



"Australian flow"  
150 cm x 120 cm, 2007, ink on paper

## A shared interest in looking for the Tasmanian Tiger

Far away from what we like to consider the centre of our world, here on the periphery of a distant continent, where in front of me lies nothing but a pristine clear ocean and, further on the Antarctic then the South Pole, I stand at the place where a man called Wilf Batty shot the last Thylacine (now the official name for the Tasmanian Tiger).

It was like a creature from a fable, a head like a wolf, small rounded ears, a torso like a dog, a rigid unwaggable tail, the pouch and reproductive system of the Kangaroo and 25 black stripes falling on its yellow-brown short hair. The Tasmanian Tiger did not howl like a dingo or a wolf. Never attacked people and hunted only for what it needed to eat. It was not a fast runner but moved with a loping gait, relying greatly on its stamina and sense of smell to outrun and catch its prey. Whenever the Thylacine was captured, it quickly gave up the will to survive and few ever lived in captivity for longer than a few years. It seems it wasn't the bloodthirsty beast it was declared to be.

Before I came to Australasia I had never heard of the Tasmanian Tiger. It had lived here for 26,000 years according to data from a skeleton of the Pleistocene epoch. A carcass found in 1965 in a cave where the dry dark atmosphere mummified the body for 4,500 years shows the same animal, and so does the black and white film footage from 1936 taken at the Hobart Zoo. Looking around the dense and seemingly endless and still unpopulated forests I cannot help but think that I might see one, right now. This does of course not happen; large expeditions with automatic cameras have tried to track it down for the last 70 years and have so far failed to find any hard evidence.

The elusive presence (or absence) of this shy yet determined animal keeps the myth strangely afloat and the fact that the whole species came to an end in captivity provokes an injustice we don't want to hear. Every story of a sighting acts like a bit of hope that it made it after all; that it had managed to survive the onslaught from an uncultivated society and the rapacious greed of those who paid the 2,184 bounties that made Tasmanian Tiger trapping a career for some at the end of the 19th century. The facts are that the creature was officially termed 'extinct' in 1986 although this is questioned by every second person I've met in Tasmania.

How a species that survived so long can disappear in less than 100 years of being exposed to our western civilisation is a haunting thought, like so many that deal with the conquering of wildernesses and the assault, physical, moral and social, inflicted on its rightful inhabitants. However tawdry the story though, the decimation of the largest marsupial carnivore is an easier one to tell than the horrifying stories of what has happened to Tasmania's Aboriginals.

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The Tasmanian Tiger has become a mythical figure and a new 'population' is growing fast on car number plates, beer bottles, buses, official council logos, souvenirs, stamps etc. but this is not the animal I am looking for. Its elusive presence lurks like a prompt for both consciousness and conscience, for the fragility of life and the endurance of hope.

Little, if anything, is said about the abstract nature of the myth of the Thylacine. Words don't lend themselves easily to a comprehensive statement that can point out the multitude of connections and the layers of legend we can sense and share. Reading abstract art makes you familiar with the fact that even if fewer conclusions can be drawn, the finished picture permits maximum readability despite the "soft focus". You feel your way through a picture rather than addressing it conceptually. I have seen the "Tasmanian Tiger" in the works of many of my colleagues from Alys to Zittel.

Alf Löhr, Stanley Jan. 07

Alf Löhr

born 1957 in Bochum Germany

Education:

1985-88 Ph.D., Royal College of Art, London  
1979-83 MFA, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf

Selective Exhibitions:

2007

*Looking for the Tasmanian Tiger*, Broadbent, London

2006

*EINblicke VI*, Gallerie Witzel Wiesbaden, group show  
*Conversations on Cork Street*, Adam Gallery, group show  
*Close in value*, Broadbent, London, group show  
*Quite strokes of the night swimmer*, Residency Gallery, German Embassy London

2005

Broadbent, London  
Residency Gallery of the German Ambassador, London  
*Slow Art*, group show, Broadbent, London  
*Herbarium der Blicke*, group show, Kunst und Ausstellungshalle der BRD, Bonn

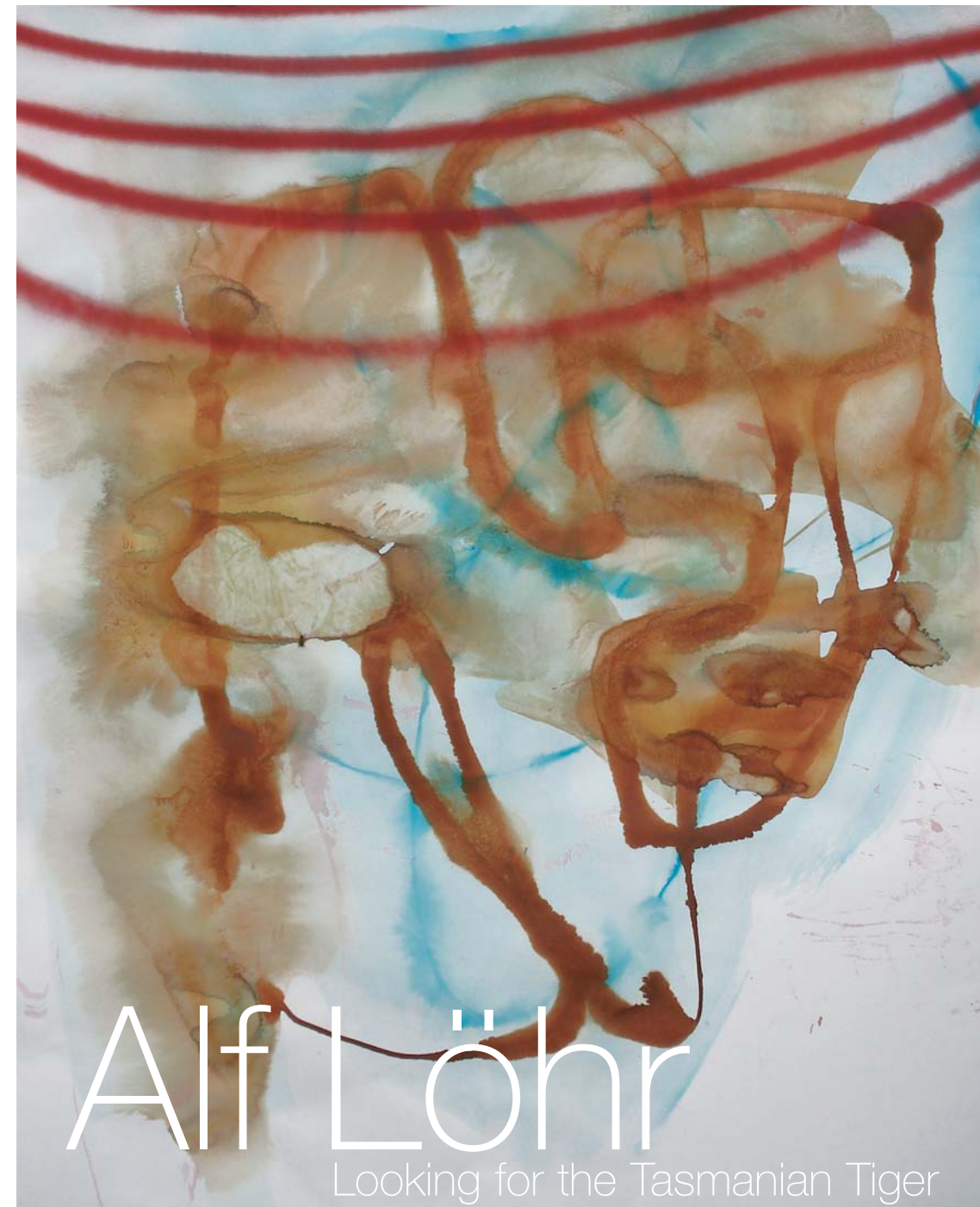
2004

Newlyn Art Gallery, Cornwall  
Kunstverein Rastatt

2003

Pumphouse Gallery, Batterseapark, London  
Howard Garden Gallery, Cardiff  
Firstsite at the Minories, Colchester

www.alflohr.com



Alf Löhr  
Looking for the Tasmanian Tiger

"Soft as a web"  
150 cm x 120 cm, 2007, ink on paper



"Grey devil"  
150 cm x 120 cm, 2007, ink on paper

"Tage wie verirrte Wolken"  
150 cm x 120 cm, 2007, ink on paper

"Looking over his shoulder"  
150 cm x 120 cm, 2007, ink on paper