

EXHIBITION PROPOSAL- Kurt Sorensen

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Exhibition working title: 'There's Death Upon Gallipoli'

Proposed venue: Building 20, Newington Armory

Proposed dates: April-June 2015. As part of the 100th anniversary commemoration of Gallipoli

Photography, video and sound installation

My name is Kurt Sorensen and I am a visual artist living in Sydney, New South Wales. I predominantly work with traditional modes of photography and I have exhibited throughout Australia and internationally.

The following exhibition proposal involves creating an immersive and sombre exhibition experience depicting and describing significant battles involving Australian forces during the First World War.

'Any soul who successfully surmounts the horrors of this war, this mad cruel farce, is forever above the run of ordinary men. The present generation is a super generation. What a terrible pity that it should bleed to death!'

Lieutenant J. T. Hampson, MC, 19th Battalion, 15 August 1917

Cited in Gammage, B, The Broken Years; Australian Soldiers In The Great War 1975

On 25th April 1915, Australia entered the first world war by invading the Gallipoli peninsula in present day Turkey. Between this date and the armistice on 11th November 1918 Australia, with a population of 4.5million, lost 61,966 people killed and 152,171 wounded, many of who would never fully recover from their wounds both physical and psychological.

The coming years will see 100 year anniversaries for the many battles that involved Australians in 'the war to end all wars'. Unfortunately, conflict and death continues to haunt the globe and Australia is still involved.

The war of 1914 was unique to its time as it was the first major conflict in which soldiers were able to regularly communicate with relatives and loved ones back home. In fact, the modern censorship during periods of combat that restricts information started as a result of the enormous amount of candid and often tragically themed writing that made it back to Australia during the first world war.

It is these letters, diaries and accounts that will form the backbone to my proposed photographic and video based work that I hope to exhibit in the Newington Armory's building 20.

I will travel to Gallipoli to create large format photographs and single channel videos at the sites of the battlefields referenced in the journal articles and letters from those who took part in the conflict. These battlefields will include:

- Anzac Cove
- Ari Burnu
- Plugges Plateau
- Hell Spit
- Johnsons Jolly
- Lone Pine
- the Nek
- Quinn's post

The images will be created using large format film and glass negatives and will be taken at the approximate time of day that the battles took place, often on or near the spots where many of the soldiers who wrote the source material fought and died.

The images will be created with the perspective of both sides of the conflict in mind. That is to say, images will be created on the Turkish and Australian sides of the line. Many of the images will be direct recreations of the images taken during the conflict and by those created by Hubert Wilkins in 1919 (see attached mood board)

It is expected that the video component of the exhibition will include relatives of both Turkish and Australian soldiers those involved in the First World War reading their relatives journal articles and letters. These videos will be single shot video 'portraits' of these relatives reciting their letters. The Australians will recite in English with Turkish sub-titles while the Turkish participants will be subtitled in English.

The letters and diary entries to be used in the work span the entire gamut of emotions raging through the soldiers during the 4-year conflict. From the excited nativity and lust for adventure of the early recruits talking of wanting their training to be finished so that '*soon we shall round the Dardenels {sic.} or (be) in the South of France and then the fun will start!*' (Cited in B. Gammage, *The Broken Years*, 1977) to the tragic resignation of the brutal effects of war and the toll it takes:

*There's a torn and silent valley;
There's a tiny rivulet
With some blood upon the stones beside its mouth.
There are lines of buried bones:
There's an unpaid waiting debt:
There's a sound of gentle sobbing in the South*

The above poem, written on the western front in 1916 by Sergeant Leon Gellert of the 10th Battalion (and cited in Gammage, 1975), is an example of the writings that will be sourced and eventually recited during the work.

The various battles would be researched with the aid of the significant resources available through the Australian War Memorial, the Department of Veteran Affairs and other institutions such as the Mitchell Library in Sydney and the National libraries Trove database.

Source publications, most notably 'The Broken Years; Australian Soldiers In The Great War' by Bill Gammage and 'Gallipoli' by Les Carlyon will serve as references for the letters and accounts to be used in the recitals, readings and exhibits. These books are exceptional not only due the detail that they provide in terms of military history and accuracy, but also in the fact that the significant portions of both publications are devoted to reprinting and recounting eyewitness records and letters of Australian forces from the front lines in Turkey and other areas of the conflict.

This project will seek to shed a sombre light onto a subject that has been largely glorified and romanticised over the past 100 years and seeks to become a touring exhibition that can be shown in the various regional galleries throughout NSW and Australia.

Thank you for considering this proposal and I look forward to your response.

Regards,

Kurt Sorensen

TIMELINE

March-July 2014:

- Research articles, publications and journals of Gallipoli veterans. Seek out relatives of those that wrote letters and diary entries chosen as suitable references.
- Research exact locations for images and videos to be created in both the Australian and Turkish lines at Gallipoli.

August-September 2014:

- Travel to Gallipoli peninsula in Turkey
- Create images at the sites of the fighting from both Australian and Turkish perspectives. Video relatives from Turkish soldiers (and maybe Australia, budget depending) at similar sites reciting the letters and journal entries of their relatives.
- Develop film before returning to Australia

October 2014-January 2015

- Video remaining Australia relatives in their homes
- Test prints of images completed
- Video selects created and sound synched

February-March 2015

- Final images selected and prints created
- Framing completed
- Video works edited and cut. Outputted in requested format

April 2015

Exhibition installation and opening.

FUNDING WILL BE SOUGHT THROUGH:

- Australia Council for the Arts
- Arts NSW
- Art and About, City of Sydney
- Various private arts funding organisations (e.g. Ian Potter Trust, Copyright Agency)
- Private and philanthropic sources

EXHIBITION LAYOUT – building 20

Entrance



Lamp Room. Proposal for channel video portraits of relatives (see Bill Viola reference) placed in the lamp recesses.



ROOM 1

Large format photography, Gallipoli battlefield landscapes from Australian perspective.



ROOM 2

1 large video screen projecting video recitals of Turkish and Australia relatives reciting letters and journals. Screen is hanging from steel enclosure at rear of room.



ROOM 3

Large format Photography of Gallipoli battlefield landscapes from Turkish perspective.



MOOD BOARD

– Photographic references

Images by Hubert Wilkins, 1919



Towards Ari Burnu, 'the sphinx'



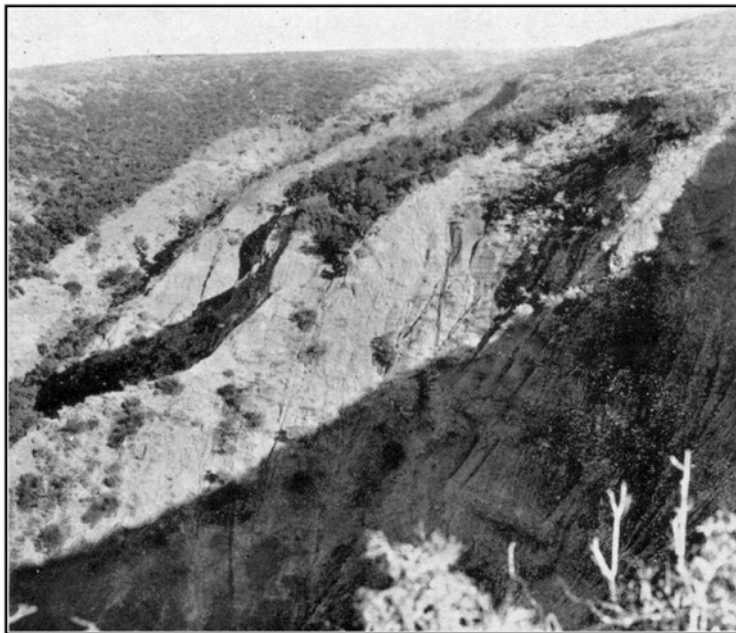
The Nek



ANZAC cove



Gallipoli wild flowers



Russel's Top



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

G01746

Top of Plugges plateau



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

G01748

View back to Lemnos, Australian embarkation and staging point

Video references



Bill Viola, **Dolorosa** (2000), video diptych



stock footage, figure in the landscape