Rietman



QUAMBATOOK
Dedicated 1923
Monument Maker J. B. Wilson (Bendigo)
Sculptor Unknown (imported from Italy)