



Tara Gilbee invites you to
celebrate the opening of

Ellipses

2 February—19 March 2023

Castlemaine Art Museum

Opening Friday 3 February, 6–8pm

The artist is grateful for the following support:
Creative Victoria and the Regional Centre for
Culture Team; Bendigo Venues & Events Team;
Ellie Young's Gold Street Studio; Orbit program
staff at Castlemaine Art Museum; Dr Peg
LeVine; and Nadine Cameron.



14 Lyttleton Street
Castlemaine, Victoria
Thursday & Weekends: 12–4pm
Friday: 12–6:30pm



This is the twelfth exhibition in Castlemaine Art Museum's
Orbit program; a series of exhibitions showcasing artists
who live and work in Central Victoria. This exhibition is
supported by the Besen Family Foundation.

Ellipses: Covert prison light

Throughout this exhibition, incarceration flourishes in spaces where light cannot dwell. In order to delicately record Victorian Gaols, Tara Gilbee chose tin pinhole devices representative of 19th century cameras. Such common optics re-create vantage points seen and unseen by prisoners. Panoramas simulate prison guards' vistas and their circles of sameness day-after-day when standing watch in towers and on grounds.

One might ponder how places committed to human confinement and monotonous routines desensitised guards to torture. Gilbee connects and disconnects these black and white images in ways that invite us to pause on that which is off screen ... execution, flogging, treadmill torture (an invention by British colonialists), sensory deprivation, and 'legal' lynching of Aboriginal People.

Gilbee's exposed images of a building, wall, footpath, sky, tree, and stone invite us to roll time backwards—before architectural plans approved by councils turned Penal Complexes into art galleries, groovy townhouses, cafés, and performing art theatres. Brochure embellishing terms like 'heritage site' muffle the moans that these humans and stone walls endured.

This photographic series records faintness of light as a way of capturing the re-stylised British penal architecture with radial 'panopticon' designs and towers reminiscent of Medieval castles. The gallows wing at HM Prison Bendigo was purpose built from colonisers' floorplans, too, and by world standards, Victoria had high execution rates between 1842–1975. (Victorian Heritage Database for Former Bendigo Gaol, January 2023).

Across Victorian Gaols where cold was bloody cold, hot was stifling, and cruelty justified ... Gilbee's images give rise to a jailer's state of mind as he cut initials into bluestone with hard steel, and the tormented fate of women in the female Bendigo wing before and after they were transferred to Pentridge in 1896. Akin to the three black dots founded in literary arts in 17th century France, Gilbee's exhibition invites us into these photographic 'ellipses' where light bleeds into dark as much as dark obscures light.

[Exposé: Dr Peg LeVine, genocide scholar-trauma psychologist-
anthropologist-sculptor, 2023]