

# Landscapes: the Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language

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## Emily

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Holcombe: Emily

**Emily**  
Digital Photograph by Jamie Holcombe



*Emily*, 2016, Jamie Holcombe, Digital Photographic Print, 100x150cms.

Thematic interpretations addressed:

*Landscape and Trauma; Public Memorials and Conflict Histories*  
*Dwelling, Belonging, Nostalgia, Solastalgia, Sense of Place*

This image depicts an elaborate and clearly heartfelt roadside memorial to “Emily”, which is an extraverted display of sadness and loss that is an increasingly familiar contemporary lament. We know not who Emily was, nor what happened to her. The story is unclear if the tragedy unfolded on the road outside the house, or inside the house itself, thus the house could have been either witness or host to her demise. The composition directs, but most certainly does not invite us via the gate to the front door, on which the cross is strangely, but unintentionally replicated. Were we to have known Emily, we could be profoundly moved by this image, reminded of a very personal loss, and the catastrophe that may surround it.

My own motivation here is one of compassion and regret for the loss of community that generates such an isolated and lonely tribute. The scene arrested me because of its overt anonymity, which seemed frozen between catharsis and repression. It weeps publicly before a locked-down house, a sign that perhaps someone wants to talk about it, but is unable.

**Jamie Holcombe** is currently Senior Lecturer in Photography & Digital Imaging at Charles Sturt University. He has a practice-led PhD in Fine Art Photography, and is an established regional artist with an extensive exhibition record, both as an exhibitor and a curator. He has been a finalist in numerous Australian national awards, most recently including the MAMA National Photography Prize, The Josephine Ulrick and Win Schubert Photography Awards. Jamie’s recent work investigates the concept of melancholy in the photograph, explored through urban landscapes taken across regional Australia.