

**Helga Groves**  
*Suspended animation*  
**Sutton Gallery, Melbourne**

As a visual artist, Groves' interest in physical geography as visible science presents a parallel universe of significant form. 'Geomorphic' as a descriptive term appeals to her as it relates to the structure and formation of landforms as the study of surfaces. The process of delineating and manifesting form is ultimately generative and conceptual in nature, contributing to her engagement in geomorphic processes as a form of animation.

Groves' polygon shaped paintings on wood are a tribute to the shaped canvases as hybrids of painting and sculpture that grew out of 1960s abstraction. Through turning the congruent shapes on their axis, cyclic rotation suggests movement. These shifts are also marked through the repetition of the hand-drawn mark in layers as an infinite reversioning of nature's primal template.

Here, *Lithic (topology series #2)*, presented as two sets of four panels in tonal polarity, feature a patina created out of elegantly rendered surface layers based on the growth patterns of Arctic map lichen on granite rock. Groves has carefully studied her source material to distill and schematize its characteristic patchwork effect so that they (simultaneously) read as topographical maps.

For *Rift*, departing from the monochromatic effect, the contrasting lichen green and orange cadmium hues, based on the astonishing brilliance of these colors in nature, provides a dynamic harmony of contrasts. This installation of ten diamond-shaped panels that lock together to create a zig zag traction, moving horizontally, doubles the action of the Earth's shifting tectonic plates. It was inspired by Groves's visual memory of the Reykjanes Ridge in Iceland, the visible above-sea-level edge of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge that continues to widen as the plates separate, rift and fold.

In these and other works presented in *Suspended Animation*, Groves reflects on the significance of the ancient and adaptive forms of plant life that have survived in the most rugged and hostile of terrains familiar to her. Used by climatologists to ascertain the age of rock and glacial deposits, they provide further resonant ground for her ongoing investigation into topographical form.

Eve Sullivan  
June 2014