

## De Quincey Co: **PARA PARRA** – *site of conscience* in the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct

*'para' meaning: at or to one side of, beside, side by side, beyond, past, by, beside, closely related, closely resembling, beyond, abnormal, fault*

### a suite of videos by Martin Fox

dance: **Victoria Hunt, Linda Luke, Tess de Quincey**

vocals: **Sonya Holowell**

sound composition: **Ben Carey**

lighting installation: **Sian James-Holland**

video projection: **Samuel James**

costume design: **Melanie Liertz**

videographer: **Martin Fox**

camera: **Denis Beaubois**

adviser: **Bonney Djuric**

concept & direction: **Tess de Quincey**

In 2020 and 2021 De Quincey Co worked in partnership with artist **Bonney Djuric** and Parragirls to develop a live site-specific performance work in the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct located on the upper reaches of the Parramatta River on the traditional lands of Darug Burramattagal people.

In 1821, as the first purpose-built goal for women and the first convict female factory in Australia, the precinct was the first destination for female convicts and orphaned children; also ill, pregnant or unemployed women, then local Indigenous women and children, and later women from many different nationalities. Many thousands of women and children were forcibly housed, living and some dying here over the 200 years of institutional welfare in the care and custody of the state through its various guises – work-house, marriage bureau, labour hire depot, prison, lunatic asylum, orphan schools, and most recently a girls' homes. The precinct has particular significance for the Forgotten Australians and the Stolen Generations as the birthplace of interventionist welfare policy with the first forced removal of children from their mothers introduced in 1826.

In mist and smoke blowing from the Parramatta River, the inmates were consigned to the daily muster of marching; labour in the laundry; the isolation cells above 'Bethel'; and brutal abuse within the main correctional and sleeping facility – acknowledged by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse of 2014 – outside which the ancient Bunya trees are a relic of the Jurassic period, behind the 4.5m high walls which kept females contained – not just for their physical safety, but also to 'protect' the colony from moral decay.

Can we be held captive in Australia's first *'site of conscience'*?