

Art in Review

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Tracey Moffatt

'Spirit Landscapes'

Tyler Rollins Fine Art
529 West 20th Street, Room 10W
Chelsea
Through Saturday

In 2010, Tracey Moffatt left New York and returned to live in her native Australia. In the new work in this show, she has returned home as well, to familiar places and to a subject that has been with her from the start: the realities that haunt Aboriginal

history, which is her heritage.

Basically, what she's doing here is landscape photography with some digital enhancing. For a series called "As I Lay Back on My Ancestral Land," she points the camera up to the sky, where a nude female figure emerges, half visible, from trippy green-and-gold clouds. In hand-tinted pictures titled "Pioneer Dreaming," she gives the Australian prairie a new population of romantic movie heroines. In "Picturesque Cherbourg," the gardens of a trim white-fence suburb take on rainbow hues.

But this is no Eden. The prairie was once Aboriginal land, from which the people were expelled; the town of Cherbourg was the settlement where they were forced to live. These injustices happened before Ms. Moffatt's time, but she sees her own Brisbane childhood as no picnic. She overlays black-and-white shots of the neighborhood where she grew up with stenciled crayon words that recall her weekly and daily routines: "Tea at the Reverends," "Stole a Mars Bar," "Bullied Here."

A final set of images, "Night Spirits," is in a dark room off the main gallery. Ms. Moffatt took the pictures at night while driving along country roads in Queensland. Periodically, on instinct, she would stop the car, get out and start photographing even if she saw nothing there. What she was capturing only became visible when the pictures were developed: misty white shapes of the kind found in 19th-century "spirit photography" — here, spirits of place, ghosts of home.

HOLLAND COTTER



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND TYLER ROLLINS FINE ART

Tracey Moffatt's "As I Lay Back on My Ancestral Land No. 1" at Tyler Rollins Fine Art.