

By James Parker and Amelia Walker

Artist in Residence

History and Heritage Collection



Women's &  
Children's Hospital  
Foundation

Arts in Health

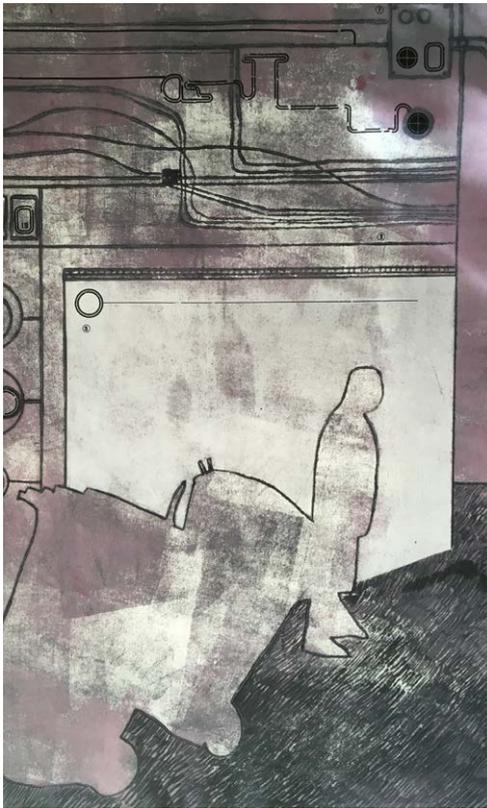
SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S  
HISTORY FESTIVAL

1-30 MAY 2021

Hidden under the Women's and Children's Hospital is an archive of artefacts and images curated by the History and Heritage Collection Curator, Emily Collins.

Artists in Residence James Parker (visual artist) and Amelia Walker (poet), experience this archive by stepping into the silenced lives of porters (orderlies), cooks, cleaners, linen and logistics staff at the Women's and Children's Hospital in the early to mid-twentieth century.

***Often overlooked in comparison to nurses and doctors, these staff play crucial roles in patient hygiene, nutrition, comfort and more. James and Amelia, have transformed these tales from the hospital archives into a mixed-mode online and physical exhibition.***



*Wheelee Bin Tandem* by James Parker

James Parker is a visual artist who works mostly in the primary school system and in his own practise as an exhibiting printmaker and bookmaker. Dr Amelia Walker is a nurse-turned-poet who lectures in creative writing at the University of South Australia. These long-term collaborators have included dry-point prints, poetry, and digital storytelling in celebration of these hidden heroes and their unsung contributions.

*Supporting Lives: Behind the Scenes at the Women's and Children's Hospital* is centered around the trolleys used by these subtle and silent workers and their journeys throughout the hospital and the integral role they play.

*"I was impressed by the different trolleys within the different departments of the Hospital and all their different functions, designs and*

construction. This exhibition is about those trolleys and the people who push and pull them through the corridors, keeping everything as it should be,” Parker said.

“I hope it brings these wonderful workers out into the light so we can say well done and thank you.”

**Both Parker and Walker appreciate these individuals and take delight in collaborating in the Hospital space.**

“As a former nurse, I was especially excited by the opportunity to collaborate on a project about health and hospitals,” Walker said. “Responding to archival materials was a new venture for me and has offered insights I can bring back to my role as a lecturer in creative writing at the University of South Australia.”

WCH Foundation’s CEO, Jane Scotcher said, “Our Arts in Health program helps to bring the History Collection of the Hospital to life by coordinating artist residencies that add ‘arts thinking’ into the healthcare environment. We are thrilled with the exhibition that James and Amelia have created, working alongside Museum Curator Emily Collins. What a wonderful tribute to all the staff that work behind the scenes.”

*Supporting Lives: Behind the Scenes at the Women’s and Children’s Hospital* will be on display for the Hospital community and available online for the public to view from 1 May – 26 July 2021.

This exhibition is part of South Australia’s History Festival, presented by the Women’s & Children’s Hospital Foundation’s Arts in Health program through collaboration with the Women’s and Children’s Health Network’s History and Heritage Collection.

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View the exhibition, including poems + video works:

<https://wchfoundation.org.au/artists-in-residence>

To learn more about James’ art practice:

[www.jameswparker.com.au](http://www.jameswparker.com.au)

To learn more about Amelia's poetry:

[www.people.unisa.edu.au/Amelia.Walker](http://www.people.unisa.edu.au/Amelia.Walker)



# With / out any trace

by Amelia Walker

Of all the hospital's histories,  
why are those of cleaners  
so hard to trace?

As though they sweep their very selves  
away – along with dust, dirt, footprints  
and finger-streak smudges on doors,  
along with spilled blood, urine,  
muscou, breath,  
all the deaths  
that could have bred there  
had they not.

Florence Nightingale is regaled as nurse.

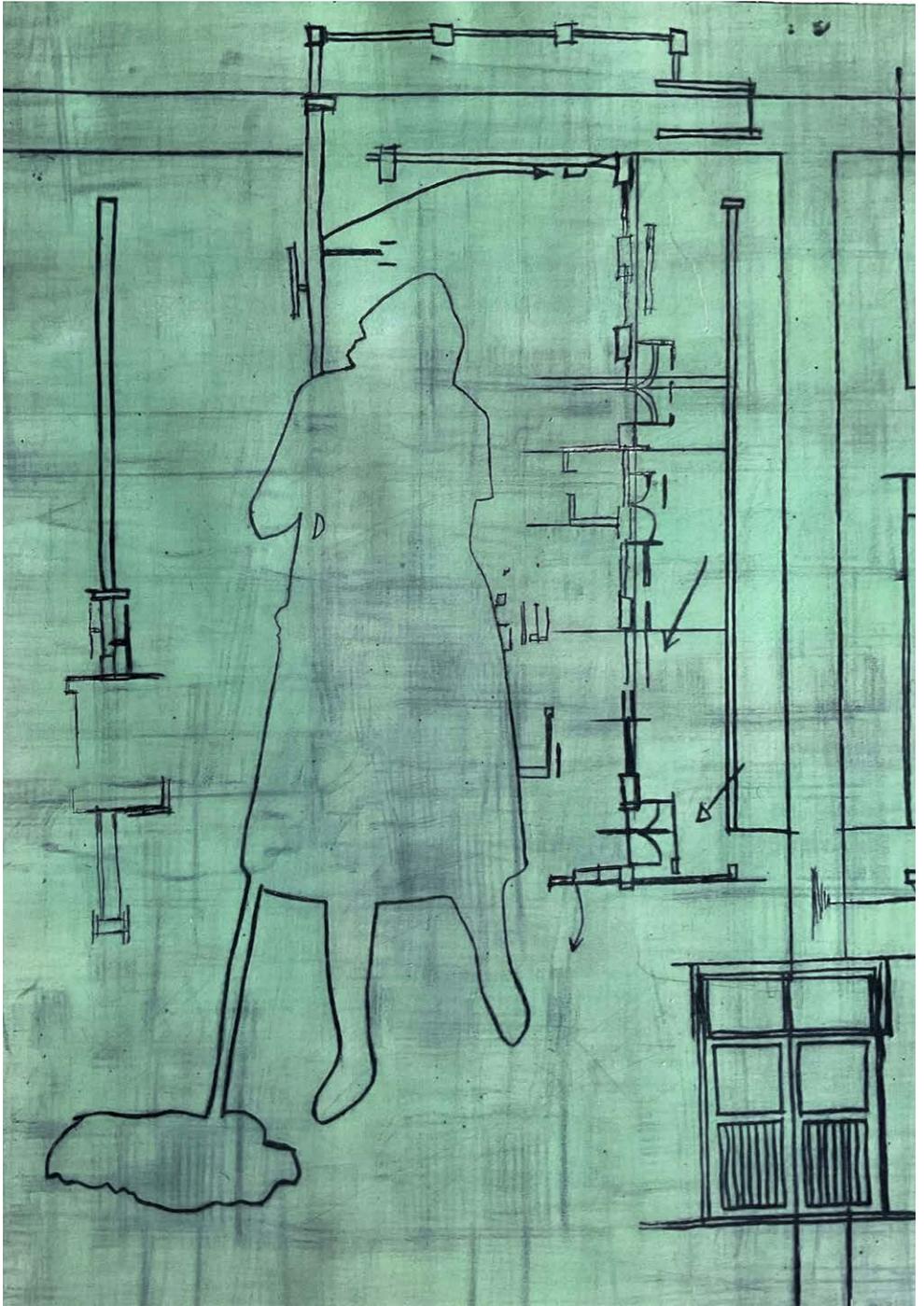
Yet she, too, was a cleaner.  
In wars as well as pandemics,  
simple hygiene saves more lives  
than surgeons stitch together,  
matters more to comfort  
than any glow  
of any lamp.

Yet so many people treat like dirt  
those who keep us clean,  
brushing lives aside like specks  
of dandruff or strands of shed hair  
– awkward reminders  
of how being  
human means being  
animal and abject.

Is this why the greatest trace  
of hospital cleaners  
a century ago, and yesterday  
is their tracelessness?

The ideal mark of a thorough clean  
is that no mark be left behind  
– an achievement visible only  
through what is not seen  
because it has been swept,  
scrubbed, soaked or scratched  
from view – or, failing that,  
covered over, in service  
of a saccharine illusion  
that no blood was ever shed,  
no fresh thing soiled.

This is the irony – and the art –  
of cleaning: its object is to make all  
its objects dis/appear  
as though never there at all.



*Cleaned Away* by James Parker

## Porters: Norman and Kay

by Amelia Walker

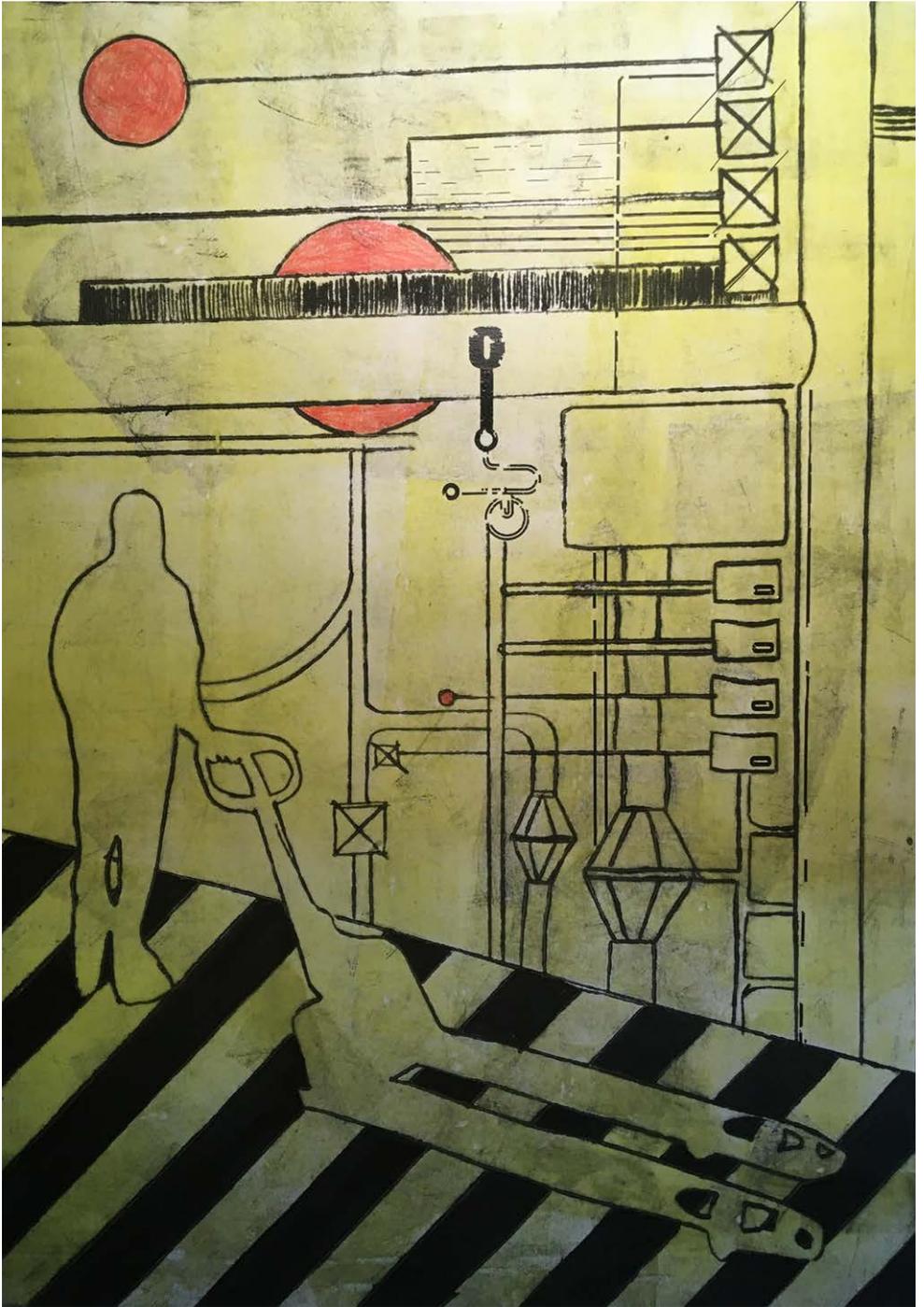
Norman “Percy” Hindle was a first-rate packer of eggs  
– or so the store-room attendants claimed,  
grateful for an extra hand in their morning juggle  
supplying demands.

Packing eggs was not part of Percy’s job  
– not on paper –  
but then neither was propping nervous patients  
with cushions, chatting to calm them  
as he lined up and captured phosphorescent snapshots:  
secrets only radium’s glowing eye can coax  
from under skin like a buried treasure  
that seems sometimes cursed.

Still, Percy did that, too,  
whenever Mr. Compton – lone radiologist  
of the 1930s hospital – took vacation.  
How did Percy feel, those days?

In the UK he’d qualified and worked as a nurse,  
a Registered Nurse.  
But 1930s Adelaide kept compassion bound  
in knots with chromosomes:  
men were deemed unfit for nursing.  
So Percy became a porter, lending smiles  
and a hand to store-room staffers when he could.  
After hours, if something broke, he’d come in  
and fix it, his young son in tow.

In 1972 the hospital employed Bernard Mead,  
a UK-trained male nurse,  
and in 1987, its first female porter  
– Kay Hopkins, a former farmhand  
and football fanatic,  
who grinned, lopsided, maybe with amusement  
or maybe hiding frustration,  
the many times each day she found herself  
mistaken for a nurse.



*Logistics* by James Parker

**This exhibition is presented by the WCH Foundation's Arts in Health program which focuses on encouraging creativity, providing moments of calm in a busy health environment, and easing the distress of patients and their families at the Women's and Children's Hospital.**

The Women's & Children's Hospital Foundation is committed to providing ongoing support to the Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide, South Australia. The Women's and Children's Hospital Foundation Arts in Health program creates a vibrant and bright hospital environment that helps to improve the health and wellbeing of patients, their families and staff. Through art, play and music, we encourage curiosity and creativity to reduce the anxiety and distress of being in hospital.

The WCH Foundation's Gallery program coordinates five galleries in the Hospital, providing a space away from the stresses of treatment to distract, entertain and inspire, improving the visual environment. The artworks displayed in the exhibition spaces come from a range of sources – internally from hospital staff, patients (women & children) and their families, through specific Arts in Health activities and externally from professional artists and art collectives.

This exhibition was planned and exhibited on the lands of the Kaurna People, we pay our respects to the Kaurna Elders past and present and to the Elders of the lands this brochure reaches.



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