

ICGC BROWN BAG SERIES

Ships in the Settler Imagination

Beverly Fok

Department of

Friday, April 7, 12 -1 pm

537 Heller Hall (ICGC)

Live Stream Available @www.icgc.umn.edu

The Torrens system is today the preferred system of land registration across most of the Commonwealth. Its original theater of experimentation however was South Australia, a peripheral settler colony. A curious feature of the Torrens system is that it imagines land to behave as ships do, that is to say, be on the move. This, despite land's canonical role as immovable ground (solum) to which all other movable chattels (superficies) yield. Why ships, then? What does that legal analogy tell us about the perceived behavior of land whilst in the process of being settled? And how does that historical imagination inform present day land reclamation, whereby territory is parted, parceled, and made to migrate by vessel, exhibiting an uncanny liquidity?



William Light, 1838. State Library of South Australia.

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