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Printed on Stone: The Lithographs of Charles Troedel, Amanda Scardamaglia, Melbourne, Melbourne Books, 2020, 321 pp., \$AU 49.95, ISBN 978-1-9255-5649-0, Publishers website <https://melbournebooks.com.au>

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## BOOK REVIEW

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Amanda Scardamaglia's *Printed on Stone* focuses on the work of Charles Troedel and Company, a lithographic printing firm established in Melbourne in the mid-nineteenth century. A history based on the archives of a local Australian printer may seem, at first glance, to cater to a very specialist – and perhaps correspondingly small – audience. Yet Scardamaglia's story of Charles Troedel deserves a wider readership than its subject suggests. Clearly designed to attract the general reader, with its large format, hard cover, and rich collection of images drawn from an extensive archive, *Printed on Stone* connects that material with wide range of academic approaches, from Scardamaglia's own specialty, trade mark law, to cultural history.

Significantly, *Printed on Stone* introduces us to an important archival source at a time when interest in the history of consumption is growing. Driven by the work of Frank Trentmann, Erika Rappaport and others, *Printed on Stone* introduces us to an important Australian archival source. The Troedel archive, held by the State Library Victoria, is the 'most comprehensive print archive to survive in a public collection in Australia' (14). Established in 1863, Troedel specialised in lithographic printing for the consumer goods market, becoming a dominant presence in its field. One of its first and best known productions was the 'Melbourne Album', a booster publication for the young colonial city. However, Troedel also produced theatre bills, brochures, posters, and more, a panoply of printed material spanning over a hundred years. By the 1950s, for example, they produced almost 80 per cent of Australia's canned goods labels. The Troedel collection holds some ten thousand items, and those collected here are not only beautifully reproduced, but also suggest considerable opportunity for future study in topics as diverse as histories of branding, advertising and the development of consumer identities, to broader studies of gender and consumption, material culture and colonial modernity. Indeed, *Printed on Stone* offers an object lesson in the latter: though lithography is routinely considered a metropolitan invention that diffused to the periphery, Scardamaglia reveals at least one form – photolithography – developed in parallel in Victoria. She also establishes the quality of Troedel's work, another reminder that advertising at the edge of empire kept up with its rivals aboard.

Scardamaglia introduces her subject with a short but useful discussion on the origins and impact of lithography, arguing its cultural influence has been underplayed. She then analyses the Troedel archive to demonstrate that impact, using a few key organising themes:

the home, drinking and smoking cultures, health and hygiene, fashion and style, along with 'leisurely pursuits'. This arrangement allows her, first, to draw together subsets of Troedel's most interesting lithographs. Each set is then contextualised with a series of short, essay-like sections, focussing on the distinct elements of each category. In the section on the home for example, Scardamaglia introduces both the rise of canned and convenience foods and the changes in advertising, trademarks, and packaging that grew up around them, before focussing more closely on the aspects like design. Here she continues work undertaken in a recent journal article, positioning Troedel's domestic imagery as complicit in the creation of Australia as a 'white, civilised part of the British Empire ... capitalising on the fruits of that colonial empire ... [an] empire built on the backs of others' (53). In a similar way, a group of lithographs promoting alcohol and tobacco is accompanied by explorations of early drinking cultures in Australia, the growth of the beer and wine industries, and the rise of teetotalism.

These discussions, which range broadly across social, cultural, legal and even institutional-style histories, sit on the border between useful context and full-fledged argument. This may reflect the book's appeal to the general readers. Scardamaglia's considerable background in intellectual property history and law is obvious, and the links made between this technical field and wider cultural readings are valuable. However, there remained room for a more penetrating analysis of some of the images. For example, the discussion on soap advertising reveals that Troedel did not deploy the usual racist stereotypicals, like black skin washed white, in their work (119). Yet whiteness can be constructed in other ways. The whiter-than-white promise of laundry soaps and starches played a part in reinforcing the hegemony of European standards of cleanliness and marked Australia out as a 'civilised' British colony.

*Printed On Stone* also left me wondering about the rest of Troedel's work. The lithographs selected belong largely to the nineteenth and early twentieth century, a period we are accustomed to accepting as 'colonial'. Assuming the archive extends beyond this era, it would have been fascinating to learn more about continuities or changes in advertising further into the twentieth century. Other work, for example by David Ciarlo on Germany, suggests the enduring presence of racism in advertising. The archive may not have allowed such an exploration: but if such material exists, its inclusion would help break down the persistent association between nineteenth-century 'colonialism' and twentieth-century 'modernity'.

This speculative criticism aside, *Printed On Stone* remains a noteworthy contribution. Its arresting images and informative text place an overlooked archive centre stage. It is to be hoped that this work inspires others to build upon it, contributing to the existing histories of consumption and modernity in Australia.

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