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CAROLYN GAI YOUNG

THE ARTISTS' EXPERIENCE: EXPLORING ART AND ENVIRONMENT
EDUCATION AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL

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Declaration of Originality

I, Carolyn Young..... hereby declare that the thesis here presented is the outcome of the research project undertaken during my candidacy, that I am the sole author unless otherwise indicated, and that I have fully documented the source of ideas, references, quotations and paraphrases attributable to other authors.

Publications During Candidature

Sections of this dissertation have previously been published in:

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My approximate contribution to this article is 50%. John Reid and Bart Meehan and I conceived the overall idea. John Reid developed and wrote the sections 'Field Study program'. I wrote the section 'The Engaging Visions Research Project'. I developed and implemented the evaluation framework described in the paper, and analysed the data.

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ABSTRACT

The world is undergoing an environmental crisis. Science has communicated that this is happening, but there is a failure to act accordingly. The United Nations Agenda 21 argues that education is central to achieving environmental sustainability. Only in the last 15-20 years have visual art educators in a few tertiary institutions around the world introduced subject specific courses, namely on the environment, as a source for artwork. Research on kindergarten to year 12 (k-12) education has demonstrated that making artworks derived from direct sensory experience of the environment encourages an emotional attachment to place and can bring about a mass shift, for the student, towards valuing nature. At the tertiary level, limited information is available and systematic research is needed to explore the art and environment phenomenon.

The opportunity to pursue this research formally arose with the commencement of the Engaging Visions Research Project (EV Project). Within this project, a model procedure was sought for visual fine artists to creatively engage with Murray-Darling Basin communities and assist with environmental concerns. The purpose of my dissertation research was to explore art and environment education at the tertiary level to better understand the artists' experience. The Australian National University School of Art Field Study program, operating within the EV Project, formed the case study. The experiences of student visual fine artists ('participants') across four programs were evaluated using a qualitative research design, which included semi-structured interviews with participants, participant observation, informal conversations, artworks, exhibition catalogues and memo notes.

The research findings indicate that the Field Study program successfully achieved a place-based art curriculum. Four key findings emerged. First, interactions between the participants themselves, between participants and the community, and between participants and the landscape, inspired the participants to make art. Second, the Field Study program facilitated a sense of place, or in other words an attachment to the field location - its people and the environs. Third, the program was successful in making the environment salient and strengthened the participants' awareness of

environmental issues. And fourth, the program was successful in teaching the participants skills in field-based research, exhibiting, working with the communications media and collegial interaction. These outcomes were made possible by: experiential learning through first-hand (sensory) experience of place and community briefings on location; action research principles, including a collegial atmosphere; learning that was embedded through repeat field trips to the one location; holding an exhibition within the field location; and a program with an overt environmental theme.

Based on the result findings, a procedure for a place-based education is put forward. The research findings are useful to art and environment conveners wanting to develop a better understanding of these programs, in particular helping them to link action to outcome and adjust their curriculum accordingly. The research findings assist with bridging the gap between education as we know it and education for sustainability. To further develop the professional skills of the participating student visual fine artists, an extended program that contains three courses is proposed. The first course, based on the Field Study program procedure, would teach field-based research skills. The second course would embody the theory of critical pedagogy of place, and teach students to critically examine the nexus between culture and nature. The third course would teach collaboration within a multi-disciplinary group and which could be extended to community engagement. The proposal is preliminary and recommendations for further research are outlined in the conclusion.

This thesis comprises two parts: studio research with accompanying exegesis (60%), and dissertation (40%). My participation in the Field Study program as an immersed researcher was important for the development of my studio research.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The world is undergoing an environmental crisis. Science has communicated that this is happening, but there is a failure to act accordingly. The United Nations Agenda 21 argues that education is central to achieving environmental sustainability, and that principles, knowledge, skills and values related to sustainability need to be taught across disciplines, including the visual arts.¹ Only in the last 15-20 years have visual art educators in a few tertiary institutions around the world sought to break the dominant fine art school model of primarily teaching discipline specific courses, and introduced subject specific courses, namely on the environment, as an originator of ideas for art making.

A role of contemporary universities is to provide skilled professionals. Tertiary level art and environment courses aim to provide the professional skills needed for students wanting to engage in, “the world as a stage for art making”² and have a core commitment to field investigation where the focus is relationship to place. The course convenor helps students to develop a connection to place in the belief that ‘place’ forms a good source for artwork.³ The literature on kindergarten to year 12 (k-12) education has demonstrated that making artworks derived from direct sensory experience of the environment encourages an emotional attachment to place and can bring about a mass shift, for the student, towards valuing nature.⁴ At the tertiary level, limited information is available. Convenor anecdotes and course student satisfaction surveys provide some insights but systematic research is needed to formally explore how to educate ecological artists in the quest to help solve environmental crises.

¹ United Nations Sustainable Development, "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development: Agenda 21" (Rio de Janeiro Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992), 1.

² Erika Osborne, "Art and Environment: An Innovative Field Course for Artists," Colorado State University, <http://blog.sustainability.colostate.edu/?q=osborne>.

³ Chris Taylor and Bill Gilbert, *Land Arts of the American West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 236.

⁴ Eileen Adams, "Art and Environment: Making Art Work/S," *Australian Art Education* 14, no. 2 (1990).

The opportunity for this research arose in 2006, when an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant (AUD\$309,674) was administered to The Australian National University (ANU), and the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) as the industry partner⁵ to undertake the Engaging Visions Research Project (EV Project).⁶ The main objectives were to:

1. To configure a model procedure for visual artists to creatively engage with Murray-Darling Basin (MDB) communities to assist with environmental concerns; and
2. To achieve this through an evaluation of the ANU School of Art Field Study program experience of both artist and the community with whom the artists interacted with in the field.⁷

During the period 2007-2010⁸ the EV Project evaluated the ANU Field Study program. The Field Study program formally began in 1996 at the Photomedia Workshop, School of Art and became the core program offered within the School's Environment Studio established in 2000. The program was developed to meld subject disciplines about environment with creative visual art outputs. The EV Project consisted of four Field Study programs, which were held in four locations within the MDB. The experiences of both participating artists and the community encountered in each field location were formally evaluated. In this dissertation I explore, record, analyse and evaluate the experiences of the participating visual fine art students ('the participants') only. During the research, artist members of the EV Project research team⁹ were actively immersed in the programs. The purpose of my dissertation research is to explore art and environment education at the tertiary level to better understand the artists' experience.

⁵ The MDBC also funded a PhD Scholarship awarded to Carolyn Young to the value of AUD\$78,000

⁶ The EV Project Chief Investigators were Mr. John Reid, School of Art, and Dr. Rod Lamberts, Centre for Public Awareness of Environment, ANU.

⁷ Carolyn Young, John Reid, and Bart Meehan, "Taking Action: Researching an Innovative Pedagogy for an Aesthetic Visual Approach to Environmental Issues," *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 16 (2015).

⁸ In 2015, in one field location only, a community evaluation was also done. The community data is still formally being analysed by other researchers and will subsequently deliver further recommendations.

⁹ Carolyn Young, John Reid and Charles Tambiah.

The dissertation comprises seven chapters (including the introduction): background and context; literature review; methods; results; discussion; and conclusion.

The background and context to the research is outlined in Chapter 2. The chapter commences with a brief explanation of terms relevant to my research. The second section considers the environmental movement and the role that artists should play in that movement. The final section introduces the educational options available for visual artists that meld subject disciplines about environment with creative outputs in art.

Chapter 3 forms the literature review. Outlined are fine art education programs offered at the tertiary level, which have an environmental theme, and a core commitment to field investigation where the focus is relationship to place. A review of theories that underpin the art and environment programs, follows. These theories are: place-based education, critical pedagogy of place, action research and sense of place. The last section in the chapter outlines The Australian National University School of Art Field Study program. The research is guided by the following questions:

1. What was the artists' experience with place during the art and environment program?
2. How has the art and environment program influenced the artists' art practice?
3. How has the art and environment program influenced the artists' relationship with, and awareness of, the environment?
4. What elements of the art and environment program worked and could be applied in a broader context?

The focus of Chapter 4 is on developing the methodological processes used to answer the research questions. The rationale for using a case study strategy to frame my research, and grounded theory to guide data collection and analysis is outlined. The remaining sections within the chapter describe the research sample and population, data collection procedures, and data processing and analyses.

In Chapter 5 the results are presented with regard to participant attendance, the interactions that took place, the procedural elements that helped participants to develop a sense of place, the professional skills that the participants either developed or enhanced, and the participants' feedback on how the program was managed and could be improved. The findings are synthesised into four emergent themes: the importance of interactions (between participants themselves, and between the participants, community and landscape), facilitating a sense of place, developing professional skills, and making the environment salient.

Chapter 6 forms the discussion. In this chapter the results are discussed in relation to the theory and my research questions.

In Chapter 7 the conclusions are presented. A summary of the research approach and key findings is provided, followed by implications for art and education. The chapter finishes with recommendations for future research.

This thesis comprises two parts: studio research with accompanying exegesis (60%), and dissertation (40%). My participation in the ANU Field Study program was important for the development of the "Grassy Woodlands" photography series, which forms the outcome from my studio research.

2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

The focus of my research is to explore, record, analyse and evaluate the experiences of visual fine artists participating in art and environment courses. The purpose of my research is to develop a better understanding of how to educate artists to become ecological artists in the quest to help solve environmental crises. In this chapter I provide background information and context to my dissertation. I begin by defining terms relevant to my research. The second section considers the environmental movement and the role that artists should play in that movement. The final section introduces the educational options available for visual artists that meld subject disciplines about environment with creative outputs in visual fine art.

2.2 Definitions

The terms ‘environment’, ‘ecology’ (ecological), ‘nature’, ‘sustainable development’, ‘place’ and ‘ecological art’ are used throughout this dissertation. I have adopted the following meanings.

‘Environment’ refers to the physical and biological phenomena, “...everything around us: the air, the water, and the land as well as the plants, animals, and micro-organisms that inhabit them.”¹⁰ I do not mean ‘environment’ in the sense social scientists often use the word, that is, the culture milieu (for example upper-class, slums). For ‘ecology’ I have adopted Chiras’ definition, “...the study of living organisms and their relationship to one another and to the environment. Ecology takes the entire living world as its domain, in an attempt to understand all organism-environment interactions.”¹¹ The relationships include the co-dependent connections among beings, and natural and built communities.¹² ‘Nature’ is often referred to as,

¹⁰ Daniel D. Chiras, *Environmental Science: A Framework for Decision Making*, 2nd ed. (California: Benjamin/Cummings Publishing Company, 1988), 3.

¹¹ Ibid., 52.

¹² Sally Gradle, "Ecology of Place: Art Education in Relational World," *Studies in Art Education A Journal of Issues and Research* 48, no. 4 (2007): 379.

“...areas unaltered by human action.”¹³ The notion of ‘wilderness’ stems from this definition. My preferred definition for nature is that which includes, “...the physical world in its entirety...nature as a universal realm of which humans, as a species, are a part.”¹⁴ This second definition incorporates the belief that humans are stewards of nature. For the term ‘sustainable development’ I have accepted the definition adopted by the United Nations, as follows, “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”¹⁵ Although often aligned with environmental issues, sustainable development calls for a convergence between economic development, social equity, and environmental protection.

In my literature review I discuss the meaning of ‘place’ within the context of place-based education and sense of place. Place also refers to the field study locations.

Environmental art is often used as a collective term to reflect art that references nature and includes land art, earthworks, art in nature¹⁶ and ecological art. My research is largely interested in ecological art undertaken by visual fine artists¹⁷. Ecological art makes the distinction from other environmental art forms in that it carries an ecological message: the artist is voicing their concern about the environment, creating works to dramatise this concern.^{18 19 20} Matilsky writes that ecological art can be broadly interpreted.²¹ It can be about celebrating or recognising nature’s beauty. Ecological art can involve interpreting or framing environmental problems. This can exist at the conceptual level with the intention of stimulating dialogue and action, or made material through a variety of media. Alternatively, an

¹³ Noel Castree, "Nature," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, ed. R.J. Johnston, Gregory, D., Pratt, G., Watts, M. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2000), 537.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ John Drexhage and Deborah Murphy, "Sustainable Development: From Brundtland to Rio 2012," (New York: International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2010), 2.

¹⁶ For example as described in: John Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond: Contemporary Art in the Landscape* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984).

¹⁷ The disciplines of the visual arts include painting, sculpture, photography, media arts, printmaking, glass, furniture and textiles. Fine artists make non-functional art for contemplative and deep thinking.

¹⁸ Douglas Blandy and Elizabeth Hoffman, "Toward an Art Education of Place," *National Art Education Association* 35, no. 1 (1993).

¹⁹ Barbara C Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions* (New York: Rizzoli International, 1999).

²⁰ Sam Bower, "A Profusion of Terms," http://greenmuseum.org/generic_content.php?ct_id=306.

²¹ Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions*.

ecological artist could propose or create artworks that provide solutions to environmental problems. Such artworks could take a physical presence within the landscape in the form of ecological restoration works, with the artist working collaboratively with people from other disciplines.

2.3 The environmental movement

During the 1960's the environmental movement commenced in Europe and North America, where concern over human use and abuse of the environment proliferated.²² The concern was triggered by several sources. In their seminal cautionary texts, Rachel Carson,²³ Aldo Leopold²⁴ and Judith Wright²⁵ shared their pleasure derived from nature, and their pain when they witnessed or feared its destruction. Visual artists, in particular photographers such as Peter Dombrovskis, brought persuasive imagery to environmental campaigns by promising the potential of 'untouched' and 'pristine' nature.²⁶ ²⁷ The image of earth from space, "...our azure-green planet in all its global beauty..."²⁸ made us aware of our fragility. Human caused environmental disasters (for example the Torrey Canyon oil spill, Chernobyl, and the Darling River algal blooms) visually impacted on people, as opposed to just 'silently' impacting on wildlife. The 1970s saw the beginning of Earth Summits as nations realised that international collaboration was needed to tackle environmental crises.²⁹ Friends of the Earth and other similar pressure groups became more numerous. All these sources brought environmental problems to the forefront of the public mind, and made acknowledgement of the Anthropocene possible.³⁰

²² John Robert McNeill, *Something New under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000).

²³ Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd, 1963).

²⁴ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac with Essays on Conservation from Round River* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

²⁵ Judith Wright, *The Coral Battleground* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson (Australia) Limited, 1977).

²⁶ Geoffrey Batchen, *Terrible Prospects*, The Lie of the Land. Ideas for Australia Program 1991-92 (Melbourne: National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, 1992).

²⁷ Photography referencing the environment is further discussed in the Exegesis.

²⁸ James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 8.

²⁹ Chris C. Park, *The Environment: Principles and Applications*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001).

³⁰ For an explanation of the Anthropocene see: Will Steffen, Paul J. Crutzen, and John Robert McNeill, "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature," *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment* 36, no. 8 (2007).

Environmental problems have largely been seen as physical problems, such as overpopulation leading to the depletion of resources and pollution.³¹ Universities during the 1970's responded in kind by designing environmental science courses. These courses brought different scientific disciplines together in an effort to provide the skills and understanding to manage complex environmental problems in their entirety.³² Most environmental systems are considered extremely complex, involving different flows and cycles operating over different timescales. Parts of the system could be in equilibrium, while others adjusting or unstable, or adjusting at different rates. This makes it very difficult to predict how an environmental system will respond to change and why managing the environment is such a challenging task.³³ Similarly Morton writes about the 'hyperobject' in discussing the difficulties associated with making sense of climate change. He argues that climate warming remains abstract for many because we can't directly touch it or see it, and the timeframe is out of our human reach.³⁴

The scientific community has played a key role in highlighting the environmental crises we face, however the communication of scientific facts alone has failed to bring about the desired actions.³⁵ The human failure to act on complex environmental (wicked)³⁶ problems, even when we acknowledge that these problems exist, poses a serious dilemma. Cognitive scientists, philosophers, psychologists, historians and others have put forward theories on why we have this dilemma. In researching why scientific fact alone is not enough, and where art could help fill the gaps, I have put forward a summary of points, which are briefly expanded upon in the following paragraphs. These points deserve much more discussion than I can provide here, but I have included them to help build my argument: art has a

³¹ Chiras, *Environmental Science: A Framework for Decision Making*.

³² Ibid.

³³ Park, *The Environment: Principles and Applications*, 84.

³⁴ Timothy Morton, "Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World," (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

³⁵ George Lakoff, *The All New Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate* (White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2014).

³⁶ For an explanation of wicked problems see, Valerie A. Brown, John A. Harris, and Jacqueline Y. Russell, *Tackling Wicked Problems: Through the Transdisciplinary Imagination* (London: Earthscan, 2010).

mainstream role in the environmental movement. Communicating scientific fact alone fails to:^{37 38 39}

1. Consider attitudes, values and expectations;
2. Engage the emotions;
3. Frame an issue, with metaphor and analogy, to help the audience make sense of, discuss and take action on an issue; and
4. Join forces with other disciplines and sectors in society to assist with repeatedly communicating the same story (dominant narrative), and thereby help build new 'frames' for people to make sense of the world.

Park writes that the causes and solutions to environmental problems lie much more in people's attitudes, values and expectations than technological solutions.⁴⁰ Modern environmental science is about learning how to live on this planet without damaging it unnecessarily or threatening human existence in the process. Chiras writes that environmental science is just a name for an activity that humans have been engaged in throughout time but have temporarily forgotten as populations became centralised.⁴¹ The shift to mass-produced food, for example, not only meant humans sought to conquer nature, but also, "...had a potentially more harmful effect: severed, in large part, the link to nature." As humans became caught up in the new technologies, we temporarily forgot that we are intricately linked to the environment, "What we do to the environment, we do to ourselves".⁴² Or put another way, humans are an inseparable part of nature.⁴³ The visual arts, Hicks and King argue, provide the tools and media for re-developing stronger connections between culture and nature. By representing the environment in art we invest it with meaning and cultural relevance. Learning to live in a sustainable way is, "a cultural challenge to our very

³⁷ Park, *The Environment: Principles and Applications*, 5.

³⁸ Lakoff, *The All New Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*.

³⁹ Matthew C. Nisbet, "Communicating Climate Change: Why Frames Matter for Public Engagement," *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 51, no. 2 (2009).

⁴⁰ Park, *The Environment: Principles and Applications*, 5.

⁴¹ Chiras, *Environmental Science: A Framework for Decision Making*.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴³ George Lakoff, "Why It Matters How We Frame the Environment," *Environmental Communication* 4, no. 1 (2010): 76.

sense of who we are and what we should aspire to become.”⁴⁴ To meet this challenge Hicks and King conclude that artists and art educator’s need to, “...re-think, re-imagine the human place in nature.”⁴⁵

If we accept that solving environmental problems requires changing attitudes and subsequently behaviour towards the environment, then we should acknowledge the role of those subjects that are concerned with the emotions, and, “Art is of paramount importance here.”⁴⁶ When it comes to making decisions, the research of cognitive and brain sciences has demonstrated that emotions have the steering wheel role, “...without emotion, you would not know what to want, since like and not-like would be meaningless to you.”⁴⁷ Contradictory to the Enlightenment view on reason, human reason is mostly unconscious (98%) and requires emotion. People are not rational: they don’t make decisions on fact alone.⁴⁸ When it comes to engaging individuals more meaningfully in climate warming and other environmental problems, “...artists whose fields of expertise are the conceptualisation of experiences and emotions have an opportunity to come to the fore”.⁴⁹ Apart from becoming a, “...purely imaginative or aesthetic activity...” affective engagement, which art can provide, is integral to creating meaningful communication between humans.⁵⁰ By engaging the emotions, artists have the potential to promote cognitive and behavioural change.

Humans make sense of the world through metaphor and analogy. Metaphors are hard-wired into the brain (physically realised in neural circuits in the brain called ‘frames’) and are the building blocks for people to understand new concepts.^{51 52 53}

Abstract concepts like climate change, are embodied and understood via repeat

⁴⁴ Laurie E. Hicks and Roger J.H King, "Confronting Environmental Collapse: Visual Culture, Art Education, and Environmental Responsibility," *National Art Education Association* 48, no. 4 (2007): 332.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 333.

⁴⁶ Adams, "Art and Environment: Making Art Work/S," 14.

⁴⁷ Lakoff, "Why It Matters How We Frame the Environment," 72.

⁴⁸ *The All New Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*.

⁴⁹ Lesley Duxbury, "A Change in the Climate: New Interpretations and Perceptions of Climate Change through Artistic Interventions and Representations," *Weather, Climate, and Society* 2 (2010): 295.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 294.

⁵¹ Nisbet, "Communicating Climate Change: Why Frames Matter for Public Engagement."

⁵² Lakoff, "Why It Matters How We Frame the Environment."

⁵³ *The All New Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*.

metaphors that build new frames.⁵⁴ Artists seek metaphors and analogies as a means of communicating with their viewers, and in this regard art can play a role in communicating messages about the environment. With a successful piece of art, the artist selects from their environment, clarifies sensations and presents them with such wholeness that the experience becomes a memorable one, and one which may become significant to many.⁵⁵ In this regard, an artwork cannot exist in a vacuum. The active life of art relies on its ability to influence the viewer's awareness and sensibilities.⁵⁶ In an encounter with an artwork, the viewer is not only invited to reflect on what the artist is communicating, but also the viewer is invited to engage in their own reflections, and recall their own experiences to evaluate and interpret the work in a process of critical thinking.⁵⁷ When looking at art, the viewer engages with a private reverie to make sense of a public global reality such as climate change.⁵⁸ In this way, through the use of metaphor and analogy, viewing art can help people to bridge the gap between their 'knowns' and 'unknowns', including content, objects, events and actions that may otherwise appear disparate and unconnected.

Lakoff⁵⁹ argues that a dominant narrative is needed for people to form new frames for making sense of the world. The same narrative needs to be repeated over and over, by different people (politicians, media, disciplines, corporations and so forth) and from different approaches (metaphors, allegory, examples) for the audience to develop new pathways of learning in the brain. In her article, Elizabeth Boulton argues the need for artists to have a prominent place in the communication of climate change.⁶⁰ As an individual, I look at my art and think, 'climate change is too big for my art to make an impact'. Participating in a collective with other artists may help to overcome this feeling of helplessness. I am not arguing though that artists alone can change the world. Artists need to work with other disciplines and vice versa. Reid

⁵⁴ *How Brains Think*, podcast audio, accessed 7 July 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldDAfoVdYU8.

⁵⁵ Betty Churcher, *Understanding Art: The Use of Space, Form and Structure* (Adelaide: Rigby Limited, 1982), 140.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, iii.

⁵⁷ Duxbury, "A Change in the Climate: New Interpretations and Perceptions of Climate Change through Artistic Interventions and Representations."

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Lakoff, *The All New Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Boulton, "It's Time for a New Age of Enlightenment: Why Climate Change Needs 60,000 Artists to Tell Its Story," *The Conversation* (2016), <http://theconversation.com>.

believes that a narrative can be strengthened by artwork that is, for example, both aesthetically powerful (acts on the emotion of the viewer through expressing high quality relationships) and scientifically informed.⁶¹ Similarly Hicks and King write, “We need new artistic visions and narrative-based understandings that articulate new ways to fit a flourishing, responsible human life within nature’s ecological constraints.”⁶² The propositional work of artists cannot be expected to come up with answers to the great problems with the environment, but their contributions could be tools for reflection, discussion and awareness.⁶³

2.4 Art, environment and education

In the previous section I demonstrated that artists have a mainstream role in the environmental movement, specifically in helping to communicate and affect change in attitude and behaviour. Having completed an environmental science degree myself, worked in this field professionally and observed the failings of communicating scientific fact alone, I wanted to explore educational options available for visual artists that meld subject disciplines about the environment with creative outputs in art. In parallel, as discussed in my exegesis, I also wanted to explore through studio practice the melding of ecological and farmer knowledge of ecosystems with art outcomes.

For professional artists, issues such as climate change are prominent sources of inspiration for art making. Only in the last 15-20 years have art educators in a few institutions around the world sought to break the dominant fine art school model of primarily teaching discipline-specific⁶⁴ courses, and introduce the environment as subject matter and an originator of ideas for art making.⁶⁵ Tertiary level art and environment courses/programs aim to provide the professional skills needed for

⁶¹ John Reid, 15 September 2014, personal communication.

⁶² Hicks and King, "Confronting Environmental Collapse: Visual Culture, Art Education, and Environmental Responsibility," 334.

⁶³ Duxbury, "A Change in the Climate: New Interpretations and Perceptions of Climate Change through Artistic Interventions and Representations."

⁶⁴ Discipline here refers to fine art disciplines of painting, sculpture, photography, print making etcetera.

⁶⁵ Erika Osborne to Art and Environment: An Innovative Field Course for Artists, 3 September 2015, 2014, <http://blog.sustainability.colostate.edu/?q=osborne>.

students wanting to engage in, “the world as a stage for art making”⁶⁶ and have a core commitment to field investigation where the focus is relationship to place. The convenor helps students to develop a connection to place in the belief that ‘place’ forms a good source for artwork.⁶⁷ Making artworks derived from direct sensory experience of the environment also encourages an emotional attachment to place and can bring about a mass shift, for the student, towards valuing nature.⁶⁸ Research is needed in order to develop a better understanding of how to educate artists to become ecological artists in the quest to help solve environmental crises.

2.5 Conclusion

The world is undergoing an environmental crisis. Science has communicated that this is happening, but there has been failure to take appropriate action.⁶⁹ Artists are needed in the communication of complex environmental problems because they communicate values, engage the emotions, help people make sense of abstract concepts through the use of metaphors, and are needed to contribute to a pro-environment narrative.⁷⁰ Ecological art has an important role in the environmental movement. In this dissertation I explore place-based pedagogies that aim to provide artists with the skills to develop an aesthetic visual approach to environmental issues. In the next chapter I briefly outline tertiary level art and environment courses currently offered across the globe, and then review in detail the theory that underpins them.

⁶⁶ "Art and Environment: An Innovative Field Course for Artists".

⁶⁷ Taylor and Gilbert, *Land Arts of the American West*, 236.

⁶⁸ Adams, "Art and Environment: Making Art Work/S."

⁶⁹ Lakoff, "Why It Matters How We Frame the Environment."

⁷⁰ Blandy and Hoffman, "Toward an Art Education of Place."

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I provided the background and context to my research, including demonstrating that artists have a legitimate role in the environmental movement. In this chapter I outline fine art education programs that are offered at the tertiary (higher) level, which have an environmental theme, and a core commitment to field investigation where the focus is relationship to place. A review of literature on the theory that underpins the art and environment programs is provided. These theories are: place-based education, critical pedagogy of place, action research and sense of place. The last section in the chapter outlines The Australian National University School of Art Field Study program, which was evaluated in order to develop a better understanding of these programs from the artist participants' perspective.

3.2 Overview of art and environment courses and programs

In coming to understand art and environment education, I researched courses and programs that are currently offered across the globe. My findings are summarised in Table 3.1. The summary includes the program name, an overview of aims, the participants targeted, and an outline of the procedure. The criteria for inclusion in this table were: tertiary level; fine art courses and programs; environmental theme; artwork informed by field research, which involved briefings from the local community. Three courses were identified in Australia, three in the USA, and one in the UK.

The courses reviewed in Table 3.1 are on the most part very similar in their aim and execution. They nearly all run for one semester, and typically as an elective within a fine arts degree (for advanced undergraduate or masters coursework). Most courses include lectures, field trips and studio development components in their procedure. The lectures are held at the institution and/or in the field, and incorporate a combination of experts from within the arts and from other disciplines and cultures. The course often has recommended or required readings. The field trips vary in

duration and number, but when more than one field trip is scheduled within a course all programs, except that of the ANU Field Study program, involve different field locations. For most programs surveyed, the field location is regionally focused rather than within the town/city where the institution resides, and the actual location varies within and across courses from urban to rural to national parks. Nearly all the courses involve the students exhibiting their artwork as part of their assessment at the institution. Students are encouraged to critically engage in, and debate, the environmental issues presented during the lectures and encountered during the field.

The making possible of first-hand experience (experiential learning) of place is emphasised and students are challenged to respond to place through the development of visual fine art. The field provides a place for formulating ideas, gathering materials and/or for making artworks whilst in the field. The Land Arts of the American West (University of New Mexico) and Art and the Environment: Studies in the Field course (UNSW) require to students to collaborate with each other on projects.

The participants targeted for the courses are predominantly visual fine art students. However three courses reviewed were also open to students from other disciplines: architecture in one instance, and all disciplines across the university in two instances. The arguments for this are: each discipline brings new ways of thinking and insights; and artists need to learn to collaborate with other disciplines if they are to effectively participate in complex environmental decision making, management and communication.⁷¹

The biggest difference amongst programs reviewed existed between the ANU Field Study program and the other programs/courses surveyed. The differences being the ANU Field Study program: deliberately offers repeat field trips to the same location within the one program; the convenor (in most instances) was not responsible for assessing the students work; and a public exhibition of artwork inspired by the program was held in the field location, as well as the institution. When I spoke to the

⁷¹ Louise Fowler-Smith, "Can Interdisciplinary Teaching Led by the Arts Contribute to the Debate on Contemporary Environmental Issues?," (University of New South Wales, 2017).

Art and Environment: Studies in the Field course convenor (UNSW), she indicated that repeat field trips to the field location were desirable, but not possible due to limited resources.⁷² For the remaining programs, the field trips were either once-off, or a one-way journey circling the region such as that for the Land Arts of the American West whereby, “The real agenda is the journey, the movement across the land.”⁷³

⁷² ; *ibid.*

⁷³ Taylor and Gilbert, *Land Arts of the American West*, 379.

Table 3.1 Overview of fine art education programs and courses: field based with environmental theme (tertiary level only)

Course name and operation length	Institution	Aim/Outline	Participants targeted	Procedure
Environment Studio: Field Study program ^{74 75 76} Commenced 1996, on-going depending on funding availability	School of Art, ANU	- To provide field research skills and subject matter (environmentally orientated), which informs the development of fine art - Support students' major art discipline study	Open to School of Art community: advanced undergraduate, honours and postgraduate students, staff, alumni, and visiting artists	- Semester length - Multiple field trips (5-10 days) to the same location with same thematic focus - In the field briefings from local community - Field trips interspersed with studio development - Concludes with a catalogued public exhibition in the field location
Environment Studio: Balawan Elective Course ⁷⁷ Commenced 2015	School of Art, ANU	Supervised, environmentally and culturally orientated field research and studio development. Field research informs the artwork ideas	Visual arts undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students. Participants have to be	- Semester or winter break length course - One 3-5 day field excursion augmented by seminars, class

⁷⁴ "Environment Studio," The Australian National University, <http://soa.anu.edu.au/environment-studio>.

⁷⁵ John Reid et al., *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment* (Acton, A.C.T.: The Australian National University, 2010).

⁷⁶ Young, Reid, and Meehan, "Taking Action: Researching an Innovative Pedagogy for an Aesthetic Visual Approach to Environmental Issues."

⁷⁷ The Australian National University, "Environment Studio: Balawan Elective," The Australian National University, <http://soa.anu.edu.au/environment-studio/balawan-field-study>.

Course name and operation length	Institution	Aim/Outline	Participants targeted	Procedure
		and studio development of a folio of artwork	enrolled in the course	discussions and individual tutorials • In the field briefings from local community • Students assessed by lecturer
Elective course (within the Imaging the Land International Research Initiative (ILIRI):^{78 79 80} • Art and the Environment: Studies in the Field Commenced 2007	Art and Design, University of New South Wales	• Aims to address the question of how we see, interact with, live in, and represent an arid land from creative perspectives • Encourages different disciplines to work together	• Postgraduate and undergraduate students studying fine arts, design, media arts, architecture, engineering, environmental humanities, environmental management and science	• One 2-week field trip to the same field research station in arid NSW • Students briefed on site by local community • Students work together while in the field and leave a legacy at the research station • Students across disciplines form groups of 3-4 people and are tasked with a land management problem to

⁷⁸ Fowler-Smith, "Can Interdisciplinary Teaching Led by the Arts Contribute to the Debate on Contemporary Environmental Issues?."

⁷⁹ Art and Design University of New South Wales, "Imaging the Land International Research Institute," University of New South Wales, <https://www.artdesign.unsw.edu.au/research/collaborations-research-groups/iliri>.

⁸⁰ Fowler-Smith.

Course name and operation length	Institution	Aim/Outline	Participants targeted	Procedure
				address and respond to creatively within the field and studio An exhibition of works that coincides with assessment is held on the Art and Design Campus in Sydney.
Two elective courses offered: - Art, Environment and Technology⁸¹ - Art, Natural Environment and Wilderness⁸² Operated from 2002 to 2009	School of Art, University of Tasmania	Explore concepts of art, nature and technology/wilderness and their role in the representation of the Tasmanian landscape	Fine art undergraduates	- Involves lectures and 2x4-day field trips per course (location varies) - May include briefings from experts and local community - Assessment: journal, essay, artwork and debate - Artwork is exhibited at institution
Land Arts of the American	College of Fine Arts,	Aims to construct a creative zone	Fine art students: advanced	Students attend four courses over

⁸¹ University of Tasmania, "Courses and Units: Art, Natural Environment and Technology," University of Tasmania, <http://www.utas.edu.au/courses/art/units/fsz250-art,-natural-environment-and-technology>.

⁸² "Courses and Units: Art, Natural Environment and Wilderness," University of Tasmania, www.utas.edu.au/courses/art/units/fsz251-art,-natural-environment-and-wilderness.

Course name and operation length	Institution	Aim/Outline	Participants targeted	Procedure
West ^{83 84 85 86} On-going Commenced in 1999	University of New Mexico, USA	for the students through field-based experience • Environmental and social justice focus within the American West	undergraduate and post graduate students	the course of one semester (full-time commitment): 1. Lectures (research) at the institution 2. Several (interspersed) field trips that encourage collaboration amongst students. Guest artists and people from other disciplines join the group for sections. 3. Studio development 4. Presentation and art exhibition
'Landmarks of Art' ⁸⁷ On-going	Art Department, MiraCosta College, California, USA.	• Examines art and architecture on-site within cultural and historical contexts.	Undergraduates (associate degree) across all disciplines	• General preparatory lectures on fine art • 3 x 3-day field trips: local art

⁸³ "Land Arts of the American West," University of New Mexico, <http://landarts.unm.edu>.

⁸⁴ "Land Arts of the American West," College of Architecture, Texas Tech University, landarts.org/category/program.

⁸⁵ Taylor and Gilbert, *Land Arts of the American West*.

⁸⁶ 'Land Arts of the American West is an advanced course. Several prerequisite courses are run for undergraduate and postgraduate students at the Art and Ecology Faculty, University of New Mexico. A more information: http://socialmedia.hpc.unm.edu/ae/?page_id=11 (accessed 28 August 2015) and <http://art.unm.edu/art-ecology/> (accessed 28 August 2015).

⁸⁷ "Miracosta College 2015-2016 Catalog," MiraCosta College, <http://catalog.miracosta.edu/disciplines/art/#courseinventory>.

Course name and operation length	Institution	Aim/Outline	Participants targeted	Procedure
				galleries; desert; sea • Studio development and assessment
Art and Environment ⁸⁸ Commenced 2014	Department of Art and History, Colorado State University	For students to: • Understand the field of environmental art and the practitioners working within that field • Develop constructive methods for working between the studio and the environment (field) • Engage in interdisciplinary practices	• Upper division undergraduate and postgraduate visual art students	• Mix of seminars, studio development and field • Read and discuss texts • Six field trips led by experts from other fields (incl. astronomer, soil scientist, permaculture)
Cultural Landscapes ⁸⁹	Interdisciplinary: Edinburgh School of Art, and School of Architecture and	• Examines the relationships between people and the landscapes they inhabit, and the ways landscapes are used and	• Postgraduate students (Masters)	• Combination of lectures (including guests) and visiting field sites within Edinburgh and further afield

⁸⁸ Osborne, "Art and Environment: An Innovative Field Course for Artists".

⁸⁹ Edinburgh College of Art, "Cultural Landscapes Msc," The University of Edinburgh, <http://www.eca.ed.ac.uk/school-of-art/postgraduate/taught-degrees/cultural-landscapes-msc>.

Course name and operation length	Institution	Aim/Outline	Participants targeted	Procedure
	Landscape Architecture, University of Edinburgh	managed in the contemporary world • Cross disciplinary		• Respond to place through artwork/architectural work or proposal

3.3 Theory behind art and environment education

3.3.1 Background on education for sustainable development

Under the United Nations Agenda 21⁹⁰ education is held to be central to sustainability. The overall goal of the UNESCO 'Decade of Education for Sustainable Development' (2005-2014) was to, "integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning" in order to encourage changes in behaviour and create a more sustainable future.⁹¹ One of the major thrusts was to reorientate existing education programs. A conundrum exists in educated nations: it is the educated nations that leave the deepest ecological footprints. Therefore Agenda 21 recognised that the solution does not lie in increasing education to these nations, but rather in re-thinking and re-vising content and pedagogical techniques to include, "more principles, knowledge, skills, perspectives and values related to sustainability in each of the three realms – environment, society, and economy".⁹² Education for sustainable development carries with it the inherent idea of implementing programs that are locally relevant and culturally appropriate, and which bridge the gap between education as we know it and education for sustainability.⁹³ ⁹⁴ Universities including ANU have declared a commitment to sustainable development and specific actions that they must undertake through, for example, the Talloires Declaration⁹⁵ and the Sapporo Sustainability Declaration (G8 University Summit).⁹⁶ The School of Art Field Study program was one methodological approach that ANU developed towards meeting the challenges presented in Agenda 21.

⁹⁰ United Nations Sustainable Development, "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development: Agenda 21."

⁹¹ UNESCO Education Sector, "United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) International Implementation Scheme," ed. Division for the Promotion of Quality Education (France: UNESCO, 2005), 6.

⁹² Ibid., 29.

⁹³ United Nations Sustainable Development, "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development: Agenda 21."

⁹⁴ David A. Gruenewald, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place," *Educational Researcher* 32, no. 4 (2003).

⁹⁵ Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future, "Talloires Declaration," http://www.ulsf.org/programs_talloires.html.

⁹⁶ "Sapporo Sustainability Declaration," <http://g8u-summit.jp/english/index.html>.

3.3.2 Placed-based education

Smith writes that learning within the primary and secondary schools has become “...something gained through reading texts, listening to lectures, or viewing videos rather than through experiencing full-bodied encounters with the world.”⁹⁷ The ANU Field Study program convenor observed similar teaching environments in the tertiary teaching environment for fine art students. Reid observed that undergraduate art students often based their artwork on, “...processed cultural material such as other artwork, literary texts, written discourse in art journals and cultural content posted on the Internet.”⁹⁸ Opportunities at ANU for students to develop art in response to real-world encounters were limited. The ANU Field Study program and the other courses briefly outlined in Table 3.1 are examples of universities making commitments towards providing an education that involves experiential and place-based learning, and one which melds the environment as the subject with creative output.

Place-based learning can be traced back for more than 100 years to progressive educators such as John Dewey.⁹⁹ Dewey was concerned about a disjuncture he observed between school and daily life: the student’s ability to apply in daily life what they were learning at school and vice versa. Dewey, “advocated an experiential approach to student learning in the local environment”¹⁰⁰ where the student learnt through experience rather than in the abstract. The argument was, “by connecting learning to real-world experiences, students can construct meaningful connections among cultural, political and social issues.”¹⁰¹

Experiential learning theory is embedded in place-base education and involves students having a direct experience with a concept or problem. Advocates argue that this experience leads to a rich form of learning.^{102 103} The student is provided with

⁹⁷ Gregory A. Smith, "Place-Based Education: Learning to Be Where We Are," *Phi Delta Kappan* 83, no. 8 (2002): 585.

⁹⁸ Reid et al., *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment*, 8.

⁹⁹ Janice L. Woodhouse and Clifford Knapp, E., "Place-Based Curriculum and Instruction: Outdoor and Environmental Education Approaches," ed. U.S. Department of Education (Charleston, WV: AEL, 2000).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰¹ Mark. A Graham, "Art, Ecology and Art Education: Locating Art Education in a Critical Place-Based Pedagogy," *Studies in Art Education A Journal of Issues and Research* 48, no. 4 (2007): 377.

¹⁰² David Zandvliet, "Environmental Learning," in *The Ecology of School*, ed. David Zandvliet (Rotterdam, Netherlands: SensePublishers, 2013), 7.

opportunities for observation, followed by reflection and negotiation, which leads to further inquiry. The following points summarises the four stages in the experiential learning cycle as initially proposed by Kolb¹⁰⁴ and annotated by Zandvliet¹⁰⁵ (in quotations):

1. Direct experience;
2. Reflective observation/critical reflection: the ability to “reflect on and observe their experiences from different perspectives”;
3. Abstract conceptualization: the ability to “create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories”; and
4. Active experimentation/negotiation: the ability to “use these theories to make decisions and solve problems”.

The emphasis of place-based education is two-fold: connecting people to people; and connecting people to nature.¹⁰⁶ Sobel, who works and researches k-12 education, defined place-based education as follows:

Place-based education is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language, arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum. Emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences...¹⁰⁷

Place-based education can include history, culture, social problems, economics and aesthetics.^{108 109} Most often however, place-based education has nature as a focus.¹¹⁰ The emphasis on nature in place-based education can be linked to environmental education, which traditionally focused on the natural sciences and more recently, environmental issues and catastrophes. Woodhouse and Knapp write that, “place-based educators believe that education should prepare people to live and work to

¹⁰³ David. A Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰⁵ Zandvliet, "Environmental Learning," 8.

¹⁰⁶ David Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities* (Barrington, MA: The Orion Society, 2005).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰⁹ Graham, "Art, Ecology and Art Education: Locating Art Education in a Critical Place-Based Pedagogy," 377.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

sustain the cultural and ecological integrity of the places they inhabit. To do this, people must have knowledge of ecological patterns, systems of causation, and the long-term effects of human actions on those patterns.”¹¹¹ Several place-based proponents argue that learning within the environment helps students to develop an aesthetic appreciation for the natural world.^{112 113 114 115}

Through a survey of literature, Woodhouse and Knapp found five distinctive characteristic patterns present in place-based education¹¹⁶:

- “It emerges from the particular attributes of place. The content is specific to the geography, ecology, sociology, politics, and other dynamics of that place. This fundamental characteristic establishes the foundation of the concept.”
- “It is inherently multi-disciplinary.”
- “It is inherently experiential. In many programs this includes a participatory action...component.”
- It is reflective of an educational philosophy that goes beyond the standards in which the institution is assessed nationally (such as financial viability) and has broader objectives.
- “It connects place with self and community...These curricula include multigenerational and multicultural dimensions as they interface with community resources.”

Much of the literature on place-based education focuses on kindergarten to year 12 (k-12) and very little on tertiary (higher) education.^{117 118 119 120} The k-12 research

¹¹¹ Woodhouse and Knapp, "Place-Based Curriculum and Instruction: Outdoor and Environmental Education Approaches," 2.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Smith, "Place-Based Education: Learning to Be Where We Are."

¹¹⁴ Blandy and Hoffman, "Toward an Art Education of Place."

¹¹⁵ Ralph A. Smith and Christiana M. Smith, "Aesthetics and Environmental Education," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 4, no. 4 (1970).

¹¹⁶ Woodhouse and Knapp, "Place-Based Curriculum and Instruction: Outdoor and Environmental Education Approaches," 1-2.

¹¹⁷ Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*.

¹¹⁸ Gruenewald, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place."

¹¹⁹ Phil Cormack, Bill Green, and Jo-Anne Reid, "Children's Understanding of Place," in *Making Sense of Place: Exploring Concepts and Expressions of Place through Different Senses and Lenses*, ed. Frank Vanclay, Matthew Higgins, and Adam Blackshaw (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2008).

indicates that the benefits are multiple. Place-based education: increases academic achievement; produces work with genuine meaning; helps students to develop stronger ties to their community; enhances students' appreciation for the natural world; and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens.¹²¹ ¹²² In addition, k-12 place-based education can lead to improved environmental behaviour.¹²³ Class room interventions that actively involved students, such as making a vegetable garden, improved environmental behaviour more effectively than environmental education interventions in other settings such as at nature camps.¹²⁴ The formative years of bonding with the environment take place during the stages of human development between ages four to fifteen.¹²⁵ Sobel argues that if you want real improvements in environmental behaviour, place-based education programs should target and actively involve k-12 students (before 18 years of age), and integrate an environmental education program into the school curriculum.¹²⁶

A contemporary role of universities is to provide skilled professionals.¹²⁷ One could potentially surmise that the majority of higher education students attracted to attending the place-based education courses had already developed a bond with the environment during their formative years, and that the role of these courses is more about environmental awareness and professional development, rather than effecting a change in values. The Art and Ecology degree curriculum offered at the University of New Mexico (which includes the Land Arts of the American West program) aims to prepare students to pursue various career avenues including: public artist (emphasis on interdisciplinary or collaborative); fine artist exhibiting at galleries with an ecological focus; educator with ecological principles; land use interpreter

¹²⁰ Woodhouse and Knapp, "Place-Based Curriculum and Instruction: Outdoor and Environmental Education Approaches," 1.

¹²¹ Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*, 7.

¹²² Smith, "Place-Based Education: Learning to Be Where We Are."

¹²³ Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*, 35.

¹²⁴ Lynnette Zelezny, "Education Interventions That Improve Environmental Behaviour: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Environmental Education* 31, no. 1 (1999).

¹²⁵ David Sobel, *Beyond Ecophobia: Reclaiming the Heart in Nature Education*, 2nd ed., Nature Literacy Series (Massachusetts: Orion, 2013), 14.

¹²⁶ *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*, 35.

¹²⁷ John Brennan, Roger King, and Yann Lebeau, "The Role of Universities in the Transformation of Societies: An International Research Project Synthesis Report," (London: Association of Commonwealth Universities, and Centre for Higher Education Research and Information, 2004).

(research and present cultural land issues and landscape through art); and activist.¹²⁸

The success of a program can be personally gauged by the convenor through keeping in touch with alumni see whether they have achieved careers in these areas.

Convenor anecdotes and course surveys provide some insights into the art and environment courses reviewed in Table 3.1, including the skills students acquired. Generally, the programs inspired art production, enabled collegial learning, developed exhibiting know-how, supported students in pursuing their interest in the environment, and helped to develop the students working practice between the field and studio.^{129 130} With regards to changing environmental behaviour, one convenor observed that her course led one participant to develop a more sustainable working practice, and inspired others towards environmental activism on environmental issues that they were exposed to during the course.¹³¹ The same convenor argues that students began to see how art could work in tandem with science and policy in the developing and promoting of solutions to environmental problems.¹³² Transformative experience with regard to art practice was observed, but not detailed, by other place-based convenors.^{133 134}

The physical setting for 'place' in the k-12 place-based education programs typically means the school grounds, and/or the town within which the school and students reside.^{135 136 137 138} Whereas the tertiary programs reviewed focused on the region, for example, the Murray Darling Basin within which ANU is located, and with multi-night field trips predominating. Distance from the institution and home, convenors argued, was needed for students to focus 24/7 on the art process.¹³⁹ Art is

¹²⁸ Art and Ecology, "About," Art and Ecology: The Department of Art and Art History, University of New Mexico, http://socialmedia.hpc.unm.edu/ae/?page_id=2.

¹²⁹ From evaluations conducted by the ANU Centre for Educational Development and Academic Methods

¹³⁰ Reid et al., *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment*, 8-20.

¹³¹ Osborne, "Art and Environment: An Innovative Field Course for Artists".

¹³² Title of Weblog.

¹³³ Gradle, "Ecology of Place: Art Education in Relational World."

¹³⁴ John Reid, 5 August.

¹³⁵ Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*.

¹³⁶ Gruenewald, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place."

¹³⁷ Cormack, Green, and Reid, "Children's Understanding of Place."

¹³⁸ Woodhouse and Knapp, "Place-Based Curriculum and Instruction: Outdoor and Environmental Education Approaches," 1.

¹³⁹ Reid.

about communicating, often in a metaphorical way, about relationships. Convenors sought field locations that abounded in quality relationships (between landscape, community and artist), and these were mostly found to occur regionally rather than locally.^{140 141 142} Based on his experience of convening the Land Arts of the American West program, Bill Gilbert expands on the importance of the physical setting,

We remove students from their normal routines, their support structures and their creature comforts. We replace these with exposure to the majesty of the western landscape and the severity of the elements. Students living day to day in the cycle of light and dark imposed by the movement of the sun with only a small tent as protective enclosure are often pushed out of their normal mindset into a peak experience. The resulting shift in perceptions open new avenues in their practice both in the field and for years afterwards. Land Arts of the American West students experience a related dislocation upon re-entering urban life. All the things previously taken for granted, electric light, heating and cooling, water from a tap, etc. are now viewed with fresh eyes, no longer as givens.¹⁴³

3.3.3 A critical pedagogy of place

The Land Arts of the American West is advertised as a, "...critical arts pedagogy based in place..."¹⁴⁴ In designing the curriculum, the convenor applied two theories: 'critical pedagogy' and 'place-based education'.

Critical pedagogy evolved from critical theory, where the aim was for students to become "transformative intellectuals".^{145 146} That is, "...capable of identifying and redressing the injustices, inequalities, and myths of an often oppressive world."¹⁴⁷ As a form of experiential learning, students learn to reflect on their own situation - the social, political, and economic - and are challenged to think critically and take action

¹⁴⁰ Fowler-Smith.

¹⁴¹ Taylor and Gilbert, *Land Arts of the American West*.

¹⁴² Reid.

¹⁴³ Bill Gilbert, 10 February 2017. Personal Communication.

¹⁴⁴ "Land Arts of the American West". <http://landarts.unm.edu/> (accessed 24 July 2015).

¹⁴⁵ Gruenewald, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place," 4. Gruenewald cites Giroux (1988) here.

¹⁴⁶ Graham, "Art, Ecology and Art Education: Locating Art Education in a Critical Place-Based Pedagogy," 379.

¹⁴⁷ Gruenewald, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place," 4.

against oppressive elements.¹⁴⁸ Through this process the student often changes their relationship to place.¹⁴⁹

Gruenewald finds fault with place-based education on its own. Traditionally, Gruenewald argues, place-based education has focused on ecological (and predominantly rural) contexts, and neglected the causes of environmental degradation from a social point of view. To overcome this problem Gruenewald and others argue the case for a critical pedagogy of place, one which combines the ecological focus of place-based education with the social focus of critical theory,^{150 151} and which considers the intertwining of, "...relationships among social, cultural, ecological and political issues".¹⁵² For the educator, Gruenewald writes, the aim of a critical pedagogy of place should be to, "...contribute to the production of educational discourses and practices that explicitly examine the place-specific nexus between environment, culture, and education."¹⁵³ A critical pedagogy of place is about learning about nature, and environmental and social issues into the education curriculum, both locally and globally, now and into the future so that we can learn to live well and sustainably in our local environments, as well as identify and change our actions that could result in exploiting other places, including its people.¹⁵⁴

A critical pedagogy of place is considered a robust framework for the theory and practice of an art education that is concerned with ecological issues.^{155 156 157}

Graham writes, "Art education that is framed by a critical pedagogy of place is responsive to ecology, community and culture while challenging the boundaries and purposes of art in ways that engage students in reflective and transformative

¹⁴⁸ Zandvliet, "Environmental Learning."

¹⁴⁹ Gruenewald, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place," 4.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Graham, "Art, Ecology and Art Education: Locating Art Education in a Critical Place-Based Pedagogy," 376.

¹⁵² Ibid., 378.

¹⁵³ Gruenewald, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place," 10.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 9.

¹⁵⁵ Graham, "Art, Ecology and Art Education: Locating Art Education in a Critical Place-Based Pedagogy."

¹⁵⁶ Blandy and Hoffman, "Toward an Art Education of Place."

¹⁵⁷ Laurie E. Hicks and Roger J.H King, "Confronting Environmental Collapse: Visual Culture, Art Education, and Environmental Responsibility," *ibid.* 48, no. 4 (2007).

learning.”¹⁵⁸ Boundaries are blurred between, “...art making, social critique, scientific enquiry and activism.”¹⁵⁹ Students are challenged to reflect on their own lives, the dominant culture, and to critically consider the assumptions and metaphors presented to them. Hicks and King argue that art educators need to enlarge their idea of community to include a bioregional perspective, where the ultimate goal is to teach students about the interdependence and interconnectedness of all things.¹⁶⁰

Graham suggests three entry points for an art education that adopts a critical pedagogy of place theory: natural history through bonding with nature first-hand; cultural journalism through connecting students to local history, stories, traditions and artefacts; and transformative education which focuses on social change.¹⁶¹ Similarly, Hicks and King¹⁶² advocate giving art students local experiences such as learning the environmental history, in the hope of engaging their imagination, and to equip students to think and act (reach out) beyond the local.

However there are obstacles to putting a critical pedagogy of place theory into practice. Students are not always interested or particularly sympathetic to environmental or local concerns - mass culture is all too persuasive - and they are happy to not question it.¹⁶³ A solution presented by Graham and Smith¹⁶⁴ is a curriculum that is responsive to the interests and experiences of the student, which allows the student to determine how they will become involved with the subject. Teachers and students develop the curriculum based on the phenomena immediately around them. In this situation, there is a negotiation of content between the teacher and student, and the teacher's role is to be an informed “...guide, co-learner, broker of community resources and learning possibilities”.¹⁶⁵ The ANU Field Study

¹⁵⁸ Graham, "Art, Ecology and Art Education: Locating Art Education in a Critical Place-Based Pedagogy," 387.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 379.

¹⁶⁰ Hicks and King, "Confronting Environmental Collapse: Visual Culture, Art Education, and Environmental Responsibility," 28.

¹⁶¹ Graham, "Art, Ecology and Art Education: Locating Art Education in a Critical Place-Based Pedagogy," 380.

¹⁶² Hicks and King, "Confronting Environmental Collapse: Visual Culture, Art Education, and Environmental Responsibility."

¹⁶³ Graham, "Art, Ecology and Art Education: Locating Art Education in a Critical Place-Based Pedagogy," 386.

¹⁶⁴ Smith, "Place-Based Education: Learning to Be Where We Are," 539.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 593.

program convenor and Land Arts of the American West convenor both advocate and apply this approach.^{166 167} Other obstacles to note, but which are outside my research scope, include reduced funding for arts, ever increasing safety protocols, and meeting nationalistic competition in the global economy,¹⁶⁸ all of which have discouraged teachers from developing new and innovative curriculum.^{169 170 171}

3.3.4 Action research

The ANU Field Study program was designed based on the theory of action research.^{172 173} The primary purpose of action research is to, “provide the means for people to engage in systematic inquiry and investigation to design an appropriate way of accomplishing a desired goal and to evaluate its effectiveness.”¹⁷⁴ The desired outcome is a practical tool for developing solutions to problems experienced by stakeholders in the context. Developed initially in the mid 1900’s by Lewin, action research involves the steps: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting on the result of the action.¹⁷⁵ It is not considered a linear model, but rather a spiral of activity or iterative cycle where the practitioner may need to go backward and repeat processes, and rethink.^{176 177} Stringer summarises the basic action research routine as, “look, think, act”:¹⁷⁸

- Looking involves gathering relevant information and describing the situation;

¹⁶⁶ Taylor and Gilbert, *Land Arts of the American West*.

¹⁶⁷ Reid.

¹⁶⁸ Gruenewald is particularly concerned about education supporting nationalistic competition in the global economy. Concern is also articulated by Graham (2007) – education testing based on standards that ignores peculiarities of place.

¹⁶⁹ Fowler-Smith.

¹⁷⁰ Graham, "Art, Ecology and Art Education: Locating Art Education in a Critical Place-Based Pedagogy."

¹⁷¹ Gruenewald, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place."

¹⁷² Reid.

¹⁷³ Young, Reid, and Meehan, "Taking Action: Researching an Innovative Pedagogy for an Aesthetic Visual Approach to Environmental Issues."

¹⁷⁴ Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE, 2014), 6.

¹⁷⁵ Robin McTaggart, "Guiding Principles for Participatory Action Research," in *Participatory Action Research: International Contexts and Consequences*, ed. Robin McTaggart (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 27.

¹⁷⁶ Stephen Kemmis, Robin McTaggart, and Rhonda Nixon, *Introducing Critical Participatory Action Research* (Singapore: Springer, 2014).

¹⁷⁷ Stringer, *Action Research*.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

- Thinking involves exploring, analysing and asking questions like, ‘what is happening here?’ Followed by interpreting and explaining who or why things are as they are (theorise);
- Acting involves planning and defining a course of action (based on analysis and interpretation), implementing the plan and evaluating the effectiveness of actions taken.

Action research allows for contextually relevant procedures to be formulated by inquiring and resourceful practitioners rather than bowing to standardised policies that may not suit or be relevant to a given context.¹⁷⁹ Action research is based on the assumption that all people who affect or are affected by the issue/phenomenon investigated should be included in the process of inquiry; action researchers are research facilitators and engage their communities of interest in systematic explorations that enable them to resolve complex problems.¹⁸⁰ In this respect, action research is a collaborative (collegial) approach to inquiry or investigation: group decisions are made.¹⁸¹ For example, when professors/teachers work alongside the students, Gilbert observed, “...the hierarchy breaks down, and you become a community of people reacting, sharing, and creating...”¹⁸²

Like other program convenors,¹⁸³ Reid¹⁸⁴ ¹⁸⁵ encourages students to be action research practitioners. Through action research, the artists develop their art practice by coming to terms with what to do in the field and how to translate the work in the field back in the studio. Students have been observed to come up with ideas that they wouldn’t have had in the studio, and that the studio and field work bounce off each other.¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 7.

¹⁸¹ McTaggart, "Guiding Principles for Participatory Action Research."

¹⁸² Taylor and Gilbert, *Land Arts of the American West*, 324.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Young, Reid, and Meehan, "Taking Action: Researching an Innovative Pedagogy for an Aesthetic Visual Approach to Environmental Issues."

¹⁸⁵ Also observed by the author when attending the ANU Field Study program.

¹⁸⁶ Taylor and Gilbert, *Land Arts of the American West*, 239-40.

3.4 Sense of place theory

“Diffuse as concept, vivid and concrete as personal experience...”¹⁸⁷

The art and environment programs outlined in Section 3.2 have a core commitment to field investigation where the focus is relationship to place. The convenor helps students to develop a connection to place in the belief that ‘place’ forms a good source for artwork.¹⁸⁸ In convening the Land Arts of the American West course, Gilbert asks the questions,

How do we occupy this zone of the West? What does it mean to be artists and designers with a practice in relationship to a place that’s had thousands of years of human inhabitation? What happens when you study with both your body and your mind? What does it mean to go out into the things that you’re interested in, rather than sit back and have them brought to you in a passive way?¹⁸⁹

Academics from an array of fields including psychology, architecture and sociology have written extensively about human relationship to place, and which they often term ‘sense of place’.^{190 191 192 193 194 195} Other terms used include topophilia and place attachment. Vanclay writes that sense of place is difficult to define, and is a macro concept and one which requires ‘unpacking’.¹⁹⁶ I find the definition presented by Steele a good entry point towards understanding what is meant by ‘sense of place’.¹⁹⁷ Steele defines sense of place as the combination of the setting and the

¹⁸⁷ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1974), 4.

¹⁸⁸ Taylor and Gilbert, *Land Arts of the American West*, 236.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 378.

¹⁹⁰ Fritz Steele, *The Sense of Place* (Boston, Massachusetts: CBI Publishing Company, Inc., 1981).

¹⁹¹ Frank Vanclay, "Place Matters," in *Making Sense of Place: Exploring Concepts and Expressions of Place through Different Senses and Lenses*, ed. Frank Vanclay, Matthew Higgins, and Adam Blackshaw (Canberra: National Museum of Australia Press, 2008).

¹⁹² Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*.

¹⁹³ Setha M. Low and Irwin Altman, "Place Attachment: A Conceptual Inquiry," in *Place Attachment*, ed. Irwin Altman and Setha Low, Human Behaviour and Environment (New York: Plenum Press, 1992).

¹⁹⁴ Brian W. Eisenhauer, Richard S. Krannich, and Dale J. Blahna, "Attachments to Special Places on Public Lands: An Analysis of Activities, Reason for Attachments, and Community Connections," *Society & Natural Resources: An International Journal* 13, no. 5 (2000).

¹⁹⁵ Jennifer E. Cross, "What Is Sense of Place?," in *12th Headwaters Conference* (Western State College, USA2001).

¹⁹⁶ Vanclay, "Place Matters."

¹⁹⁷ Steele, *The Sense of Place*.

person's experience, which includes what the person psychologically brings to the setting. The setting is two-part: the physical setting which includes the surroundings; and the social setting which gives context through relationships with other people and social institutions. This relationship is shown in Figure 3.1. As Steele explains, the diagram is a simplification but his main point is that,

...sense of place is an interactional concept: a person comes into contact with a setting, which produces conscious and unconscious reactions. These include feelings, perceptions, behaviours, and outcomes associated with one's being in that location.¹⁹⁸

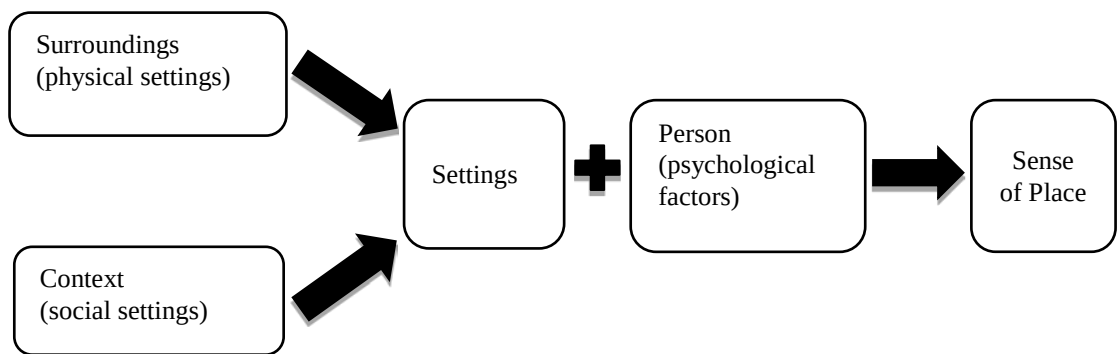


Figure 3.1 Developing a sense of place based on the theory presented by Steele¹⁹⁹

For Vanclay sense of place is comprised of place attachment, place awareness and place commitment.²⁰⁰ Like Tuan's broad definition for 'topophilia'²⁰¹, place attachment occurs when a person has a feeling about the material environment and/or community. Gussow, an artist who pioneered the bringing together art and conservation, describes this attachment beautifully, "A piece of environment that has been claimed by feelings."²⁰² Vanclay describes place awareness as the extent of knowledge an individual has about a specific place, and place commitment as the extent to which individuals are willing to contribute to a place. A person's mood

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 12.

²⁰⁰ Vanclay, "Place Matters."

²⁰¹ Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*.

²⁰² Alan Gussow, *A Sense of Place: The Artist and the American Land* (San Francisco: Friends of the Earth, 1972).

(psychological factors) will impact on place commitment and place awareness; a person needs to be mindful/present, and bring a positive attitude.²⁰³

‘Place’ has been broadly defined as: the tangible, symbolic, physical location, a psychological state, a social status, spiritual worlds, the location of something in one’s mind; and involves an emotional or cultural attachment.²⁰⁴ ²⁰⁵ ²⁰⁶ Place is often differentiated from space. Eisenhauer, Low and Altman, Vanclay and Tuan argue that undifferentiated space becomes place as we give it meaning through personal, group, or cultural processes and as a result, become embedded into personal memories and community stories. Casey takes the opposite view on place and considers place to be prior to space; he argues we are always in place because we are never without perception.²⁰⁷

Perception links the artist to a setting and several authors write about perception in relation to sense of place theory. Tuan defines perception as, “...both the response of the senses to external stimuli and purposeful activity in which certain phenomena are clearly registered while others recede in the shade or are blocked out.”²⁰⁸ This is necessary in order to avoid being overwhelmed. Through perception, a person receives a signal from the immediate setting and, “then organises the signals in such a way as to give them meaning”.²⁰⁹ Adams writes that perception is a creative act that involves highly complex skills and capacities such as “scanning, observing, discriminating, defining, analysing, categorising, comparing, establishing relationships and creating meaning.”²¹⁰ Making art works involves reflecting upon and reworking an experience, and thereby, intensifying the experience. Art-based environmental study, Adams argues, builds up a vocabulary to describe and evaluate aesthetics, and develops environmental awareness through the focused act of looking followed by reflection and critical review. Relph writes that, “A strong sense of

²⁰³ Steele, *The Sense of Place*.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Vanclay, "Place Matters."

²⁰⁶ Low and Altman, "Place Attachment: A Conceptual Inquiry."

²⁰⁷ Edward Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena," in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press, 1996).

²⁰⁸ Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*, 4.

²⁰⁹ Steele, *The Sense of Place*, 22.

²¹⁰ Adams, "Art and Environment: Making Art Work/S," 14.

place appears to be partly instinctive, but it can also be learned and enhanced through careful practice of comparative observation and appreciation for what makes places distinctive.”²¹¹ Art and environment courses construct a creative zone whilst in the field with the aim of helping the artist focus on place in their art practice.²¹² These ideas about perception, in particular learning to ‘read the landscape’ and employing the grid to categorise and compare biodiversity changes, are explored directly within my studio practice (and discussed in my exegesis).

Steele writes,

After perception comes awareness, where the person uses incoming information as raw material for thoughts and feelings about the setting. Awareness can be about specific elements in the setting (colours, trees...), or about patterns and relationships among elements such as...contrasting textures.²¹³

Awareness is stimulated by the senses. Relph writes that sense of place, “...is a synaesthetic faculty that combines sight, hearing, smell, movement, touch, imagination, purpose and anticipation.”²¹⁴ Touch in particular is considered very important to developing a sense of place. Through her research of people experiencing the Great Barrier Reef, Pocock argues that a diversity of haptic experiences gives people a sense of place. Without a tactile experience, such as only viewing the reef through glass bottom boats, visitors experience the reef as ‘space’ and their experience is replaced with an, “imagined touch and anticipated memory, which do not contribute to a sense of place.”²¹⁵

A convenors role includes managing artists’ expectations about the field location.²¹⁶ Expectations are a structuring device to help with selecting what to notice and what to ignore in the world so as to avoid being overwhelmed.²¹⁷ The convenor needs to

²¹¹ Edward Relph, "A Pragmatic Sense of Place," in *Making Sense of Place: Exploring Concepts and Expressions of Place through Different Senses and Lenses*, ed. Frank Vanclay, Matthew Higgins, and Adam Blackshaw (Canberra: National Museum of Australia Press, 2008), 315.

²¹² Bill Gilbert. Personal communication.

²¹³ Steele, *The Sense of Place*, 25.

²¹⁴ Relph, "A Pragmatic Sense of Place," 314.

²¹⁵ Celmara Pocock, "Reaching for the Reef: Exploring Place through Touch," *ibid.*, 83.

²¹⁶ John Reid, 29 February.

²¹⁷ Steele, *The Sense of Place*.

consider how much information is provided to students before they enter the field location. Having some prior information, such as images, can help a person leap forward in understanding and prioritise knowledge, and help focus intentions and make good use of time in the field. Whereas too much prior information can blind the artists (visitor) from seeing the richness of what is there, “We are looking so hard for what we are supposed to see that we do not allow new unexpected features to emerge.”²¹⁸

Like Steele, several authors write about the importance of social ties and interactions in developing a sense of place.^{219 220 221} Tuan writes that, “The appreciation of landscape is more personal and longer lasting when it is mixed with the memory of human incidents. It also endures beyond the fleeting when aesthetic pleasure is combined with scientific curiosity.”²²² The research by Eisenhauer et al. on the attachments that people develop to public places reinforces this theory. Their findings indicated that, “the primary reasons why places on public lands are regarded as special are because of the environmental features of a place (34.2%) or because of interactions with significant others at the locale (36.9%).”²²³

Jackson believes that, “...a sense of place is something that we ourselves create in the course of time. It is the result of habit or custom.”²²⁴ Research by Moore and Graefe suggests that frequent visits to a natural resource increases dependence on the setting and ultimately leads to an emotional attachment (place identity) with the area.²²⁵ Casey writes that places gather things, experiences and histories, not just amassing things, but holding them together in a particular configuration - holding

²¹⁸ Ibid., 155.

²¹⁹ Eisenhauer, Krannich, and Blahna, "Attachments to Special Places on Public Lands: An Analysis of Activities, Reason for Attachments, and Community Connections."

²²⁰ Relph, "A Pragmatic Sense of Place."

²²¹ Steele, *The Sense of Place*.

²²² Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*, 95.

²²³ Eisenhauer, Krannich, and Blahna, "Attachments to Special Places on Public Lands: An Analysis of Activities, Reason for Attachments, and Community Connections," 421.

²²⁴ John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 151.

²²⁵ Cited in: J. Jerry Vaske and Katherine C. Kobrin, "Place Attachment and Environmentally Responsible Behaviour," *The Journal of Environmental Education* 32, no. 4 (2001).

your memories and when you return to a place, it releases these memories.²²⁶ Casey also writes that places are dynamic, allowing us to return again and again to the same place. Such theory tends to indicate that repeat field trips to the same location, as undertaken by the ANU Field Study program, could enhance the artist's sense of place compared to those students who visited field locations only once during their course procedure.

Convenors of environmental art programs seek places that will inspire the artists towards art making. Steele suggests criteria for predicting whether or not a place will be a stimulator of experiences and suggests that a place needs:²²⁷

- choices and options for how it can be used;
- reinforcing patterns and sequences that help build experiences;
- rich material for fantasies and memories;
- consistent themes which helps build its identity;
- special features made visible which highlights possibilities;
- to be at an appropriate scale at which a person can develop a relationship;
- active vitality, such as have people actively using the place;
- a degree of strangeness, as Tuan further explains, confrontation with novelty may also prompt a visitor to express themselves.²²⁸

Having considered the theory that underpins art and environment programs, the next section provides greater detail on the ANU School of Art Field Study program, which was evaluated to address the gap in our understanding of these programs from the students' perspective.

²²⁶ Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena," 24.

²²⁷ Steele, *The Sense of Place*, 186.

²²⁸ Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*, 63.

3.5 The ANU School of Art Field Study program

3.5.1 Overview of Field Study program

The ANU Field Study program was evaluated for two reasons. The researchers in the overarching research project (see Section 3.5.2, page 42) wanted immersed researchers and prior to conducting the research I had participated in several Field Study programs as a fine art student. Secondly, the research enabled me to merge my research interests in art and environment, and formally explore this phenomenon.

The Field Study program formally began in 1996 at the School of Art, ANU, and was the core program offered within the School's Environment Studio²²⁹. The program was developed to meld subject disciplines about environment with creative outputs.²³⁰ In establishing the program, the convenor argued that students needed an alternative program within the curriculum and one that offered: time for and access to complex, real-world experiences; and provision to undertake collegial, field-based action research. At least two programs per year have been run since its inception. Programs have taken place in south-eastern Australia, from remote native bushlands, to agricultural landscapes, through to urban settings.²³¹ The convenor exposes the students to the roles that artists can play locally and regionally, and challenges them to produce aesthetic visual works that respond to environmental issues pertinent to the field location.²³²

The main pedagogic features of the program are:

1. Attendance is open to the entire school community – visual fine art students (advanced undergraduate, honours and postgraduate), institutional staff, alumni, fellows and visiting artists;

²²⁹ The Environment Studio was established in 2000 for the purpose of offering the Field Study Program.

²³⁰ Young, Reid, and Meehan, "Taking Action: Researching an Innovative Pedagogy for an Aesthetic Visual Approach to Environmental Issues."

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

2. The field research supports either the student's major discipline²³³ or the student can enrol in the Environment Studio Course as a complementary study;²³⁴
3. Field research consists of two or more trips to the same location, typically three five-day trips (Wednesday to Sunday) throughout a semester, or two ten-day field trips during non-teaching periods where one or more day's travel is required. Field locations away from Canberra are favoured to enable the students to focus on their creative art practice and not be distracted by their usual habits at university and home;
4. Briefings are held within the field location and include from scientists, government environmental officers, local shire officials, Indigenous leaders, landholders, community advocates, and local artists. The briefings combine listening and real-world seeing into one temporal experience reinforced by staying on location;
5. The convenor/ field co-ordinator is not involved in the formal assessment of students (except for Environment Studio Complementary Course students);
6. Studio development takes place between field trips where students meet with their supervisors; and
7. The program concludes with the convenor organising a catalogued public exhibition of artwork inspired by the Field Study program and held in a town central to the field location.

In brief, the history behind how the ANU Field Study program came to have a repeat field-trip procedure is as follows. After returning to a field location with students after a period of two years the convenor observed the students, "seamlessly resumed the development of subject matter that they had previously undertaken."²³⁵ In addition he observed that the resulting artwork conveyed a conceptual maturation that was not curriculum driven. Following the principles of action research, the convenor designed a Field Study program with repeat field trips to the same location

²³³ The major disciplines include painting, sculpture, photography and media arts, printmaking, glass, ceramics, furniture and textiles.

²³⁴ The convenor teaches students field-based research skills, but not discipline specific skills (apart from photography in which the convenor is qualified). Students are required to use their existing art-making technical skills. Students must have support of their major workshop supervisor.

²³⁵ Young, Reid, and Meehan, "Taking Action: Researching an Innovative Pedagogy for an Aesthetic Visual Approach to Environmental Issues," 65.

within the one semester-length program.²³⁶ The convenor wanted to know if repeat field visits to the same location within the shorter time-frame of one semester would still lead to the benefits he had observed.

With regard to holding a public exhibition within the field, the idea stemmed from the ANU Field Study program students themselves who wanted to give back or in some way reciprocate the generous hospitality that they had received from the communities visited during the field trips in the NSW Riverina.²³⁷ The students and convenor decided to hold a visual fine art exhibition within the town central to the community they visited with the artworks inspired by the field location. The response from the community to the exhibition was so positive and encouraging that this became a fixture within the procedure.

3.5.2 Engaging Visions Research Project

The opportunity for this research arose in 2006 when an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant (AUD\$309,674) was administered to The Australian National University (ANU), and the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) as the industry partner²³⁸ to undertake the Engaging Visions Research Project (EV Project). The main objectives were to:

1. To configure a model procedure for visual artists to creatively engage with Murray-Darling Basin (MDB) communities to assist with environmental concerns; and
2. To achieve this through an evaluation of the ANU School of Art Field Study program experience of both artist and the community with whom the artists interacted with in the field.²³⁹

During the period 2007-2010 the EV Project evaluated the ANU Field Study program. The evaluation was undertaken across four Field Study programs. The programs were held in the following locations through which the Murray Darling

²³⁶ Reid et al., *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment*.

²³⁷ Reid.

²³⁸ The MDBC also funded a PhD Scholarship, which supported this research.

²³⁹ Young, Reid, and Meehan, "Taking Action: Researching an Innovative Pedagogy for an Aesthetic Visual Approach to Environmental Issues."

River system runs: St George, Queensland; Tumut, NSW; Benalla, Victoria; and Renmark, South Australia (for locations see Figure 3.2). Artist members of the EV Project research team, including myself, were actively immersed in the programs.

The experiences of both participating artists, and the community encountered in each field location were formally evaluated.²⁴⁰ In this dissertation I explore, record, analyse and evaluate the experiences of the participating artists only. During the four programs the convenor challenged the artists to, "...aesthetically visualise, as affirmatory or transformatory propositions, the sense of place, forms of life and environmental issues pertaining to Basin river catchments and their communities."²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ For information on the EV Project community evaluation, see Reid et al., *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment*.

²⁴¹ Young, Reid, and Meehan, "Taking Action: Researching an Innovative Pedagogy for an Aesthetic Visual Approach to Environmental Issues," 68.

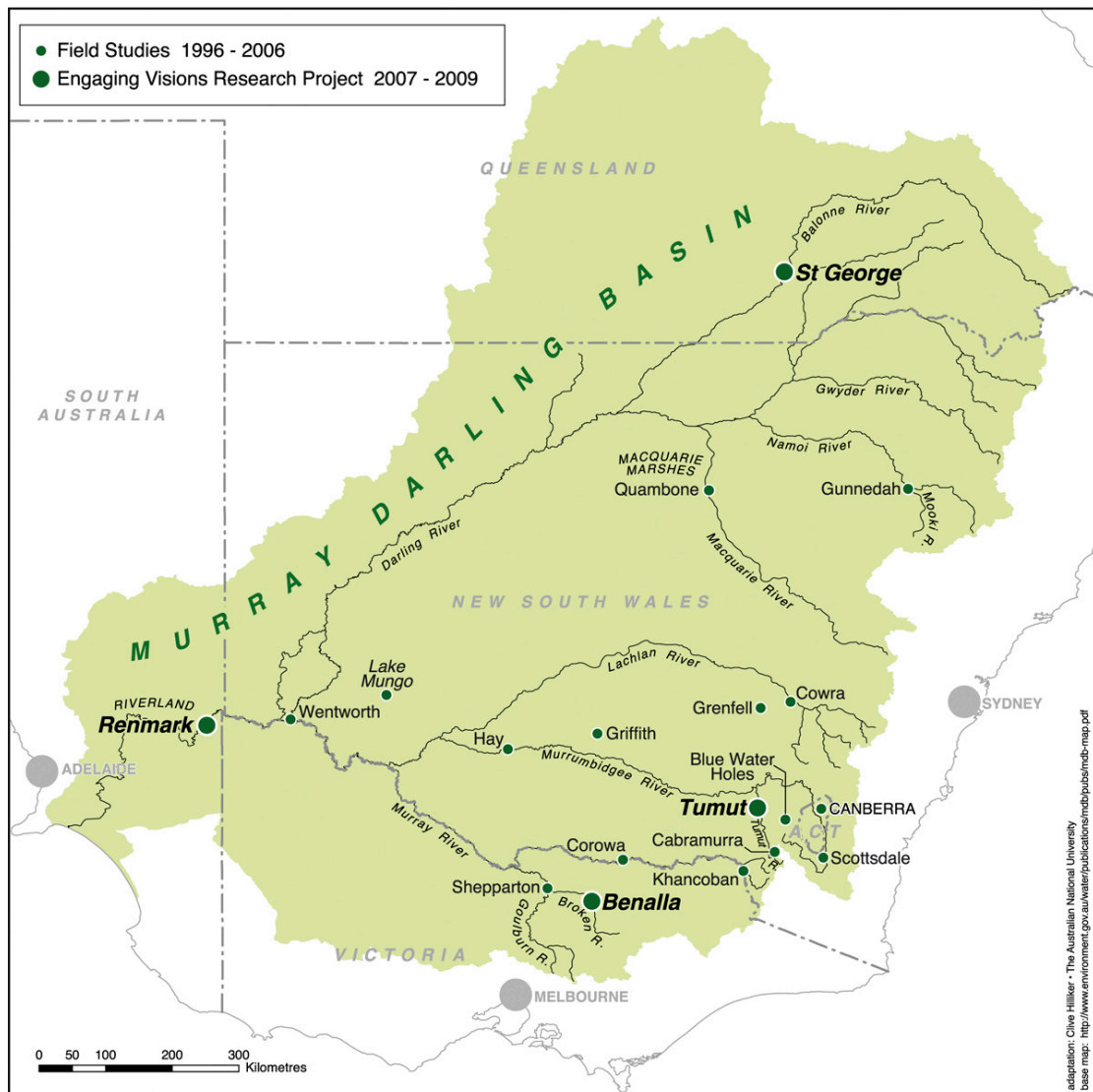


Figure 3.2 Map showing the Field Study program locations held in the Murray Darling Basin from 1997 to 2009, including the Engaging Visions Research Project field locations.²⁴²

3.5.3 Field Study program procedure evaluated

A time-line showing the schedule overview for each Field Study program is shown in Table 3.2. A detailed schedule is provided in APPENDIX A (page 162). From survey field trip through to concluding exhibition (and not including the pre-planning) the duration of each Field Study program varied between 3.5 to 9 months.

²⁴² Map source: Reid et al., *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment*.

Table 3.2 Schedule overview for each Field Study program evaluated

	Weeks																																								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	
St George	Survey				Field trip 1										Field trip 2											Exhibition															
Tumut	Survey				Field trip 1				Field trip 2					Field trip 3												Exhibition															
Riverland	Survey				Field trip 1													Field trip 2																							Exhibition
Benalla	Survey				Field trip 1				Field trip 2			Field trip 3					Exhibition																								
Duration	1 week				5-10 days						5 days				10 days		3 weeks		10 days						4-11 days															5 days	

In approximate order, the steps involved in establishing and running the Field Study program procedure are listed in Table 3.3. The Field Study program was managed by a convenor. The convenor's roles include establishing the program, conducting the survey, recruiting students undertaking risk assessment, organising the exhibitions, and running field trips (unless a field coordinator is employed to undertake this role). During the EV Project, a field coordinator was employed to run one field trip.

For the EV Project, a graphic design company was employed to design, establish and maintain the EV Project website, as well as design and produce the exhibition catalogues. The website provided details on the Field Study programs and documentary photographs of the field location. Artists were encouraged to post their works-in-progress. A photographer was employed to document all field trips, including the surveys, and the exhibitions. Employing a graphic designer and documentary photographer was an anomaly to the EV Project Field Study programs, made possible through grant funding. The convenor would typically have undertaken these roles.

Table 3.3 Steps in the Field Study program procedure

Key elements	Tasks within the key elements
Pre-planning	An appropriate field location was identified. Initial criteria for selecting a field location were: • within one to two days drive of Canberra to ensure at least three days of field time; • within the Murray-Darling Basin, the geographical research focus; and • for evaluation purposes, a rural town with an obvious town centre that is the economic hub for the region, and has a population of less than 10, 000 people.

Key elements	Tasks within the key elements
	The program schedule was timetabled.
Site Survey	The convenor and EV Project members undertook a pre-program survey to identify the field location educational values, logistical details and establish realistic expectations. Photographic documentation of the location was undertaken. A theme(s) was identified. For the Benalla Feld Study program only, the EV Project team held a community consultation meeting to communicate the project and learn more about the community and field location.
Artist recruitment	The programs were advertised to artists through posters at the School of Art, and through word of mouth amongst students, lecturers, supervisors, and the convenor. Convenor briefed artists visually and verbally on the field location, including the: • central township; • landscape features (documentary photographs) • local industry and agriculture; • environmental issues; • potential environmental projects; • potential community people to meet through briefings on the first field trip; • accommodation options are provided and participants were asked to voice their preference; and • travel arrangements.
Field trips	Preparation involved: • Insurance/safety assessment • Arranging transport, typically a 12-seater bus plus trailer and depending on numbers, an additional station wagon. Sometimes participants chose to travel in their own vehicle. Field trip logistics: • Artists were deployed for two 10-day field trips or three 5-day field trips to the research site over the course of one semester. Attendance of all three field trips was encouraged but not compulsory. • Summarised in APPENDIX B (page 163) are the attributes of the main accommodations used during the field trips.

Key elements	Tasks within the key elements
	• The first field trip focused on providing the participants with an orientation of the region and its physical and social environment. The community briefed artists within the field location (see APPENDIX C, page 164) for an itinerary example). Student attendance of briefings was not compulsory. • During field trip 1, showcase exhibitions from artworks produced during previous Field Study programs were held in Tumut and Riverland. The purpose was to provide examples of the types of art works that the community could expect to see in the concluding public exhibition and with the aim of engendering rapport between the artists and the community. • During field trips 2 and 3 the emphasis was on the participant to determine their own field trip itinerary, while the convenor/field coordinator provided a supporting role.
Studio development	Alternated with field trips. The intention was for artists to consolidate their artwork in consultation with their major discipline supervisors
Public exhibition	• Exhibition catalogues were designed, printed and distributed to the artists and community. The catalogues were printed in full colour at A5 size. The catalogue content included: acknowledgements; an introductory essay; documentary photographs; images of artworks (exhibited or works-in-progress); and artist statements.²⁴³ • The convenor and artist volunteers transported artwork from School of Art to field location • Bump-in, gallery sitting and bump-out was managed by the convenor and/or gallery staff, with assistance from the artists. • Most exhibitions were held in empty shop fronts transformed by the convenor and artists into a suitable gallery space. Two exhibitions were held in art galleries. The convenor curated, with student input, the exhibitions not held in professional galleries. Details on the exhibition location and gallery attributes are provided in APPENDIX D (page 165).

²⁴³ A selection of catalogues are available at the ANU, School of Art, Environment Studio website <http://soa.anu.edu.au/environment-studio>

3.5.4 Definitions for community engagement and community interaction

As the EV Project progressed, confusion was expressed amongst the research team and artist participants over the meanings of the words ‘community engagement’ and ‘community interaction’.²⁴⁴ The EV Project research team discussed different meanings and came to the consensus that:

- ‘Community engagement’ is the “formal dialogue between communities and artist participants with the goal of collaboration between all interested parties in both the planning and conduct of the Field Study and its associated activities and outputs”;²⁴⁵ and
- ‘Community interaction’ is “any involvement between parties that did not include formal, mutually negotiated and planned engagement.”²⁴⁶

I have adopted these two definitions for my dissertation.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the theory that underpins art and environment courses at the tertiary level was reviewed. The theories were: place-based education, critical pedagogy of place, action research and sense of place. Much of the literature focuses on kindergarten to year 12 (k-12) and very little on tertiary (higher) education. K-12 art and environment education has a different purpose to that of the tertiary (higher) education level, and k-12 education focuses on local places, whereas higher education tends to focus on the regional. Convenor anecdotes and course surveys provide some insights into the tertiary art and environment courses reviewed, but systematic research is needed to explore the art and environment phenomenon formally, in particular from the participant’s experience. The ANU School of Art Field Study program was evaluated to address this knowledge gap.

²⁴⁴ The students consult with the community in order to meet curriculum requirements

²⁴⁵ Reid et al., *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment*, 146.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

The evaluation will be guided by my research questions:

1. What was the artists' experience with place during the art and environment program?
2. How has the art and environment program influenced the artists' art practice?
3. How has the art and environment program influenced the artists' relationship with, and awareness of, the environment?
4. What elements of the art and environment art program worked and could be applied in a broader context?

The research findings will assist universities in making decisions on, and taking actions towards, sustainable education as set out in Agenda 21. In the next chapter I outline my methods and the theory underpinning them.

4 METHODS

4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter I reviewed the theory that underpins art and environment courses at the tertiary level. Convenor anecdotes and course surveys provide some insights into the tertiary art and environment courses but systematic research is needed to explore the art and environment phenomenon formally. To address the knowledge gap, my dissertation explores, records, analyses and evaluates the experiences of the artists who participated in four ANU School of Art Field Study programs. In this chapter I outline my research design, the sample and population, data collection procedures, and data processing and analyses.

4.2 Research design

In order to explore the experiences of artists participating in the ANU School of Art Field Study program I used a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is described as:

...a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self...Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.²⁴⁷

A qualitative research design was chosen for several reasons. The limited number of students attending any given Field Study program (typically < 20) meant I could delve in depth into complexities and process. Complexities are often masked by quantitative methods.²⁴⁸ The art and environment phenomenon is little known and I could not base my research design on a hypothesis, but rather needed to be guided by research questions. I needed a flexible and iterative method that allowed for the data

²⁴⁷ Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005), 3.

²⁴⁸ Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), 53.

analysis to inform the next stage of data collection, and with which to formulate conceptual insights.²⁴⁹ Human actions are significantly influenced by the social and physical settings in which they occur.²⁵⁰ Qualitative research allows the researcher to learn about a phenomenon as a human (and personal) experience, to collect grounded contextual data, and to capture people's meanings, reasons and descriptions of events.²⁵¹ ²⁵² Qualitative research typically involves four methods for gathering information: face-to-face interviews, observations, documents, and material culture.²⁵³

I applied a case study strategy to frame my research and grounded theory methods to guide my data collection and analysis.

Yin defines a case study as, "...an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident."²⁵⁴ Case study strategies are considered appropriate when: the research purpose is exploratory; how, why and what research questions are asked; the investigator has little control over events; and the focus is on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena.²⁵⁵ ²⁵⁶ I employed a multiple-case design, whereby each Field Study program evaluated formed a single case. A multiple-case design is considered more robust than a single-case design because each case is compared individually and collectively.²⁵⁷ I first conducted a pilot study using the St George (Queensland) Field Study program, and then replicated my methods in three additional field locations: Tumut (NSW), Renmark (South Australia) and Benalla (Victoria).

²⁴⁹ Barney G Glaser and Anselm L Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967).

²⁵⁰ Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 53.

²⁵¹ Victor Minichiello et al., *In-Depth Interviewing* (Melbourne: Longman Australia Pty Ltd, 1995).

²⁵² Lyn Richards and Janice M. Morse, *Readme First for a User's Guide to Qualitative Methods*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2007).

²⁵³ Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 97.

²⁵⁴ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2003), 13.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁵⁶ Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 34.

²⁵⁷ Yin, *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, 46-47.

Yin writes that case study inquiry benefits from prior development of theoretical propositions which are used to guide data collection and analysis.²⁵⁸ The limited theory on art and environment education (see Chapter 3) meant I needed an analytic strategy that enabled concepts, themes and potentially theory to emerge from the data. To meet this need I used grounded theory methods, which include a set of inductive strategies for analysing data.^{259 260 261} Starting with individual incidents or experiences, the researcher develops abstract conceptual categories to synthesize, to explain and to understand the data and to identify patterned relationships within it. I handled my data collection and analysis using the following grounded theory methods:²⁶²

- Data analysis informed the next stage of data collection, and in some instances was undertaken simultaneously;
- Analytic codes and categories were developed from the data (inductive), not from preconceived hypotheses;
- Memo writing was undertaken to elaborate on processes, assumptions and actions;
- Emerging conceptual categories from data analysis were checked and refined before the next phase of data collection (akin to ‘theoretical sampling’);
- I undertook ‘constant comparative analysis’, by comparing different people, incidents and categories; and
- My data analysis guided the structure of my literature review.

I employed several strategies to ensure reliability. Consistent with a multiple case study strategy, the research was undertaken across time, place and space. Reliable data was obtained through asking consistent questions over four Field Study programs, asking similar people the same questions, and recording the interviews and making memo notes. My theory supervisor undertook an independent content analysis of five clean interview transcriptions. When his codes were compared to

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 22.

²⁵⁹ Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*.

²⁶⁰ Richards and Morse, *Readme First for a User's Guide to Qualitative Methods*.

²⁶¹ Kathy Charmaz, "Grounded Theory," in *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*, ed. Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁶² Ibid., 497.

mine, they mostly overlapped. This indicates that similar results would be obtained if the study were replicated.²⁶³

To ensure that my study accurately reflected the phenomenon being studied (ensuring validity), I implemented several strategies. I checked the ‘fit’ of my research questions to data sources and research design (see Table 4.1) in consultation with my theory supervisor, validated by what is considered appropriate for a case study and grounded theory research design.^{264 265 266} I mapped the interview questions to my research questions and repeated this check with my theory supervisor following the St George pilot study (see Table 4.4). During the data collection and analysis I documented significant decisions and interpretation of discoveries through memo notes. I used multiple methods to collect data. The interview data was supplemented with secondary data sources to provide an additional perspective that could not be accessed by the interviews alone, to help make sense of each data source and identify consistent themes.²⁶⁷ Sandelowski and Jones write that an inevitable gap exists in interview data between “life-as-lived” and “life-as-told”.²⁶⁸ Interviews, when combined with careful observation enable the researcher to discover contradictions and ambivalences within ‘what on the surface’ may seem to be simple reality²⁶⁹ and, “...allow the researcher to understand the meanings that everyday activities hold for people.”²⁷⁰ My purpose was not, “...to adjudicate between participants’ competing versions, but to understand the situated work...” that the participants do.²⁷¹ I balanced my viewpoints with those of the participants by intertwined cycles of data collection and analysis, tempered by checks through informal discussions with participants, colleagues and my theory supervisor.

²⁶³ Richards and Morse, *Readme First for a User's Guide to Qualitative Methods*.

²⁶⁴ Charmaz, "Grounded Theory."

²⁶⁵ Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*.

²⁶⁶ Richards and Morse, *Readme First for a User's Guide to Qualitative Methods*.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Margarete Sandelowski and Linda Corson Jones, "Healing Fictions: Stories of Choosing in the the Aftermath of the Detection of Fetal Anomalies," *Soc. Sci. Med.* 42, no. 3 (1996): 355.

²⁶⁹ Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 102.

²⁷¹ David Silverman, *Qualitative Methodology and Sociology: Describing the Social World* (Hants, England: Gower Publishing Company, 1985), 105.

Table 4.1 Fit of research question and data sources

Research questions	Data sources
1. What was the artists' experience with the environment during the Field Studies program?	<i>Core:</i> interviews <i>Supplementary:</i> participant observation (researcher's experience and observing others), informal conversations especially during field trips
2. How has the Field Studies program influenced the artists' relationship with the environment and their art practice?	<i>Core:</i> interviews <i>Supplementary:</i> reading the artist statements in the exhibition catalogues and looking at the participant's artwork
3. What elements of the environmental art program were successful and could be applied elsewhere?	<i>Core:</i> interviews <i>Supplementary:</i> informal conversations

In summary, I used a multiple-case study strategy to frame my research and grounded theory to guide data collection and analysis. I used multiple methods for collecting data: interviews with participants (primary method), participant observation, informal conversations, artworks, exhibition catalogues and memo notes.

4.3 Sample and population

Participating artists were defined as those who had registered for, and attended, a Field Study program, be they an ANU School of Art undergraduate or postgraduate student or alumni, a School of Art visiting artist or member of academic staff. A School of Music undergraduate student also participated in the interviews. The visual artists were from the disciplines: painting, sculpture, photography, printmaking, glass, ceramics, multi-media, furniture making, textiles and performance art.

The ANU Human Research and Ethics Committee approved the research (Protocol: 2007/0231). The people expected to participate in the research were not considered vulnerable and therefore not needing specific consideration as outlined in the

NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.²⁷² The participants were asked to sign a consent form and were also provided with an information sheet detailing the purpose of the research and how the interview results were to be used. As far as the law allowed, the names of participants and their response to the interviews were kept confidential, and the results were treated as non-identifiable data.

Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 show the breakdown of participants into the different categories, and the number of interviews.

From Table 4.2, there were a total of 103 people who participated in the four Field Study programs, of which 62 participants fell within the research parameters. The largest group of participants were the School of Art undergraduates, although this category declined in number after the Tumut Field Study. Conversely, with each Field Study program the Alumni increased in numbers. No staff from the School of Art, apart from the Field Study program convenor (counted as a researcher), attended the Field Study programs.

Between eight and 11 artists were interviewed for each Field Study (see Table 4.3). In four instances the participant was interviewed only once. Out of the potential study participants (those within the research boundary), 65% were interviewed. For the first Field Study (St George), all Field Study participants apart from the visiting artists including myself (interview one only) were interviewed. I interviewed myself predominantly to trial the interview questions and secondly to test my comfort levels as a participant observer. After analysing the data, I decided that the interview data from the other participants was rich enough without my further input, and I was concerned about my ability to suspend my preconceptions about the topics under discussion.²⁷³ For the Tumut Field Study program the number of potential participants increased above the allocated 10-11 spots available within the project resources for interviewing. Field Studies is predominantly run for the benefit of

²⁷² NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, Australian Government 2007, p51 [www.](http://www.anu.edu.au/ro/ORI/Human/NHMRC_Human_Ethics_National_Statement_2007.pdf)

http://www.anu.edu.au/ro/ORI/Human/NHMRC_Human_Ethics_National_Statement_2007.pdf

²⁷³ Matthew B. Miles and Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (California: SAGE Publications Inc., 1994), 6.

enrolled School of Art students and hence this category was given priority within the evaluation. For the Benalla interviews I sought to interview representatives from each participant category. Through informal conversations with alumni and visiting artists I realised that their input was insightful to further understanding emerging themes.

The interviewed participants were mostly Anglo-Saxon with no participants identifying themselves as indigenous Australians. The participants interviewed were mostly female (89%). Males accounted for 15% of the potential study participants. The majority of undergraduates were aged in their early twenties. The postgraduates were mostly in their forties and fifties. The alumni ranged in age from the mid-twenties to sixties. The fifties age bracket dominated. The majority of the older alumni (40s +) had completed the visual arts degree as a mature age student, coming to the visual arts from another career. Two of the participants could be classified as professional and established artists. The remaining alumni and postgraduate students could be described as emerging artists.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴ The National Association for the Visual Arts Ltd uses the following definition in determining a professional artist: “regular public exhibitions of art work; offering work for sale, or selling work; eligible for or has been awarded a government grant; selected for public exhibition, awards or prizes; has secured work or consultancies on the basis of professional expertise; has had work acquired for private or public collections; is a member of a professional association on the basis of his/her status as a professional artist.” Source URL: <http://www.visualarts.net.au/advicecentre/what-professional-artist-0>. 23 December 2010.

An emerging artist is someone who has been practicing as a professional artist for no more than five years. Source URL: <http://www.visualarts.net.au/advicecentre/what-emerging-artist>. 23 December 2010.

Table 4.2: Total number of artists who participated in the four Field Study programs: St George, Tumut, Riverland and Benalla.

Participant attendance category	St George	Tumut	Riverland	Benalla	Total n
Within research boundary					
School of Art undergraduate	7	7	5	3	22
School of Art postgraduate	2	3	1	6	12
School of Art alumni	2	3	4	10	19
School of Art member of staff	0	0	0	0	0
Visiting artist	2	2	1	4	9
Sub total n	13	15	11	23	62
Outside research boundary					
School of Music (SoM) students / teachers	0	1	0	7	8
EV Researcher	2 (1) ¹	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	11
Local artist	2	4	7	4	17
Writer	1	2	1	0	4
Journalist	0	0	1	0	1
Sub total n	5	10	12	14	41
Total n	18	25	23	37	103

1. The number in the brackets refers to the author who was already counted in the School of Art postgraduate category, and hence was NOT counted again within the researcher category.

Table 4.3 Number of artists who participated in the interviews and the number of interviewed participants within each category

Number of interviews	St George	Tumut	Riverland	Benalla	Total n
Interview one	11	11	8	10	40
Interview two	9	10	6	10	35
Total n	20	20	14	20	74
Participant category					
School of Art undergraduate (exchange student)	7	9 (1) ^{1, 2}	5	3	24
School of Art postgraduate	2	2	3	3	7
School of Art alumni	2	0	0	3	8
Visiting artist	0	0	0	1	1

1. Nine undergraduate students were interviewed in total, which included one exchange student.

2. A SoM undergraduate student was also interviewed and has been counted in the School of Art undergraduate category.

4.4 Data collection procedures

4.4.1 In-depth interviews

At the Field Study program briefings, artists were made aware of the EV Project by the convenor and the research that I was undertaking. Following the briefings I contacted artists who had registered for the Field Study program and invited them to participate in the interviews. Artists were advised that participating in the research was confidential, voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences to their participation in the Field Studies program. Almost all the Field Study participants I approached agreed to partake in my research.

I chose to individually interview each participant, face-to-face, using a semi-structured interview guide. Because I had participated in Field Study programs prior to my research I understood enough to, “develop questions about the topic in advance of interviewing, but not enough to be able to anticipate the answers”.²⁷⁵ The goal during the interviews was to allow for discussion, explore people’s thoughts, feelings and experiences in some depth, and allow for surprises. A conversation style interview was encouraged through the design of open questions and prompts, and taking the opportunities when presented to allow for deeper conversation on points relevant to the research.²⁷⁶

The participants were individually interviewed twice: before attending the first field trip and then after the exhibition. The majority of interviews were held face-to-face (n=69) and audio taped (n=59). The participant’s verbal permission was sought for recording the interview. The interviews were conducted at a convenient setting for the participant: within my office at ANU, a quiet café, or within the participant’s home. For the St George pilot study I experienced audio recording problems (n=6) and took notes instead. One participant requested that she not be recorded. Out of all the second interviews, five participants were unavailable for face-to-face interviews and therefore were interviewed either via the phone (n=1), Skype (n=2) or an email questionnaire (n=2). I began each interview by explaining the research project and

²⁷⁵ Richards and Morse, *Readme First for a User's Guide to Qualitative Methods*, 14.

²⁷⁶ Martin Brett Davies, *Doing a Successful Research Project Using Qualitative and Quantitative Methods* (New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

thanking the participant for agreeing to partake in the two interviews. Immediately before and after the interviews, the participants were invited to ask me any questions about the research. After the interviews a thank you email was sent to each participant.

For the St George pilot study 17 questions were designed for interview one, and 18 questions for interview two. The sequencing of interview questions was designed to ease the participant into the interview with easy to answer and non-threatening questions before asking questions that needed a thoughtful response. The questions were mapped back to the original research questions. After analysing the results for the St George pilot study, it became evident that some of the questions gave overlapping answers. Following grounded theory methods,²⁷⁷ and in consultation with my theory supervisor, I revised the questions before conducting interviews with the Tumut Field Study program participants. Interview two needed a question that enabled a more direct evaluation of whether or not the experience of attending a Field Studies had changed the participant's awareness of the environment. Fifteen questions were designed for interview one and 19 questions were designed for interview two. The prompts used in the interviews were based on the St George data analysis. The questions, presented in Table 4.4 and Table 4.5, stayed the same for the remaining interviews. To assist with data analysis, I focused on those questions that would lead me to collecting more data around emerging themes.

Interview one commenced with questions regarding the participant's academic status (i.e. enrolment) before moving onto questions (questions 3 to 9) about logistical support. The participant was questioned about their expectations and levels of comfort in attending the upcoming field trips. This was to ascertain how successful the convenor and his briefings were in waylaying any fears or misgivings, which the participant may have had in attending the Field Study program, and where improvements could be made to the Field Study procedure. I found it important to determine early on in the interview whether or not the participant had attended any prior Field Study programs. Prior experience often meant that less logistical support from the convenor and less information on arrangements such as transport was

²⁷⁷ Charmaz, "Grounded Theory."

needed or expected by the participant. I also found it really beneficial to hear their longer-term perspective: repeat participants tended to reflect more deeply on the questions. For questions 10 to 15, I wanted to explore the participant's experience with the program, environmental awareness, motivations and concerns.

For interview two, a similar structure of questioning was followed, however the responses in general provided a more lengthy discussion. Prompts were used based on the first interview and themes emerging from my data analysis. The academic status was questioned first to establish any changes in the participant's circumstances. Questions about procedural logistics followed with a purpose of establishing the extent to which the participant's expectations were met and where the procedure could be improved. An open question was then asked (question 5): what did the participant most like and not like about the field trips? Questions 6 to 10 related broadly to motivations, art practice and environmental awareness. Often during this sequence of questions, the participant and I would look at the exhibition catalogue to help with discussing and reflecting upon the artwork. This also provided me the opportunity to explore the participant's meanings. The following three questions (11 to 12) relate to the exhibition and were included to gauge the importance of the exhibition in the participant's art practice and learning, and hence within the Field Study procedure. The final six questions (14 to 19) relate to the future with regard to community interaction, attending future Field Study programs and some general reflective responses on the participant's experience overall.

To assist with developing rapport with the participants and to encourage a conversational style interview I conducted background research prior to each interview. For the first interview the background research was limited and involved finding out the participant's year of study and discipline. Before the second interview, I re-read the transcription from the first interview and looked up the participant's artwork and statement as documented in the exhibition catalogue. This enabled me to develop a quicker understanding with the participant, and customise and target my questions. During the interviews I paid close attention the participants'

language to help me bridge the participants' lived experience with my research questions.²⁷⁸

The level of discussion generated during the interviews varied. The first interview usually lasted 30 minutes or less, while the second interview often took longer: in some instances up to 90 minutes. Typically the undergraduates provided the briefest answers to the questions, while the older and/or alumni were more ready for a lengthy discussion and needed less prompting. Interview two generated more discussion because participants were able to speak about their experiences. Participants who had attended more than one Field Study tended to have more to say because they would reflect on their collective experience of the Field Study program.

Table 4.4: Revised questions for interview one and mapping to research questions

Interview one questions	Relevant research question(s)
Academic Status	
1. What studies are you enrolled in (undergraduate pass degree, honours degree, postgraduate) and at what stage are you in your program?	3, Case data*
2. For Field Studies students, are you attending the Field Studies program as a Field Study or Complementary Study?	3, Case data
Logistical support	
3. Have you attended fields trips organised through the Program before? If yes, which ones and when?	3
4. How did you find out about the Field Study program?	3
5. Was the pre-field trip logistic and academic information provided at the briefings adequate? (i.e. trip planning, your understanding of what gear to bring etc)	3
6. For Field Studies students, was the subsequent support from the convenor adequate (i.e. in answering follow up questions/requests)?	3
7. Was support from your workshop staff adequate?	3
8. What are your expectations of the trip based on the briefings? What is ideal? i.e. ideas for making art? Travel arrangements once in the field study location? Any specific attractions? Anything you are particularly looking forward to?	3

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 505.

Interview one questions	Relevant research question(s)
9. Do you have any misgivings, fears or concerns about the up-coming field trip? (with regard to logistics)	3
Experience with the program, environmental awareness, motivations and concerns	
10. To what extent do you think the Field Studies program will contribute to your artwork? A fundamental role (leading role) or are you open to ideas and exploring options?	2
11. Ask the participants who have attended previous Field Studies trips: To what extent has the Field Studies program informed your art making in the past? Discuss reasons for this outcome.	2
12. What are the reasons for your attendance on this field trip? What would you like to get out of the field trip? (i.e. inspiration, friendship, contacts with the community and local scientists, local knowledge of environmental issues, experience in field based art work and exhibiting)	1, 2
13. Do you have some art making ideas already that may benefit from the field trip? Yes/no and prompt if participant willing.	2
14. To what extent have you been involved in environmental issues? (personal or through art making)	1
15. What (if any) environmental concerns are you interested in generally? and specifically on this field trip? Who would you like to engage with during the field trip to find out more about this environmental concern? (i.e. scientists, indigenous people, farmers, industry, local artists, others?)	1

* Case data refers to information that describes the research participants. For example enrolment, which field trips they attended, whether they exhibited

Table 4.5: Revised questions for interview two and mapping to research questions

Interview two questions	Research questions
Academic status and background information	
1. Have your studies or course enrolment changed since our first interview?	3, Case data
2. Which field trips did you attend?	3, Case data
3. Did you exhibit at Tumut? Did you attend the exhibition?	3, Case data
Logistical support	
4. Has the field trip(s) lived up to your expectations and are there any changes or improvements you'd like to see regarding:	3
• Pre-trip organization and information provided?	
• Travel arrangements to field studies site and once at the destination?	
• Length of field trip?	
• Number of repeat field trips to the one site?	

Interview two questions	Research questions
• Accommodation?	
• Provision of communal facilities?	
• Field studies location?	
• Resources provided to assist you, i.e. local information, field work sites, funding etc?	
Open question	
5. What did you like about the field trips (the best features) and what didn't you like about the field trips, i.e. is there anything you would change, move, minimise, expand?	1, 2, 3
Motivations, art practice, place	
6. What were your reasons for attending or not attending the second field trip?	1, 2, 3
7. Has the Field Studies influenced and developed your art practice? If yes, how?	2
• Extent: fundamental role or secondary role?	
• Your ability to commence or progress your art practice?	
• Time allowed for gathering of materials for your studio practice and or developing your art during the field trip?	
• To what extent did the field experience assist you in conceiving of ideas for making art?	
• Assisting you in developing your Major Workshop proposal?	
• As part of your overall Art School educational experience?	
• Did the field trip challenge you as an artist? (i.e. through discussions with the convenor, other artists and local community).	
• Professional development? (i.e. participating in the exhibition).	
8. What idea or issue have you focused on with regard your art practice?	1, 2
9. Through what means did you get the inspiration for your art practice or become aware of these issues? i.e. engagement with people (who and how), engagement with landscape (what and how), other means?	1, 2
10. Has your attendance of the Field Studies program changed your commitment to the environment?	1, 2
Exhibition focus	
11. What were your reasons for preparing work for the exhibition or not preparing work?	3
12. What were your reasons for attending or not attending the Tumut exhibition? Did you help with setting up or taking down the exhibition?	3
13. If you attended the exhibition - what was your experience? Worthwhile	3

Interview two questions	Research questions
attending? Could the program make the experience better?	
Future	
14. Would you be interested in continuing your involvement with the community and doing more sustained art practice within the field site locality? If yes, what sort of assistance and incentives would help you achieve this goal? If no, probe for reasons.	2, 3
15. Would you attend another field studies program? (Either as a student or fellow).	2, 3
16. Overall, what did you like about the Field Studies program? What, if anything, could be improved upon? (Further prompts - assisting with your art practice, opportunities otherwise not provided? i.e. networking, increased awareness of natural resource management issues, focus for your art practice, exhibition experience?)	1, 2, 3
17. How do you feel the field studies have affected the community (from first contact through to exhibition)? What are your impressions?	
18. Was there anything that surprised you about the Field Studies program?	1, 2
19. Was there anything that changed your mind?	1, 2

4.4.2 Informal conversations

Informal conversations with the participants took place before and after I commenced recording the interview, during the field trips, when I ‘bumped into’ participants at the School of Art, and over coffee with participants who had become friends. These conversations offered insights that the participants may have been nervous to talk about ‘on record’ in the interview, or had since reflected on further and wanted to share their thoughts with me, or had simply forgot to mention in the interview. In addition I had numerous conversations with the convenor, convenors of other similar programs, and EV Project colleagues to develop my historical perspective on the program, and discuss themes emerging from the data. Conversations with the convenor and colleagues were not counted as data, but rather as insights to help me with collecting and analysing the data. I compiled notes in response to these informal conversations in a field journal.

4.4.3 Participant observation

As discussed in my exegesis (Chapter 2), I participated as a student within all four Field Studies programs evaluated, and exhibited artwork in each exhibition. I attended the briefings for each Field Study program, the majority of field trips (70% of official field trips, plus two solo trips), and two exhibitions (Tumut and Benalla). Whenever possible I observed the activities of the participants and the convenor throughout each step in the Field Study program procedure. Being an immersive researcher has several benefits: the ability to ask questions and gather information that outsiders could not with knowledge, depth and sensitivity; being included in the community and endearing trust; allowing time and space for informal conversations; and providing contextually based information.^{279 280 281} To overcome potential bias from being an immersive researcher my theory supervisor, who is an outsider to the Field Study program, reviewed my research methods and data collection, including reviewing my interview style by reading through five clean interview transcripts. Having an outsider review your methods avoids the potential insider, "...taken-for-granted..." stance towards the participants', "...meanings, languages and concepts..."²⁸²

I met with some participants in their studios where they showed me artworks-in-progress. This was valuable in helping me to understand how the participants were managing their working process between the field and the studio. These observations also enabled me to compare the way in which participants described their work with the actual artwork they created.

I recorded my observations in a field journal.

²⁷⁹ Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*.

²⁸⁰ Robert K. Merton, "Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge," *The American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 1 (1972).

²⁸¹ Maxine Baca Zinn, "Field Research in Minority Communities: Ethical, Methodological and Political Observations by an Insider," *Social Problems* 27, no. 2 (1979).

²⁸² Minichiello et al., *In-Depth Interviewing*, 184.

4.4.4 Documents and artworks

The participant's artwork (works-in-progress and exhibited), exhibition catalogues, the EV Project website and published book²⁸³, and documentary photographs were referred to during the research. As background research I read through each artist's statement before interviewing them for the second time, and used the catalogues as interview prompts. The artwork titles and artist statements were included as data because they provided, "background clues as to what was going in the more direct [interview] data".²⁸⁴ The catalogues along with documentary photographs of the exhibitions were crucial in helping me to become familiar with the artwork and exhibition layout when visiting the exhibition was not possible for the St George and Renmark Field Study programs.

4.4.5 Memo notes

I compiled memo notes during the data collection and analysis phase. These notes were written into my field journal or typed directly into my dissertation draft. The notes were records of my thoughts, feelings, insights and ideas in relation to the research project.²⁸⁵ The notes were for my eyes only and treated as preliminary, partial, and correctable.²⁸⁶ I found writing memo notes to be invaluable for analysing the data: developing thoughts on emerging categories and themes, and identifying synergies and irregularities with theories on place-based art and environment education. Marshall and Rossman conclude that, "writing notes, reflective memos, thoughts, and insights is invaluable for generating the unusual insights that move the analysis from the mundane and obvious to the creative."²⁸⁷

4.5 Data processing and analyses

4.5.1 Preparation

I typed up my notes taken during the interviews when the audio device failed, and one of the audio-recorded interviews verbatim. The remaining interviews were

²⁸³ Reid et al., *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment*.

²⁸⁴ Richards and Morse, *Readme First for a User's Guide to Qualitative Methods*, 118.

²⁸⁵ Melanie Birks and Jane Mills, *Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide* (Sage: Los Angeles, California, 2011), 40.

²⁸⁶ Charmaz, "Grounded Theory," 512.

²⁸⁷ Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 161.

transcribed verbatim by a professional transcribing company. I crosschecked several transcribes for accuracy against the interview audio. Only a couple of misinterpretations were found. The transcribed interviews were not offered to participants for checking of content.

4.5.2 Content analysis

Data analysis commenced immediately after my first interview. A conceptual content analysis of the data was undertaken. A conceptual content analysis is used to determine the presence of words or concepts within texts.²⁸⁸ In my research a text included interviews, conversations, my diarised observations and exhibition catalogues. The text was coded (broken down) into meaningful and manageable words, phrases, sentences or concepts, which I have called 'codes'. Following grounded theory analysis methods, my codes were developed from the data (inductive), not from preconceived hypotheses.²⁸⁹

The coding process commenced with reading the interview transcription but not making any notes with the intent of re-familiarising myself with the interview and getting a feel for what codes will emerge and where the key discussions take place in the transcriptions. Rereading data forces the researcher to become intimately familiar with the data.²⁹⁰ On my second reading, codes were written in the margins alongside the relevant text. If the relevant discussion covered more than a few lines, a line from the start to end of discussion was placed along right edge of the text. The emerging codes were then listed in a table. I described each code, drawing from my language and that of the participants, and noted my reasons for including the code. The codes that had similar expressions and ideas were grouped into categories based on the rule, "...categories should be internally consistent but distinct from one another".²⁹¹ This was the beginning of discerning regularities and patterns between codes.

The list of codes and categories compiled from the St George pilot study analysis were used as the starting point for coding the Tumut interview transcribes. As new

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Charmaz, "Grounded Theory," 497.

²⁹⁰ Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 158.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 159.

codes emerged from the data, I added them to my list. To properly account for each step in the analysis, each code was tracked to the source data. Each change in code or grouping of codes into a category was documented in a table. To help focus my analysis, I counted the frequency with which each code came up in the interview texts. I also took notice of codes that had emerged perhaps only once in the interview texts but also resonated with my observations and/or an idea or issue expressed during an informal discussion with a participant or research colleague.

To consider the conceptual development of subject matter within a participant's artwork, I undertook focused coding of the artist statements in the catalogues and compared these with the interview analysis. I wanted to develop my understanding of the participants' relationship to place and their meanings around the words 'environment' and 'nature', so that the number of artworks where 'nature' or 'environment' was the subject could be noted.

To help collate the interview data into my codes and categories, I used NVivo software (QRS International, NVivo version 8). NVivo is designed as a data management tool to enable the researcher to keep track of the codes in one place, giving quick access to participants and their quotes within a code, and cross-comparing codes. I found that NVivo provided an additional thinking tool, but didn't reduce the data sufficiently. I found I needed to do the extra reducing step of making data summaries, and then collating these with direct quotes from the participants into matrices (tables). Through creating a unique number for each participant, I could trace back to the original interview to clarify meanings and identify additional quotes that substantiated my data summaries.

In analysing the data I constantly made comparisons between one participant's beliefs, actions with another participant's, or one experience with another. I compared the participant's response, experience, and situation at interview one to their response in interview two. Through the process of memo writing I began to clarify which categories were major and which were more minor.²⁹² Categories that best explained what was happening in my study were raised to concepts. I explored

²⁹² Charmaz, "Grounded Theory," 514.

the relationship between concepts through flow diagrams until eventually I reduced my data to four themes that described the smaller categories. The themes and memos guided the structure of my results chapter, literature review and discussion. After my conceptual analysis of the data I returned to the literature on art and environment education and compared how and where my research findings fitted in with, and diverged from, the theory. I made memos during the writing of my literature review. The memos and themes were used to guide my main points in the discussion chapter.

4.6 Conclusion

In this methods chapter I outlined my research design, the sample and population, data collection procedures, and data processing and analyses. In summary, I used a qualitative research design based on: multiple-case study strategy to frame my research and grounded theory to guide data collection and analysis. I used multiple methods for collecting data: interviews with participants (primary method) from four ANU School of Field Study programs, participant observation, informal conversations, artworks, exhibition catalogues and memo notes. A conceptual content analysis of the data was undertaken. Codes and categories were developed from the data (inductive) and were then reduced to four emerging themes. In the next chapter I present my results with regard to participant attendance, the four emerging themes, and the participants' feedback on how the program was managed and could be improved.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

In the last chapter I outlined my methods and the theory underpinning them. In order to explore the experiences of artists participating in the ANU School of Art Field Study program I used a qualitative research design. Codes and categories were developed from the data (inductive) to assist with answering my four research questions:

1. What was the artists' experience with place during the art and environment program?
2. How has the art and environment program influenced the artists' art practice?
3. How has the art and environment program influenced the artists' relationship with, and awareness of, the environment?
4. What elements of the art and environment art program worked and could be applied in a broader context?

In this chapter I present my results with regard to participant attendance, the interactions that took place, the procedural elements that helped participants to develop a sense of place, the professional skills that the participants either developed or enhanced, and the participants' feedback on how the program was managed and could be improved. I synthesised my findings into four emergent themes: the importance of interactions; facilitating a sense of place; developing professional skills; and making the environment salient. These emergent themes are further expanded upon in my discussion chapter.

The words of participants always appear in italics, whether as a separate quote or when embedded within the text with quotation marks. My words, as the interviewer, appear in normal text but with quotation marks.

5.2 Attendance

5.2.1 Number of interviewed participants who attended each part of the procedure

In total, 40 participants were interviewed. The number of participants who attended each part of the Field Study procedure is listed in Table 5.1. Question marks have been inserted where the numbers were not available.

The majority of participants attended the first field trip within the Field Study Program. Except for the Benalla Field Study, there was a marked drop-off in attendance for field trips two and three. The Benalla Field Study also had the most participants (7) attend the catchment exhibition, while Riverland Field Study program had only one participant. Two participants also went on their own ‘independent field trip’.

Table 5.1 Number of interviewed participants who attended each part of the Field Studies procedure

Attendance numbers	St George	Tumut	Riverlands	Benalla	Totals
Total number of participants interviewed	11	11	8	10	40
Convenor Field Study briefing	?	7	8	9	>24
Field trip 1	11	10	8	8	37
Field trip 2	3	4	3	8	18
Field trip 3	NA ¹	6	NA	2	8
Independent field trip	0	1	0	1	2
Showcase exhibition	NA	10?	8	NA	>18
Catchment exhibition	6	5	1	7	19
Exhibited artwork at catchment exhibition	10	8	7	10	35
Community workshop	2	NA	NA	1	3

1. ‘NA’ means not applicable

5.2.2 Reasons given for attending a Field Study program

During our first interview I asked participants what their reasons were for attending the Field Study program. The participants responded both implicitly and explicitly to this question. All were seeking and/or hoping for inspiration to furthering their art

practice as summed up in this quote, “...*I hope to be inspired and I hope to make some work.*”

Field Studies was seen as an opportunity to make more art and within new contexts. The field trips held during school break enabled artists, “...*to do more school work during holidays, otherwise lose momentum.*” Alumni participants expressed repeatedly the opportunities available to them, “...*very grateful to have this opportunity to stay and keep a focus in my art practice.*” Participants commonly mentioned wanting to make art within the context of the Field Studies program or as put by one participant, “*make meaningful art*”. Three participants told me they wanted to learn more about ecological art, while others were interested in trying out new art making ideas because they felt safe to do so in the Field Study environment, “...*what I really appreciated about the Field Studies trips is that I’ll do things that I wouldn’t normally do in the workshop.*”

The means by which they hoped to get inspiration are summarised in Table 5.2. Participants often expressed more than one reason for attending, “*To go somewhere new, to be with a group of artists, to be inspired.*” Another participant commented, “*I just loved the fact that we were able to go out to an area that I never would have otherwise...and get to meet a lot of the people in the area and go multiple times and really get to know that one area.*” The most common reason given for attending was the opportunity to hear and learn from the local community, followed by spending time with other participants, and then, interacting with nature. The term “*first-hand*” was repeatedly used by participants when describing the kinds of interactions they hoped to have by attending the program.

Table 5.2 Summary of reasons for attending Field Studies, from most to least common

Number	Reasons given by participants for attending Field Studies
1	The opportunity to meet, hear and learn from local people directly involved in or affected by decisions about environmental management. Get new points of view and get first-hand experience. <i>“...I want to talk to the locals. That in some ways has more meaning for me than the actual exhibition at the end, and the artworks...”</i> Participants repeatedly mentioned an interest in meeting Aboriginal people and learning more about their culture.
2	Interact with other artists, in particular those from the School of Art and the researchers involved, <i>“I always find it very inspiring just being with a group of people”</i>, and another’s comment, <i>“...I think it’s a good opportunity to meet different people [from the SoA and EV Project] and connect with other people that you wouldn’t meet otherwise.”</i>
3	Interact with nature, be still, absorb and reflect, <i>“...an opportunity to spend time in a particular place”</i>, and another’s comment, <i>“...just interacting with nature first-hand and making art on site.”</i>, and another, <i>“I always like going out into the bush...”</i>
4	Get away from Canberra, studio (normal studies, routines) and other distractions, <i>“To have an intensive time of working without other pressures, that’s attractive.”</i> <i>...I find that it’s kind of like a little artist’s retreat. Like, you know, it’s really great to be able to go and just have time that’s actually set out away from real life to make art and stuff. I find it very productive.”</i> The opportunity to explore making art outside the studio was also of interest, <i>I suppose the most important reason was to get out of the [art school] workshop. I was thinking about the idea of where you make art. Making art at home is different to making it in the studio and so making it in the outdoors is different to making it inside a big concrete building.</i>
5	See new places, different landscape to Canberra, <i>“Just seeing new places”</i>, <i>“I wanted new experiences.”</i> and <i>“Provides a different stimulus and environment – you never know if something will trig your mind”</i>, and <i>“It’s somewhere that I haven’t been to before...I think that’s very conducive to doing work or having new ideas...”</i> Participants also liked visiting places you would normally skip as a tourist, <i>“...it’s just a</i>

	<i>good way of getting out there and going somewhere you wouldn't normally go."</i> <i>You just pass places off because you've been to them once you think it's a really crap town. But if you went 50km that way it's actually really beautiful. You have to know someone that can tell you that. Because if someone doesn't tell you that then you have no idea that it exists.</i>
6	The opportunity to exhibit, <i>"It's good to work towards an exhibition because...you have to lift your game, you have to try and produce something better; that you know you're just not doing any old thing."</i>
7	Field Studies was recommended to me by a friend <i>I've had lots and lots of friends who have done them and just got so much out of them and it took them away from the space that they were in, the headspace that they're normally working in at school, so getting out and starting to think about different things was beneficial to their work at home as well as focusing on the environmental studio...so I wanted to give it a go before I left...</i>
8	Field Studies and all it encompasses is organised for you and is not something you could arrange yourself as an independent artist, <i>"I can't see any of the things that we're invited to go and do happening if I just went on my own, so that's really good."</i> And another, <i>"I jumped at the opportunity to do it [Field Studies] because...I didn't have the means to do it and that provided it."</i>

5.3 Interactions

5.3.1 Artist interactions with the community

The types of interactions that took place between the participants and the community are listed in Table 5.3. 'Community' refers to the people who live in the field study location and whom the participants have either met or observed. All participants who attended field trip one also attended some or all of the community briefings and itinerary activities. About a third of participants said they initiated further networking and research on subsequent field trips. The convenor or field coordinator organised/facilitated most of the interactions listed in Table 5.3. The interactions that

the participants said they initiated, and/or which I observed them initiating, have been asterisked.

Table 5.3 How the participants and community interacted with each other during the Field Study programs

Interactions with the community	St George	Tumut	Riverlands	Benalla
Community briefings during field trip 1	✓	✓	✓	✓
Follow up contact with community members in field trips 2 and 3*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meet the artist nights (i.e. at local pub, locals house, gallery)	✓	✓		✓
Local artists participating in the Field Study program	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local artists visiting participant's studio in Canberra	✓	✓		
Community member visiting participant's studio in Canberra		✓		
Participants visiting local artist studio			✓	
Accommodation on locals property/house and impromptu interaction*	✓			✓
Participant run art workshops in field location	✓			✓
Conversations with locals at the exhibitions*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Giving talks at exhibition (including to school groups)	✓			
Practicing plein air art in a public place (main street)*		✓		
Work-in-progress meetings between participants and local artists	✓	✓		✓
Participants visiting schools and giving art talks		✓		✓
Temporary studio in main street empty shop*			✓	
Follow up visits to local people's properties*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant collaborating with local artist to make artwork for the exhibition*	✓			
Op-shopping*	✓	✓	✓	✓

*Interactions that the participants also initiated

5.3.2 Artist interactions with each other

The interactions that took place amongst the participants are shown in Table 5.4. A similar set of interactions took place during each Field Study program evaluated. The most common ways in which the participants interacted with each other were through attending the community briefings, shared transport and shared

accommodation spaces. All these interaction opportunities were facilitated by the convenor except where stated otherwise.

Table 5.4 How the participants interacted with each other during the Field Study programs

Interactions	St George	Tumut	Riverlands	Benalla
Shared transport to and within field location	✓	✓	✓	✓
Attending community briefings	✓	✓	✓	✓
Socialising at the accommodation: shared campfire/communal areas	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observing each other in the process of making artwork	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assisting each other with their artwork	✓			✓
Collaborating on art projects				✓
Group work-in-progress meetings whilst in the field	✓	✓	✓	✓
Group work-in-progress meetings at the School of Art	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social dinner nights at local pub	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shared field excursions in addition to those facilitated by convenor	✓	✓	✓	✓
Independent field trip with other participants				✓
Setting up and sharing a temporary studio in main street empty shop			✓	
Meetings with the convenor to decide on arrangements for field trips and the exhibition	✓	✓	✓	✓
Setting up the catchment exhibition	✓	✓	✓	
Attending catchment exhibition	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant run art workshops in field location	✓			✓
Un-installing the catchment exhibition	✓	✓	✓	✓

5.3.3 Artist interaction with the landscape

By the word ‘landscape’ I mean the field location, which encompasses “*nature*”, “*the bush*”, “*a particular place*”, “*new places...different landscape*” as described by participants in Table 5.2 (page 73).

I observed the participants in their interactions with the landscape during the field trips. The landscape provided a place for three things to happen:

1. The gathering of inspiration and developing ideas for making art;
2. The gathering of materials for which to make art with; and
3. The making of artwork.

The ways in which participants spoke about how they experienced a landscape and my observations are summarised in Table 5.5. The participants either experienced the landscape by themselves or in the presence of other participants, the convenor, EV Project team members, the community and/or members of the media.

Table 5.5 How the participants interacted with the landscape during the Field Study programs

Interactions	St George	Tumut	Riverlands	Benalla
“Sitting within the landscape”, “just be”	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accommodation location	✓	✓	✓	✓
Walking	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wading through rivers or lakes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Swimming in rivers or lakes		✓		
Cycling				✓
Mini-bus	✓	✓	✓	✓
Car (Field Study program vehicle)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Car (Privately owned)		✓	✓	✓
Community/Government vehicle		✓	✓	
Light aircraft flights	✓	✓	✓	
Boat (aluminium dinghies and river cruise)	✓		✓	

5.3.4 Emergent theme: The importance of interactions for inspiring artwork

During the second interview I asked the participants, “through what means did you get the inspiration for your art practice?” The most common response was that community briefings offer, “...all these wonderful opportunities to hear people talk...you’re not just seeing the landscape...you...get things explained well...”

Travelling around (including aeroplane flights) and spending time within the field location, such as through camping, was the second most common response.

Interactions with other participants were also mentioned regularly in the interviews. The participants also researched the field location using the internet. The responses

from the participants to this question were very similar to the responses given in interview one when I asked their reasons for choosing to attend a Field Study program (see section 5.2.2, page 71). Examples of these interactions are shown in Figure 5.1.



(a)



(a)



(b)



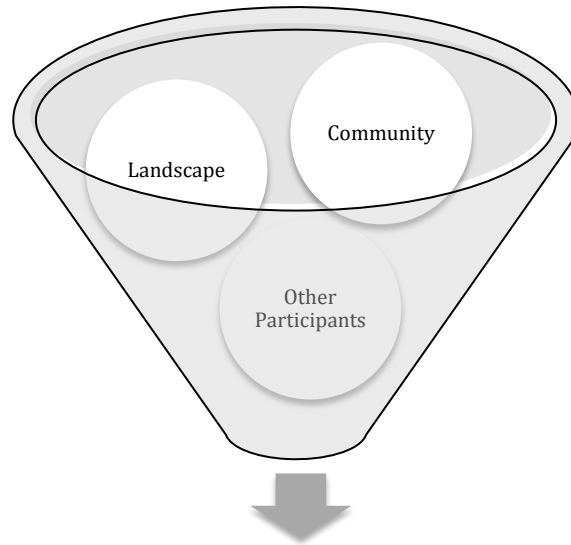
(c)

Figure 5.1 Interactions: (a) Participants being briefed by community member during the Benalla Field Study (Photographs: John Reid, left and Dean Sewell right); (b) Participant interacting with the landscape when making art during the Riverland Field Study (Photograph: Dean Sewell); (c) Participants interacting with each other in the field during a ‘show and tell’ of works in progress during the Tumut Field Study (Photograph: Dean Sewell).²⁹³

Analysing the reasons why a participant chose to attend a Field Study program and their interview responses to what actually inspired their artwork, it emerged that interactions were crucial. The three interactions that inspired the majority of artworks produced by the artists were those with the community (in particular), the

²⁹³ Reid et al., *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment*.

field location landscape, and other artists (Figure 5.2). The artist experienced these interactions either singularly or in combination. These interactions are reported in more detail throughout the remainder of this chapter.



Interactions that inspires art making

Figure 5.2 Emergent theme: key interactions that inspired art making

5.4 Sense of place

In this section I report on the Field Study procedural elements, which based on my findings, helped the artists' to develop a 'sense of place'.

5.4.1 Convenor briefing to participants prior to first field trip

The information provided by the convenor at his briefings was usually the participant's first introduction to a place, and the beginnings of their developing a sense for the field location. In the first interview I asked each participant whether they thought the pre-field trip logistic and academic information provided by the convenor was adequate. I also asked them their expectations based on the briefings. In their responses, the participants repeatedly made comment about the photographs that the convenor included in his PowerPoint presentation. The convenor (a photographer) and the EV Project documentary photographer took the photographs during the survey field trips. *"I...like the fact that he'd [the convenor] been out there and done a really good job of visually documenting some possible sites..."* The photographs showed places of interest, people of interest and accommodation options. A Riverland participant (who had also attended the Tumut Field Study) commented on the landscape photographs, which she found inspiring, *"I think it was better, this was because we had more visuals, there was a PowerPoint he did. I was able to see slightly more of the area, and it's totally like the great red earth that drew me in. It looked so foreign."*

The discussions held between the convenor and the participants during the briefing were also considered insightful, *"I think in terms of discussions about some of the issues and the places that we'd be going, I thought it was actually really good..."*

5.4.2 Engaging Visions Research Project website

In preparing for the first field trip participants mentioned visiting the EV Project website, *"I think it is a great way of orientating everything just to visually get an idea of the area."* Again the importance of photographs was mentioned, *"...the photos are really good because...it gives you an idea of what the landscapes like and*

the area you are going to work with...it gives you a bit of time to start processing things or start thinking of ideas..."

During the Field Study program participants continued to look at the website to get updates on the program and the field location. Specifically mentioned were photographs by the EV Project documentary photographer, *"Dean has got some...really powerful photographs on the web. So I think it's another...reminder of how much of what's happening [in the Riverland] is affecting people's livelihood."*

Participants suggested that the website could be better kept *"...up to date and errors out."* But as one participant conceded, keeping the website up to date, *"...depends a bit on people [participants] contributing stuff and I haven't got around to doing any of that because I don't how to do it"*. Participants were shown how to load their pictures and comments to the website, but comments such as these suggest more demonstrations were needed.

5.4.3 Repeat field trips

The repeat field trips alternated with studio time gave participants a deeper understanding of place, and enabled more reflective responses in their artwork. In answer to my question, "What were your reasons for attending all three field trips?" one participant said, *"Just to repeat the experience and sort of internalise it a little bit more each time...to deepen that experience so that it could then be transferred to the art making process..."* The repeat field trips reduced pressure by enabling the participants to plan and focus their art works.

...going out three times for that period of time, you could...think about it in between times and do a little bit of work and then narrow it down each time what you wanted and what you wanted to take back with you so by the third trip I...knew...what I wanted to do while I was there.

The studio time between field trips is important for participants to absorb what they learnt/researched while on the field trip(s), *"...you having to go away and be somewhere else and absorb that and then be able to respond to it."*

Repeat trips also enabled participants to consider whether they were interested in making an artwork about a particular place and also a field-based approach to their practice. A Tumut participant found she was not inspired by the landscape. *“I thought it [the repeat field trips] would give me a chance to delve into some sort of subject matter more deeply and consider what I want to do and then go back and do more. But it didn’t turn out that way.”* Similarly, attending the first and second Tumut field trip helped another participant to understand her art practice better and where she wanted to focus in the future, *“I came back and realised my work’s really based around urban structures.”*

Attending the first trip speeds up induction to a place and attendance should perhaps be compulsory, *“In a very very short time [we] actually interact with some of the local people and in ways that I felt was very, very privileging.”* One participant observed that the first field trip *“...saves each artist from reinventing the wheel.”* Another acknowledged that the induction to place as organised by the Field Study program would be *“...impossible to organise by yourself.”* A Benalla participant who missed the first field trip because of other university commitments commented she felt confused on the second field trip when,

...everyone [the participants] kept talking about whether to drain the lake²⁹⁴ or not and I just didn't have any idea whether people [of Benalla] were actually for or against it...but it's that thing because everyone had been on the first trip and had that discussion...

Participants felt compelled to attend everything on field trip 1 even though the itinerary is understood to be *“a menu of options”*. When I asked a participant, *“Did you feel pressure to attend?”* she responded, *“No I didn’t feel pressure to attend I was just like wow, I’ve got this opportunity, I should go and I don’t know how much of it I ended up retaining because there was a lot of it.”* Participants see it as necessary to attend everything to get a good overview of place, *“You had to see everything in order to make meaningful choices.”* And similarly,

²⁹⁴ Lake Mokoan was originally a natural lake that was dammed to provide more secure water supply to downstream users. During the period which the Benalla Field Study program took place the lake was being decommissioned so that a wetland could be restored.

The first field trip is always taken up with racing around the place in the bus and the car and everything, which I find really tiring but I think it's probably necessary so we get an overview of the whole situation.

Participants expressed that they were tired and overwhelmed by the field trip 1 itinerary leading to their suggesting some time-out from briefings, *"I think it was a bit overwhelming. There was a lot of information and I think perhaps we could have benefited from, I don't know, spending a day out somewhere and just hanging out there and taking some time out from talking to lots of people."* Participants, particularly those who attended the 5-day field trip programs, had trouble absorbing the information presented during the briefings. One Benalla participant commented, *"It was probably on the edge of a lot to take in."* One half-day with no briefings was suggested by one participant, *"...to consider the place we were in."*

Two alumni participants who attended the Benalla Field Study program felt that the EV Project had created a *"...kind of ramped up thing..."* The field trips, they felt, were compartmentalised: participants were either being formally briefed by the community or doing their own thing rather than a gentle intermingling of the two and for them, this led to a *"...less organic..."* and less enjoyable experience.

Comments on field trip length varied. Participants who attended the 10-day field trips (Riverland and St George) suggested that the extra field trip length allowed adequate time to attend the briefings, as well as time to pursue their own interests, *"...I thought each day there was a sort of balance between meeting people who were concerned with various aspects there versus time to go and look around, poking around. I thought that was okay..."* Participants who attended the first field trip for the Riverland Field Study expressed that they didn't feel rushed *"...to see the next thing"*, and one participant said, *"...I knew we had enough time to investigate things properly."* The 10-day field trip as one participant commented also enabled the, *"...chance to...really engage with the place and forget about your other life a bit."* However participants did complain about the difficulty in clearing their schedule for 10-days, *"...it's a bit hard to commit to going somewhere for 10 days..."* A Benalla participant felt that the 5-day field trips, *"wasn't quite long enough because you spend most of the day at either end travelling...In some ways, longer and less field trips would be a bit easier to work in."* The Tumut location, which was three hours

from Canberra, enabled independent weekend field trip options, which a few participants undertook when they had other commitments during the scheduled field trips.

Participants said they needed un-scheduled time, particularly during field trips 2 and 3, to consider the field location and how they wanted to respond. To contemplate a place, participants commented on their need to, *“be left to your own musings”*, *“wander around”*, *“just be”*, and have time for *“sitting within the landscape”*. A Tumut participant found the first two field trips, *“too busy”* with regard to briefings and sorting out the group transport, and told me *“The third trip was good because we had lots of time...by ourselves to explore stuff. So I just started my project then...”*

The amount of un-scheduled time that was considered desirable varied amongst participants. Those participants who knew how the Field Study program worked understood that the second and third field trips were for the participant to take initiative, for example, *“...deepen relationships [with the community] or find out more...”* Participants who were new to field-based research had expected the convenor to continue to provide an itinerary for the second and third field trips. As one participant said to me, *“I didn’t know how it [Field Studies] worked...I felt the momentum was totally lost in the second trip...I wanted to find out more about the area...The second one you’re pretty much on your own. I think it was a waste for me the second trip.”* and then after the second field trip she understood, *“...The third trip I went back and then I was able to start doing something of my own.”* Another participant new to Field Studies made a similar comment, *“...it took until maybe the last trip to work out what to focus on...”*

Participants were surprised how complex the field sites were and appreciated that the repeat field trips gave them an opportunity to further explore this complexity. *“I was surprised at how nice it was out there and how much there was out there.”* A Riverland participant spoke about how she appreciated the second field trip to help her understand the place.

I think it was good because I had more an idea about the place, I had a bit more idea of what to expect, and I think I produced more work from that trip

than the actual first one. I didn't really do very much work at all [on the first field trip]. I think I was just absorbing it all. It was like, oh gosh, this is more than I expected.

5.4.4 Travelling within field location

Although participants mostly said they thought the travel arrangements within the field were adequate for them, some frustrations were aired. If artists are inspired by locations away from the accommodation base, then they are reliant on transport.

...in the second [field trip] I didn't really find that I had much time to do more work either because of the way transport had been arranged. We had to go around to lots of different places so that everyone could see what they wanted to...I wasn't able to stay for long at the places I was interested in...and as a result there wasn't much time to do artwork.

The Tumut Field Study program accommodation was located approximately 25 km out of town along dirt roads and a smaller group of participants wanted more ready access to Tumut during field trips 2 and 3. Regardless of where the accommodation is located, the shared vehicles need to be carefully coordinated to assist artists with accessing places of interest.

Participants repeatedly mentioned how they appreciated getting to know a landscape through the aeroplane flights and boat rides organised by the convenor for some of the programs.

5.4.5 First-hand experience

The participants received first-hand knowledge from the local community - not filtered through the media - they learned new points of view and in turn developed their own critical view. *"We both read a lot of things and are exposed to a lot of different media all the time, but there's just nothing that really compares to hearing people's stories, and I think in terms of informing your perspectives about things."* First-hand experience gives a different insight, *"I think you do get a different...insight...after going to a place as opposed to reading about it...Makes sense more in a different kind of way. It becomes more real."* From afar, participants form a conceptual or imaginary idea of what's happening and visiting the field location makes the issues more real.

I think until you actually go there, it's hard to actually put it into real understanding...You have this figment of your imagination, 'Oh we know it's dry, we know there's a bit water problem..' Until you actually visit the place and talk with the people who are living it, I guess you don't understand what they are needing.

Hearing about the same issue from different perspectives - people from different backgrounds - gave participants, “an in-depth insight into what was going on in the area.” One participant commented that she thought the briefings ensured, “...that there is fairly good technical basis for artists as they start to develop ideas about what they might do with their art.” For example, Figure 5.3 shows an artwork where the artist, after talking to local people, decided to gather together the differing aspects of and vested interests in Lake Mokoan. By attending the briefings, one artist felt she could make informed art about St George.

...to have some informed art making, that's what I really enjoyed about the St George experience. To be able to have the opportunity to talk to people from different aspects of what was going on in and around St George and in respect to the environment.

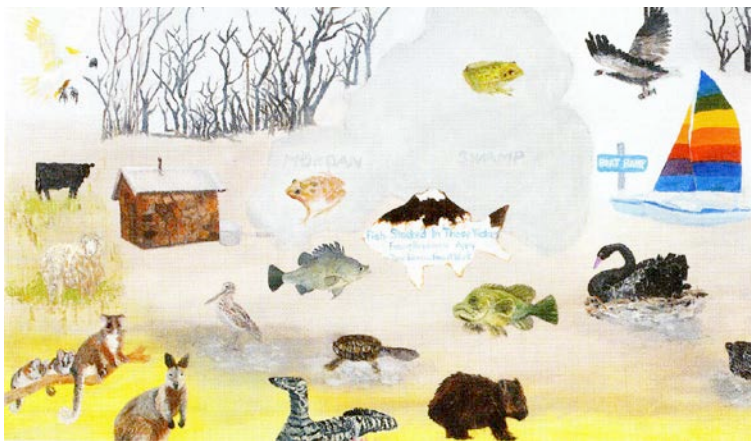


Figure 5.3 Robyn Banks, /Swamp/Lake/Wetland, 2009, 80 x 120 cm, acrylic paint on canvas²⁹⁵

Participants mentioned repeatedly how visiting a field location within the Field Study program gave them a first-hand experience of place that would have otherwise

²⁹⁵ The Australian National University, "Engaging Visions a Benalla Field Study 10-31 October 2009," ed. Field Studies: Environment Studio School of Art (Canberra: The Australian National University, 2009), 36.

been limited in comparison, *“Being there and just hearing them speak about local issues gave me insight that I wouldn’t get if I just went and visited the area.”*

As further expanded upon in section 5.5.1 (page 97) it was through first-hand experience that participants mostly became more aware of environmental issues, *“Well it made me aware of what was happening in the Murray-Darling. I mean you hear about it and you read it in the paper but it doesn’t really mean much until you are actually there in the middle of it.”* And similarly, *“...I think you could probably spend 10 days reading about it but not really have the same kind of understanding that you do from going there.”*

The participants particularly appreciated one-on-one interactions with the local community. Participants suggested that the convenor organise, particularly on field trips two and three, more informal opportunities for them to talk with the community such as, *“more social stuff”* to enable one-on-one *“deeper conversations”*. Two participants particularly enjoyed their interaction with schools and suggested that the program offer more involvement with schools.

First-hand interaction with nature was important for artists to develop an emotional connection to place. *“...when I go there I expect that the environment will give me feelings and I will respond intuitively...I tend not to do work about social issues in a direct way. I’m more interested in connection with environment...emotionally...”* To make their artworks, participants spoke about the need to immerse themselves in the natural world.

...to immerse myself really in the natural world...which has become more and more important in relation to my practice...The connection with growing things. The connection with the weather. The connection with the smell of the air. It all is essential to me staying fully alive as well as being a painter.

It was important for participants to have quiet time, one-on-one with nature to enable a connection to take place, *“...having the opportunity just to be a part of that interaction with nature and that sense of place and thing that you can sort of pick up just being there and being quiet and just meditating on that place.”* Figure 5.4 shows two examples of artworks produced as a result of first-hand experience enabled by

camping in the field. Felicity Green's painting is a merging of quiet observations with memories from her time spent on the Goobragandra River. In Heike Qualitz's work a recording of frogs from Lake Mokoan plays in a discarded petrol tank. One participant (a painter) spoke about how she and other Australian artists are trying "...tap into...a sense of place, spirit of place..." similar to what Aboriginal people have been doing,

...in order to create new myths for white people we have to somehow engage in what the Aboriginal people have been doing because it's about land and country and with the drought and global warming, trying to understand how this land works as opposed to how Europe works...

This participant believes that "*spirits inhabit all the natural world*" and explained her interaction with nature in relation to her art practice, "*...being in [by] that river just trying to absorb that I suppose and then I think some of the paintings have that feeling that...a spirit may inhabit it...of their own free will and...work through you and that's what I was trying to do I suppose.*"



(a)



(b)

Figure 5.4 Felicity Green, *Cave*, 2008, gouache and ink on canvas²⁹⁶; Heike Qualitz, *Saturday Night on Lake Mokoan*, 2009, dimensions variable, sound, steel, pvc, electronics²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ "Tumut: An Exhibition of Fine Art," ed. Field Studies Environment Studio School of Art (Canberra2008), 20.

²⁹⁷ "Engaging Visions a Benalla Field Study 10-31 October 2009," 25.

5.4.6 Accommodation in the field location

While the Riverland Field Study participants complained about a lack of community contact in general during the field trips, they did comment on how staying at Calperum Station gave them ready access to scientists, field staff and conservation volunteers working there who readily shared their knowledge. Calperum Station, a pastoral lease that now operates as an education and research centre, is located outside of town (20km from Renmark).

Talking to the staff at Calperum, that was great...because we were in closer proximity to the workers, we were right beside their sheds...quite often I'd be walking past a shed and see Les [a worker] and he'd be pointing out some sort of gumnut...there was a lot of interaction there which was really wonderful.

Similarly, another Riverland participant told me about the conservation volunteers she had met at Calperum Station and their research findings on the local fauna. The volunteers had, “*come out to do some cataloguing of animals...they come out regularly and they trap animals, just to measure populations...After I think it was three or four days of trapping, they'd only [caught]...one animal*”. When I asked, “They normally get more?” the participant answered, “*Yes, apparently they normally get a lot more. So I guess it shows something in the sightings of the drought and what's going on.*” Participants only get to experience a place for a relatively short period, and therefore interacting with the volunteers who return to Calperum Station every year gave them a longer-term understanding of the place.

Staying on a farm can also lead to spontaneous and enjoyable interaction with the local community.

...in the extra time that [another participant] and I stayed in the second field trip...we stayed at the Carlisles farm because Louise [a local farmer] had made the offer for people to camp there...we had a really really fun extra two days or three days for interactions with the family...It was interesting interaction because these are real country, farm people and the fact that two artists had come and they camped down by the river. So we were camping in a sheep paddock...we were trying to play around with – if you're going to do an Andy Goldsworthy sort of work in a place like that, how would you start going about it...[the participants had lined up sticks which they wanted to burn]...The nephew came down at a critical time, just to sort of say hello as

country people do. So you have to invite him to stay...so we thought, well here's a man probably experienced with dealing with fire, let's make him part of the [art] project. So we told him what we were doing and he entered into it with good spirit and I'm sure they'll dine out on that story for the rest of his life.

On the whole, participants expressed a preference for staying outside of towns and *"Living in it [the landscape]"*, for example near natural features such as the mallee, rivers and lakes. Benalla participants commented that they didn't enjoy staying at the caravan park in Benalla. *"I think you are much more inspired when you are staying [in the landscape] unless there are some really really colourful locals [in the township]."* A Riverland participant appreciated the proximity of Calperum Station to both the landscape and the local town, Renmark.

It was good being out of town...because it was really nice to be able to just wander around outside and not be disturbed by shops and people and distracted by all that stuff...But you know it's [Calperum Station] actually quite good because it was not too far away from [town].

Staying within reserves such as at Calperum Station enabled direct access to the landscape's natural features and helped participants, whose inspiration was nature, progress their artwork. *"Three of the five paintings were actually things that were quite close to the homestead [at Calperum Station]. So when we were staying at the homestead I used to walk around on the paths around the homestead and...look at the landscape."*

Camping brings participants even closer to their environs than staying in buildings. During the Tumut Field Study participants camped by the river on the first field trip, which led one participant to comment, *"It was surprising. Everyone was really affected by the river because when you come to go sleep you could hear it."*

Camping at Lake Mokoan also affected participants and inspired their artworks. *"Being so close to Lake Mokoan...the work that I developed...was only possible by actually being, living so close for those few days I was there...it was just being there and noticing it."* Staying in the landscape enables participants to, *"...explore...places in a more relaxed timeframe"*, rather than being constrained, for example during a catchment tour or shared transport situation, which has a group timeframe. Shown in

Figure 5.5: an artist's accommodation in the field, their 'studio' 10m away and the resulting artwork.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure 5.5 Dean Sewell's accommodation in the field (a); his studio (b) (Photographs: John Reid)²⁹⁸; and the resulting artwork (c) produced for Benalla Field Study, *Terror Australis*, 2009, 80 x 100 cm, pure pigment print on archival rag²⁹⁹.

When conceptualising and making her artwork, one participant spoke about the importance of having sustained accommodation in a particular place.

Lately it is has been more about being in a particular spot and you know kind of just letting stuff come to us and kind of creating character in that particular space, then building on that character in the context of the story of that place. The actual story of that place, but not letting it read into the image in too much of a realistic way...It's a bit more folk tale-ish or myth, legend that kind of thing.

²⁹⁸ Reid et al., *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment*, 39.

²⁹⁹ University, "Engaging Visions a Benalla Field Study 10-31 October 2009," 18.

A minority of participants preferred to stay in town rather than camp, and then do day-trips to inspirational places. One Benalla participant who is retired and an alumna provided her reasons, *“Benalla, I thought no, I'm not into cold showers in the middle of winter thank you very much and so that's why I elected to stay at the caravan park in the cabins.”* Other participants were inspired by landscapes at locations elsewhere to the accommodation and sought day-trips to these places, which is further analysed in the section 5.4.4 (page 85).

Participants spoke about how they prefer the group to stay together in the one location to provide *“a chance for the participants to share the reflections from the briefings and talk about that place we're in”*. During the second Benalla field trip, the participants separated into groups depending on whether they chose to camp or stay at the caravan park again. When talking about this occurrence, one participant commented, *“It's winter and it's also, I don't know, I don't want to say it rudely but it is a lot older demographic. Maybe they just don't want to camp so much anymore.”* Two participants suggested that the convenor should enforce only one accommodation option, and thus ensuring that all the participants stay in the one location and create a cohesive, interacting group, *“...otherwise it doesn't feel like a field study with other people.”*

Two alumni participants spoke about their experience of Field Study programs prior to Engaging Visions and how they enjoyed having all participants camping together in the one spot.

...we all go and camp in a particular spot and people come and talk to us or we go and talk to people to say we are at Macquarie Marshes and we are camping in the one spot and then we would go and talk to a farmer at their farm or go and do something, but we would also come back to that same spot...A lot of people were doing their work everyday kind of around that spot.

The accommodation having a designated communal gathering place, particularly where everyone comes together at night, was considered important by participants (see Figure 5.6). The large houses, which the participants stayed in at St George and Riverland, were very popular. They each had a single kitchen area and fireplace, which brought the participants to a natural meeting area, and created a *“family*

atmosphere”. Benalla participants commented, amongst other reasons already mentioned, that even with most participants staying at the caravan park on the first field trip, this accommodation option limited their ability to interact with each other because people tended to stay in their cabin and didn’t use the communal kitchen. *“If we were all eating dinner in the communal [caravan park kitchen] ...maybe there would be...more interaction.”*



Figure 5.6 Around the fireplace, a place for participants to bond during field trips (Photograph: Dean Sewell)³⁰⁰

5.4.7 Artists exhibiting in the Field Study location

Participants observed that the catchment exhibition gives the community a sense of where the Field Study program/artists are coming from and then the community drop their guard a bit. As one Tumut participant commented, *“In a sense the exhibition’s almost like the beginning of the contact with the people if you know what I mean.”* A St George participant made a similar comment.

It was disappointing in the sense that it was only after the exhibition that we felt like we were really getting into the community...I think there was a very good response to the exhibition and a lot of things could have flowed on from that, like community workshops...

During our second interview, one St George participant reflected on her conversation with the convenor after the St George exhibition and suggested, *“...maybe not*

³⁰⁰ Reid et al., *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment*, 39.

having the exhibition as the culmination of the thing” but rather halfway through the program.

I just feel that there were a lot of other communities – a couple of community groups and things that came and we learnt about doing the exhibition, because the people would come in and talk to us, so I feel like we could have done a lot more networking.

The St George exhibition left many participants feeling “abuzz” from the honest dialogue they experienced with the community when talking about their artwork. One participant commented, “You see, they never had an exhibition in St George before.” In response to my question “what was the response from the community?” a participant answered,

It was pretty good, actually. The opening night came and they all dressed up...and They’d walk up to you and say, “oh, is this yours? What’s that about?” Well you never really, you know, if you’re at an exhibition opening, you don’t walk up to the artist and go, oh so what’s this then? So people were really like honest, kind of brutally honest. And they’d go, “oh is that what you think? What about lah, lah?” And you’d be like, oh God, I didn’t think about that. So it was, yeah, it was a terrific experience...people would ask you what you’ve done and why, so you know, which is weird but good...But I mean, if you’ve gone to all that trouble [to make an artwork] and thought about it, it’s like yes, somebody cares!

Figure 5.7 shows the opening night for the St George Field Study exhibition which was held in an empty shop located in St George’s main street.



Figure 5.7 Opening night, St George Field Study 2009 exhibition, *Balonne: An Exhibition of Visual Art* (Photo: Doug Spowart)³⁰¹

Unfortunately I was not able to attend the St George exhibition and after hearing from each participant felt I had missed a wonderful experience. The experiences relayed by the convenor and participants suggest that artwork can be a catalyst for opening up further conversation with the community and developing rapport. Realising this, the convenor decided to include showcase exhibitions in the Field Study program to speed up this understanding and build trust between the community and the artists. The showcase exhibitions were held in the first field trip for Tumut and Riverland, and in Benalla during a meeting with the community before field trip one. Exhibited were artwork outcomes from previous Field Study programs.

The participants who experienced the showcase exhibitions during the Tumut and Riverland Field Study programs appreciated the additional opportunity to talk with the community. *“I liked the [showcase] exhibition, and having...met some people [during the briefings] and then going out to see them in a more social situation...being able to engage with them...you can follow up on a more personal level.”* Another Tumut participant told me during the second interview, *“I think having the showcase exhibitions has been a good improvement.”* When I prompted, “in terms of?” the participant replied, *“Well in terms of getting interaction...”* She has observed that at exhibitions, *“...a lot of things broke down...the breaking down of shyness or whatever...and the understanding of what we are doing.”* Without the

³⁰¹ Ibid., 75.

showcase exhibition, “...we probably wouldn’t have been showing along at the TAFE...if we hadn’t...made those connections with the Mayor and the TAFE lecturers [during the showcase exhibition]...I think that really helped.” Holding the showcase exhibitions though, meant that the convenor and some participants missed out on an afternoon of community briefings while they were installing the art works.

Tumut participants who attended the final exhibition enjoyed the exhibition and felt the community did too. “I liked the exhibition and thought that they’d done a really good job setting it up and there was a lot of buzz there and a lot of enthusiasm from the people.” When I asked, “what do you think the community got out of the exhibition”, a participant responded,

I think that a lot of people really enjoyed it...community arts is really amazing for...infusing community with... just really, really good energy...it’s very exciting and engaging to go out and join in with people and making connections and I guess just see things in a new way.

Unfortunately Riverland participants lacked the audience to feel they had engaged with the local community during the exhibitions (and in general), “...the only disappointing thing that I found with the Riverland exhibition and Field Studies was that in the end there wasn’t the community contact.” Riverland participants wondered if the showcase exhibition would have attracted more passers-by if it had been held in the main street of Renmark.

I think most people in the community probably had no idea that we were there. You know we put up that little exhibition [showcase] while we were there and that was a bit disappointing because I don’t think anybody came...I think we could count them on the fingers of one hand.

More analysis on interacting with the Riverland community is presented in the section 5.7.4 (page 123).

5.4.8 Emergent theme: Facilitating a sense of place

By attending the Field Studies program the artists not only seek inspiration to make art, but also to make art from an informed conceptual base that gives art meaning (for example, scientifically informed art about environmental issues). As an

emergent theme based on my findings, the Field Study procedural elements that need to exist for the artists to develop a ‘sense of place’ are presented in Figure 5.8 and further expanded upon in my discussion chapter.

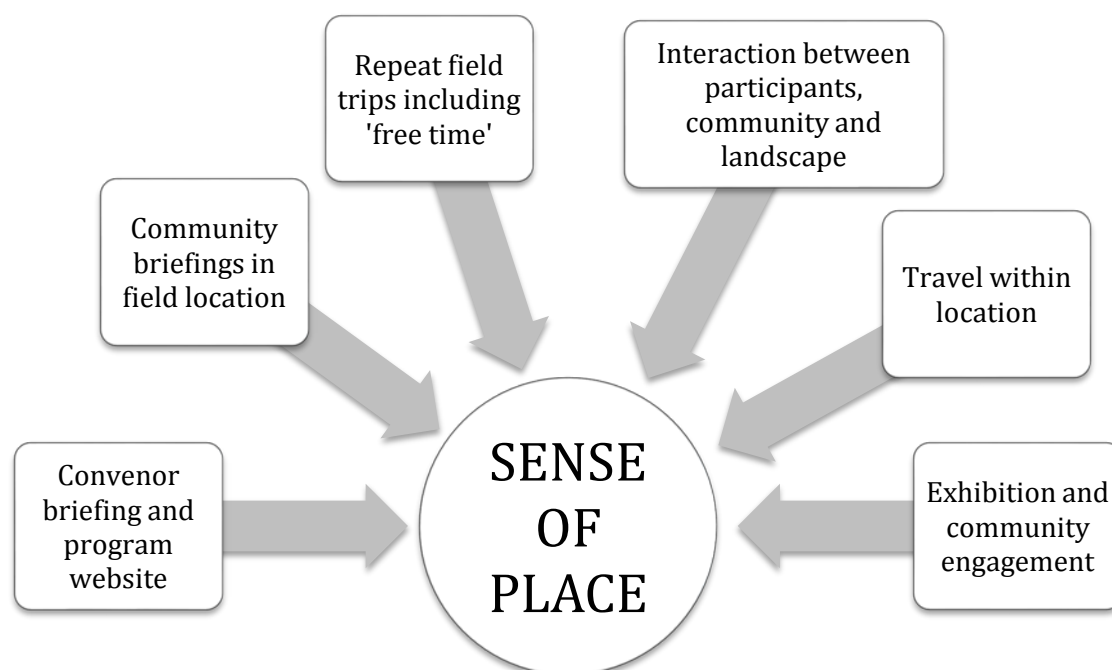


Figure 5.8 Procedural elements that need to exist for an artist to develop a sense of place, and make art with meaning about a place³⁰²

5.5 Making the environment salient

To make something ‘salient’ is bring it to the forefront of a person’s mind. In this section I report on the results with regard to the participants’ environmental awareness and the conceptual development of artwork.

5.5.1 Developing environmental awareness and confidence in their art practice to make environment the subject

In our first interview I asked participants to what extent they had been involved in environmental issues. I found that sixteen out of the 40 participants had

³⁰² An earlier version of this diagram was published in: Young, Reid, and Meehan, "Taking Action: Researching an Innovative Pedagogy for an Aesthetic Visual Approach to Environmental Issues," 69.

qualifications or work experience within the environmental management profession. I was also interested in whether the participants considered themselves to be ecological artists, or were interested in ecological art. The majority of participants responded that they had made art where the environment (issues) or nature was the subject. As mentioned already in section 5.2.2 (page 71) three participants told me they wanted to learn how to address environmental issues through their work and thought attending the Field Study program may assist them, *“Well I’ve been interested in some kind of environmental theme...It hasn’t been necessarily that easy just to do something with an environmental theme. So I thought going on the field study would be a way of getting images of the landscape.”*

Two out of 40 participants said they were not interested in or hadn’t thought about environmental issues, *“I’m not really interested in environmental issues”* and *“I haven’t really thought about environmental issues.”* Another participant over the course of a few interviews said she wasn’t a political person and considered statements about environmental issues to be political, *“I guess that when you’re talking about environmental issues then I think politics. Yeah you’re either for or against the way they are using the water or the way they are using the land, you know, where as I would sit more on a fence...”* Like many others, this participant was inspired by nature in her art practice.

It emerged after my initial analysis of the St George interview data that it would be insightful to ask participants to reflect on whether their experiencing the Field Study program had changed their environmental awareness. Three main responses emerged from the data. Participants either felt they became more aware, or confirmed what they already knew, or experienced little to no change in their environmental awareness. For the latter category two of these participants withdrew from the program after attending the first field trip for Tumut.

Overwhelmingly the response was that participants said they became more aware of environmental problems. Participants expressed this strength of awareness differently. For example a Tumut participant felt she had become much more aware, *“Well, a ton. I mean I didn’t really know about any of it before, any of the water problems that they were having with the river or the dam.”* While other participants

expressed with less confidence. *“I probably learnt a bit more. Like when we went on that boat ride with Chris...You know things that might be quite common sense but I hadn’t really understood...the rivers themselves are becoming toxic to the life that they usually sustain.”*

One participant who attended three of the four Field Study programs held during the EV Project said she felt not only more aware of Murray-Darling Basin issues but also more confident to voice her opinion on environmental issues.

I would have just been pottering somewhere doing my own little trip whereas [the Field Study program] has really encouraged me to go much more political and if anyone wants a public opinion, well I am very ready to stand up and give one...I feel like I’m informed and that’s a fantastic thing.

A smaller group of participants said their experience of the Field Study program consolidated or reinforced what they already knew and cared about.

It didn’t really [change my awareness of environmental issues] because I think I’m pretty aware anyway, but it did make me aware of the problems in that particular context. Whereas before I might have known about water problems on the Murray but you sort of get a close-up view of it, a bit more of a depressing feel about it as you talk to people and their reaction, farmers, because they work in the area, but yes, it puts a human face on it, but I don’t think it raised my general awareness.

The Field Study program provided a local context for environmental issues. Through hearing directly from the local community participants learnt about the effect of issues and environmental policies on people’s lives. From this experience participants said they developed both a more balanced view on issues (or changed their view) and empathy, *“I think it probably gave me a bit of a sort of balanced point of view as well. I think talking to some of the irrigators and people like that out there, yeah I don’t know but I probably have a more sympathetic view towards those guys.”*

Water management was the most commonly mentioned issue of interest to participants. Other stated issues of interest were: habitat loss, environment restoration, salinity, land-use suitability and sustainability.

It certainly made me think...you can turn things from a dam into something else so that having made a decision to wreck a natural environment you could then do a bit of an about face and try and fix it. That's a good thought. Ray Thomas' work with the [wildlife] corridors made a big impression on me...Yes and I'm telling people around here [Canberra].

During our interviews, participants spoke about how they became more aware of environmental issues. As evident in the quotes presented in both this section and section 5.4.5 (page 85), participants predominantly increased their environmental awareness through first-hand experience of place.

To consider the conceptual development of subject matter within a participant's artwork, and their willingness in particular to address the environment, I drew upon several sources of data. In our second interview, I asked participants what idea or issue they focused on with regard to their art practice. I observed participants in the field, met with some participants in their studios where they showed me works-in-progress, looked at the completed exhibited works during the exhibitions and read through the artist statements in the catalogues. Based on these sources of data, I concluded that just over a half of all artwork exhibited was inspired by the subject matter 'environment'. For example, one Benalla participant during our interview told me what inspired her artwork, "...a region has made the brave decision to reverse water storage for farming and recreational use and basically hand it back to the environment..." Another participant spoke about how Field Studies challenged her art practice into new genre and subject matter, "It was really interesting for me because I had never really done landscapes or art that dealt with the environmental really before so that was something new..."

A summary of the subjects, which inspired the artwork, is provided in Table 5.6. Within the environment subject, many participants based their artworks on water and river issues within the field location. I was not surprised by the water focus for both environment and nature inspired artworks given that the programs were held in the Murray-Darling Basin catchments (it was a common theme identified for the program), and our accommodation was nearly always next to a river or a lake. The second category that emerged was those artworks in which nature and/or the field

study location were the subject (for artwork example see Figure 5.9). For example, one participant told me what inspired her. “*It was mainly the contrast of colours and textures*” collected from the Murray River bank. Aboriginal people, their knowledge and/or their treatment were the third major inspiration for artworks.



Figure 5.9 Example of artist inspired by direct experience with nature, “shapes and colours” within the field location: Robyn Banks, *On the Road to Yuballa*, 2009, 35 x 70 cm, acrylic on board and found frame³⁰³

³⁰³ The Australian National University, "Riverland: An Exhibition of Visual Art 11-27 March 2009," ed. Field Studies Environment Studio School of Art (Canberra: The Australian National University, 2009), 27.

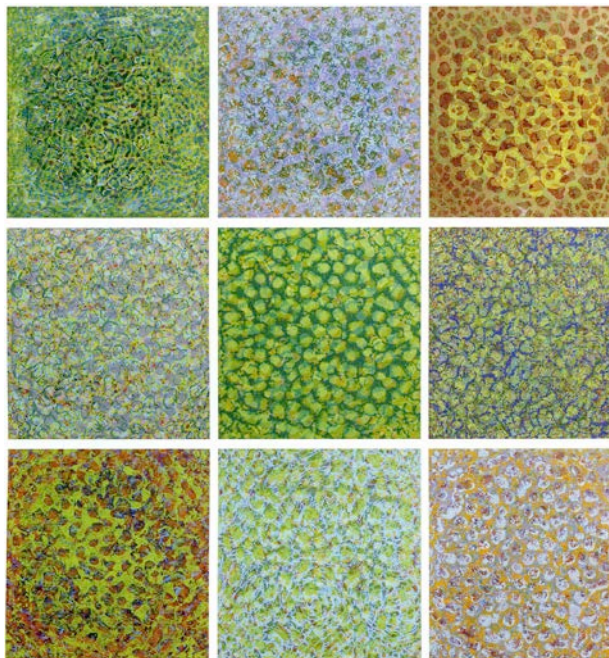
Table 5.6 A summary of the subject matter, which inspired the artworks exhibited for each Field Study program, from most common

Subject matters which inspired artworks	St George	Tumut	Riverlands	Benalla
Environment				
Water management	✓		✓	✓
Rivers		✓		✓
Biodiversity loss	✓		✓	✓
Cultural identity, and land and water management decisions (miss-management)		✓	✓	✓
Orchard industry		✓	✓	
Cotton industry	✓			
Consumerism	✓			
Nature and field study location landscape	✓	✓	✓	✓
Indigenous history and culture	✓	✓	✓	
A community member	✓	✓	✓	
Isolation	✓			
Artwork that the community could also make	✓			
Distance and time	✓			

Not all participants were motivated to make art about environmental issues or the nature experienced in the field location, “*Well I found that despite having strong interest in environmental issues it’s just not something I wanted to engage with in my work.*” A Tumut participant pulled out of the Field Study after the first field trip because she wasn’t interested in making art about the environment, which she understood to be a requirement, “*...but I just didn’t seem to have any interest in – I suppose the emphasis of making work for it would be to talk about environmental issues and things and I just really wasn’t interested in those.*” The last two rows of Table 5.6 represent a smaller group of participants who worked on ideas not inspired by the actual field location.

The following figure (Figure 5.10) provides examples of artworks that address some of the different subject matters identified in this section. Sarah Ryan’s artwork falls within the ‘environment’ category and considers local industry and it’s impact on native forests. Liz Coat’s artwork was inspired by the fresh growth after rain and the

desire of the local people to make healthy the land. In his photograph, Dean Sewell has photographed Aboriginal people in the Tumut region.



(b)

(c)

Figure 5.10 (a) Sarah Ryan, *Unrolled*, 2008, 90 x 150 cm, digital print³⁰⁴, (b) Liz Coats, *Fresh Growth*, 2009, 146 x 152 cm, acrylic media on board³⁰⁵, (c) Dean Sewell, *Common Ground*, 2008, 120 x 80 cm, archival inkjet on canvas³⁰⁶.

³⁰⁴ "Tumut: An Exhibition of Fine Art," 13.

³⁰⁵ "Engaging Visions a Benalla Field Study 10-31 October 2009," 26.

³⁰⁶ "Tumut: An Exhibition of Fine Art," 15.

5.5.2 Emergent theme: Making the environment salient

The procedural elements and other factors that combined help to make the environment salient for the artists have been summarised in Figure 5.11. These implications are further expanded upon in the Discussion Chapter.

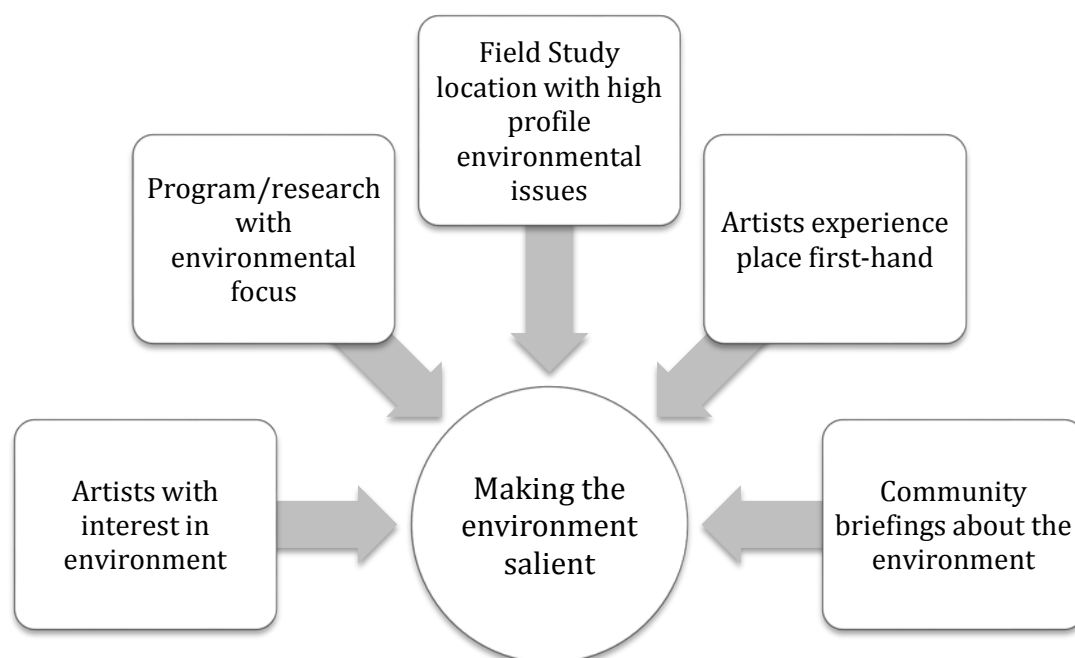


Figure 5.11 Procedural elements that lead to making the environment salient for Field Study Program participants³⁰⁷

5.6 Developing professional skills

The Field Study program provided life experiences that aided the participants' professional development. I begin this section writing about how strongly the participants felt they were affected by their experience, and then expand on the skills that the participants felt they developed or enhanced while attending the Field Study program.

³⁰⁷ This diagram was first published in: Young, Reid, and Meehan, "Taking Action: Researching an Innovative Pedagogy for an Aesthetic Visual Approach to Environmental Issues," 71.

5.6.1 Inspiring the participants practice

Participants reported feeling strongly affected by the Field Study program(s). By being inspired, the participants were more likely to involve themselves in the program and engage in opportunities for developing their professional skills. Words such as “...a fairly large impact...”, “...huge influence...”, “...a very big influence” and “...brunt of my practice” were used by participants during the interviews when describing the influence of the Field Study program on their art practice. One participant told me, “*I see it as very significant in terms of what I’m going to continue doing.*” For some participants it was a fundamental influence to their art practice, while others spoke about how attending the Field Study program enriched their existing art practice, “*So it [Field Studies] really added an important element to it.*” Three participants produced work outside and/or in addition to their study commitments, “*I’ve just really enjoyed the opportunity that Field Studies gives me to do things I wouldn’t normally do in the workshop.*” A Tumut participant felt greatly inspired and told me that the Field Study program “*...was actually my main focus for the semester. Even though I wasn’t enrolled, that was my main interest. I put a huge amount of time and effort into that work.*”

Nearly two thirds of participants had attended a Field Study program prior to the Engaging Visions Research Project. Participants expressed being greatly inspired, “*I love field trips. I just think they sort of evoke a volcano of creativity in me.*” One participant commented that when attending a Field Study program, “*...it becomes a complete focus and helps to organise it [my art practice].*” Another found inspiration and renewed confidence in their art practice during the field trips, “*...and then come back [to the studio] and feel really enthused about my worth with a whole lot of new ideas.*”

Not all participants reported being inspired by their Field Study experience. In fact, four participants reported that Field Studies had little influence on their study and art practice: they either didn’t like the field location or the field-based approach. “*I don’t know, just didn’t take to the area and the town...and it certainly didn’t fit in with what I was planning to do for my honours.*”

5.6.2 Developing field-based research skills

In addition to inspiring their artwork, Field Studies influenced *how* they worked. Through experiential learning, participants developed field-based research skills.

Participants new to the Field Study program learnt how to undertake field-based research but comments suggest they could have benefited from better communication or training from the convenor. A couple of undergraduates told me how initially they didn't know how to go about field-based research, with one Riverland participant feeling that the convenor was “...*assuming a greater amount of knowledge than a lot of people probably have.*” Prior to attending the first field trip the participant wanted “*to know where can I do some research to find out about what's going on in those places...*” The convenor's response was, “...*that's why we're going there, to find out.*” After experiencing the program, the participant reflected, “*But I probably have a much better idea about those things now.*” Not only how to research in the field but also how you get, “*different...insights...after going to a place as opposed to reading about it.*”

I observed that those participants who had attended more than one Field Study program honed their field-based research skills and further developed their confidence with each program, “...*the more experience I get with field studies like this, the more opportunity I'll have to have the better self-confidence to go out and do my own work anyway.*” Another participant developed the confidence to engage with people through her art practice, “...*it's also given me...a sense of confidence in approaching people and just being really kind of proud of where I'm coming from.*” These experiences reinforce the positive effects of experiential learning.

A couple of participants spoke to me about how they found fieldwork to be important to their art practice. “...*I realise how incredibly important it is. If you're going to portray in your art something about the environment you've got to go there.*” One participant had been commissioned to develop an artwork about Tumut and after trying and failing to make the artwork in her studio she made the decision to return to Tumut.

And I just couldn't pull it together until I actually went back to there to decide...and I did them [the artworks] all on site beside the river...So if you're actually working on a type of art work that is conceptual, it's not necessarily just a recording of a photograph, if you want to put more into your art work than that then for me it's just essential that I actually go there and get absorbed into the place and the colours and hear it...So that was a good learning lesson and now I realise through Engaging Visions how vitally important it is to be in the field.

Another participant spoke about how making artwork in the field made her more connected to the subject matter, “*So even though I was using photos as a guide, it...seemed to mean more that I was there and that there was mallee there and that I was painting mallee, rather than in the studio... it makes you a bit more connected...*”

A postgraduate Tumut participant told me during our first interview that by participating in a Field Study program she hoped to develop a field-based practice as an abstract landscape painter, “*Ultimately...I'm going to have...to take myself out to places and live in them for a short amount of time and then come back to the studio and try and pick up on that sense of place...*” The participant was happy with her results and explained her field process.

So having that imagery [from the field trips] and having experience by the river, having that energy from the river, from nature...[having] textual memory of this place...has been really good because you just get stuck in your studio and because I usually work from my imagination and not the real world, it's been good for me to go out into the real world and to bring some of that back in [to the studio] and get those two working together.

Participants felt inspired to adopt a field-based approach. One participant described the Field Study program as, “*A big influence because it's basically how I want to work...that field-based research...mostly visual research and talking to people rather than reading heaps.*” Participants appreciate being able to pursue subject matter rather than justifying / emphasizing where their art practice fits within an art theory context such as is required at the School of Art, “*...reminds me that I don't have to get so caught up in intellectualising it [artwork]. I think I need that, so I enjoy that and I think it often starts me thinking about things, or on certain paths that sometimes come up later...*”

During each Field Study program at least two participants mentioned to me that they were inspired by the convenor and considered him, “a very valuable mentor.” They were observing the way the convenor manages the Field Study program alongside his art practice.

So it [attending the Tumut Field Study program] was like a little satellite cameo idea of how you go about it [field research] and I learnt a lot of stuff from just observing you know, John [convenor] and his confidence and his bridge building techniques and his open house policy...It was a really positive experience.

Within this group, participants told me that they would like to convene a Field Study type program. “I’m on a total roll as far as my art’s concerned...I just could work on a job like that for the rest of my life doing what we’re doing with Engaging Visions.”

As mentioned previously, not all participants were inspired by field-based research but their experience helped them to better define their preferred work practice, “...I think it was more effective for me in identifying certain things that didn’t work for me...I found it quite difficult to work up there [at St George] and it helped me pinpoint the things that I’d like to have in order to work...” The experience also helped participants to identify what subject matters they find inspiring, “I think it also sort of helped me pinpoint the things that I’m interested in discussing in my work as well, or at least some of the things I’m not interested in discussing.” The learning benefits of attending the Field Study program also extends to those participants who felt they didn’t engage in the program.

Figure 5.12 below shows two examples of participants using field-based skills to develop their artwork. Fran Ifould made this work with dyes from vegetation collected in the Balonne area.³⁰⁸ Suzanne Potu developed her work through observing trees in the St George area while walking with a local Indigenous Elder.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ The Australian National University, “Balonne,” ed. Field Studies Environment Studio School of Art (Canberra: The Australian National University, 2007), 11.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 10.



(a)



(b)



Figure 5.12 Examples of artwork produced through field-based research: (a) Fran Ifould, detail from *Natural Dye Response*, 2007, 45.0 x 90.0 cm, natural dyes and charcoal on paper³¹⁰; (b) Suzanne Potu, *Untitled, Faces in Trees Series*, 2007, 18.0 x 26.0 cm, digital print, sumi ink on Hahnemuhle paper.³¹¹

5.6.3 Learning to share with the community

One participant, a postgraduate, spoke about how showing her artwork to Aboriginal Elders during a briefing to participants became an icebreaker and facilitated a dialogue between her and the Elders.

...one of the elders saw my dog [sculpture] in the back of the ute and she's like, who's that, did you bring your dog with you kind of thing. I just said oh yeah that's one of my sculptures and they went ooh. When we went outside it was a stinking hot day but, I just thought oh well here's an opportunity because they were asking about it so I pulled them out and they really like, you know the one was pissing, so they loved that and then we started to talk...Once they actually saw the objects that I was making they laughed a lot, they got the humour and then they started asking questions and you know, about welding and techniques and...what I was putting into it. There was a real exchange and it kind of almost was like, I could feel their excitement about the making process...So I felt like it was like the beginning of dialogue that might have happened but you know, everybody wanted to go and like it was just the wrong time, but it gave me a little bit of a sniff of you know, maybe going back and doing a, some kind of workshop.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

³¹¹ Ibid., 10.

This Tumut participant also invited a community member to visit her studio in Canberra at ANU. This participant told me how she felt the experience enhanced their rapport.

So he [a Tumut community member] called in [to her studio at ANU] so I could talk to him and show him my work and my world which I think was really beneficial...but for me the experience of him visiting me and kind of having a look at my world, it just felt like I was sharing something...you feel it's a valuable exchange of communication and I felt that for him you know, he relaxed and understood more where I was coming from.

Participants spoke to me both during our interviews and informally about engagement versus interaction with the community. The conversation perhaps stemmed from the Field Study programs being run within the EV Project where the word 'engagement' was used repeatedly by the convenor and EV research team members. One of the EV research team members also felt that the Field Study program should operate on a quid pro quo basis, that is; the program (the artists) should give something in return to the community. Participants started to question what engagement meant and what was their responsibility as a student participant, "...I was thinking, what exactly was Engaging Visions trying to do? I was thinking well, I've got this idea of what I was trying to do but was there an actual stated aim about what it was trying to do?" Participants would have benefited from the convenor and EV Project team clearly communicating the EV Project aims and responsibilities of Field Study program participants.

The convenor told me that he had always considered the catchment exhibition to be the program's way of giving back to the community. A participant commented that she thought the exhibition was important because it proved to the community that the artists had followed through and made artworks. "Yes, just to show people that we actually did something, we weren't fake tourists."

Participants unprompted wanted to talk to me about what "giving back" to the communities meant to them and also wanted to know the EV Project research teams' adopted stance. Participants expressed guilt. They felt the community had given more to the artists than they'd received, "I've come away feeling like the community gave more to me than I gave back to them". Another participant would have liked to

run an art workshop for the community, “*You share some knowledge there and then I would I suppose have felt happier about receiving their stuff.*” One participant thought the program had “used” the community “*...as material for student artists to help their learning experience and I guess in recognition of our use we are asking of them whether should in a reciprocal sense be returning something*”.

Undergraduate participants who attended the Benalla Field Study program told me how they had felt pressured by the same EV Researcher to “give back” to the community, for example run an art workshop. Which led one undergraduate to tell me that the most she could give to the program was, “*...to make an artwork...*” because of her university commitments and lack of experience in teaching. Several participants (mostly postgraduates) did end up running art workshops within the community, which were organised by the convenor and field coordinator. Figure 5.13 below shows an example of participants running an art workshop with the community and talking with a school group at a Field Study exhibition.



(a)



(b)

Figure 5.13 (a) Participant running art workshop with the community (Photograph: Carolyn Young) and; (b) talking with a school group at a Field Study exhibition (Photograph: John Reid)³¹².

³¹² Reid et al., *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment*, 45.

5.6.4 Cultural sensitivity

During the interviews, without being prompted eleven out of the 40 participants told me that they were interested in learning more about Indigenous Australian culture while attending the Field Study program.

One participant relayed her experience when attending a briefing by Aboriginal Elders (women) to participants during the Tumut Field Study program. The participant told me,

I was running late...I walked in to that room...and there was a lot of respect in the room but it was...a bit stilted the atmosphere...there is a slight sense of apprehension and I felt there were a few culturally inappropriate questions asked towards the women [Elders] by a couple of individuals...I just felt a little bit uncomfortable about...I mean people [participants] were asking about sacred sites and where they could find them and stuff like that...and they [the Elders] were quite guarded and basically said you know there's been vandalism. I've worked as a ranger, I've seen just terrible things done to aboriginal art, rock art and stuff like that so why should they give away all that information...It just seemed like a form of...cultural consumerism or something...

This artist thought a role of participants in the Field Study programs should be to share their knowledge with the community, to have a dialogue as already mentioned in section 5.6.3 (page 109). When I asked the participant "...whether there'd be some...way field studies could be more sensitive?" the participant responded, "*I don't think they could personally because the people involved are just that kind of people.*" The convenor wasn't present during this briefing because he was installing the showcase exhibition. I wasn't present at this meeting also so cannot add any insights of my own.

5.6.5 Participating with a group of artists

Participants enjoyed and benefited from mixing with a diverse group during the Field Study program. I remember a fun afternoon on a Benalla Field Trip where a couple of participants accompanied me on a field trip to a nearby forest to collect artefacts and plants for my still life photographs. These participants also wanted to watch me put a still life photograph together at my make-shift field-studio. Their

suggestions while observing me also provided valuable feedback on my technique and expression.

The Field Study program helped the participants to extend beyond their School of Art workshop network. An undergraduate participant told me in our second interview, *“I found myself sometimes like being unaware of it but becoming very insular...you go into your workshop and then you don’t leave for six months.”*

Through attending the Field Study program this participant’s experience was, *“...you get to interact with people from lots of different workshops, which I could do anyway, but just when you’re so rushed and so pressed for time I forget to do things like that or I just don’t do it enough.”*

The Field Study program provides an opportunity for artists to develop a support network while studying, *“...one of the really important bits is artists bonding with each other and especially across workshop, because making art is really intense and often isolated thing.”* Similarly an alumna who attended the Benalla Field Study program spoke about what attracted her.

...but in the main I think participating with a group such as this...just makes it that much more appealing. And being no longer a student, or under grad or post grad, it’s possible to be isolated when we’re working alone. This gives me the opportunity to work with a group and you just automatically - the vibes sort of diffuse and you pick up stuff and you see what other people are doing, they see what you’re doing. It’s a little bit like having a foot back in the academic environment of art school without the commitment and stress and all of that.

Participants inspired each other in their art practice. A participant from the Printmedia and Drawing workshop told me, *“...I was really inspired by talking to those other sculptors, students who are sculptors...”* and as a result made a sculpture for the Tumut exhibition. The participants observed each other working, *“...you get to see...people working in a different medium...”* I personally was inspired by the Tumut participant who learnt to show her artwork to members of the community as an icebreaker and catalyst for sharing ideas.

Participants benefited from attending the work-in-progress meetings facilitated by the convenor and other informal discussions that took place during the program. As one participant commented, “...*sometimes the critical feedback from the group, it really pushes the art in a direction it might never have gone in and maybe gets it a whole lot further a whole lot quicker.*” And similarly another participant told me, “*I really like being with a group of artists to bounce ideas off/ collaborate with/ share the experience...*” Participants told me that during field trips they would like the convenor to organise/facilitate more group sharing opportunities such as evening talks about works in progress, casual critique sessions, discussions around ideas and interests, as “...*an incidental thing*” around the fireplace at night. Participants also commented that they wanted more group work-in-progress meetings between field trips.

Participants also helped each other to get to know a field location through sharing information and debating issues. “*I think experiencing new things with people you don’t know particularly well, it just sets up interesting situations to talk about places...*” During our interviews, participants often mentioned how they’d learnt (for example) about a particular place of interest or about an environmental issue when talking with other participants.

Participants expressed that they felt safer/more comfortable interacting with the community from within a group of artists.

Like setting up a meeting to talk to the mayor by yourself could be really intense because you would have to be engaged the entire time, but in a group of 20...because you are not interested in everything he says, but then he says something interesting and you are able to engage [with] it. There is a lot less pressure.

Two participants also spoke about how they found interacting with the community from within a group could open up conversations you wouldn’t think to have. For example, when another participant asked the Benalla mayor what the positives are in Benalla the Mayor struggled to answer that question, “*He wasn’t expecting it...it just totally caught him off guard and he didn’t know what to do...We loved Charles’ question. We talked about it a lot afterwards.*”

The common interest in the environment amongst participants (as outlined in Section 5.5.1, page 97) helped the group to bond.

...I find there is an underlying passion about environmental issues with the people that usually go along on these and so there's something in common. Even though you might be very different people there's still that underlying passion which connects you I think as people...common sensibility and interest.

Of course, not all participants got on and these annoyances were often expressed to me during interviews and informal conversations throughout each Field Study program. There is not much a Field-Study program convenor can do about personality clashes amongst participants. In larger groups, participants mentioned it was easier to avoid people you didn't like. One undergraduate who was struggling with making artwork during the second St George field trip compared herself with another participant. *"But the second time [the other participant - name has been removed] was quite prolific and I just wasn't feeling it like that so I did feel a bit inadequate."*

5.6.6 Exhibiting experience

The artists liked how the catchment exhibitions were accessible to all Field Study program participants. Undergraduate participants told me the Field Study program gave them their first experience of exhibiting.

It's great for you as an artist to have experience in exhibiting...From my perspective from when I started doing it [attending Field Studies] years ago, there's nothing else like that at art school in terms of you having practice in actually exhibiting. So if I hadn't done that, I would have just got into my professional practice a bit greener.

A third year undergraduate student said participating in the exhibition gave her confidence, *"It's good practice because I always thought of exhibitions as something really scary and something that you had to produce perfect work for. But it made me a bit less scared of exhibiting my work."*

Even though exhibiting was not required as part of their studies most participants chose to exhibit (35 participants out of a possible 40). The exhibition gives momentum to program participants, *“Then you have got the exhibition at the end kicking you along.”* Having an exhibition helps the artists to have a disciplined approach to their artwork, *“It forces you to work through ideas you’ve been having into some type of outcome.”* They wanted to learn from the experience. Artists wanted to see their artwork hung and see other participants work too, *“I really wanted to see everyone’s work...because I saw them in the process and I was like, what did everyone do?”* Participants wanted to see the community’s response to their artwork and saw participating in the exhibition as, *“...a great chance to follow up and...get feedback on all of the work.”*

A St George undergraduate participant learnt how to transform a vacant shop space to a gallery.

I was interested in making the gallery because we had to clean the bloody place and it took three or four days so I wanted to be part of the gallery. I thought that would be a really cool thing to do...I mean it was really, really hard work in the heat but I thought that was a really rewarding thing to do, like to just huh, we can take this shitty building and turn it into a gallery.

Figure 5.14 (on left) the Benalla Field Study exhibition at the Benalla Art Gallery, and (on right) the Tumut Field Study exhibition being set up in an empty shop.



Figure 5.14 (on left) Benalla Field Study exhibition (Photograph: Carolyn Young), (on right), the Tumut Field Study exhibition being set up (Photograph: Dean Sewell)³¹³.

³¹³ Ibid., 44.

5.6.7 Communications media experience

Interacting with the communications media gave participants the opportunity to talk about their artwork, the medium, the subject and the how it relates to or was inspired by the field location. The experience helped participants to better understand their work, and as one Riverland participant told me, develop their confidence with working with the communications media. She relayed to me her conversation with the convenor and the ensuing radio interview experience.

...he [the convenor] said we have to do this radio interview...have to be there in 10 minutes. I said I don't want to do a radio interview and I'm not doing it. He said yes you are...He bundled me into the car and off we went to do the radio interview. That was a bit of a surprise.

When I asked, "What did you think of the experience?" The participant replied,

It was a really good experience. I'm glad he made me do it...It's good to do those things, get a bit of practice, get over your stage fright. I feel like I've been working, got experience in knowledge about a whole lot of different things through it.

While being interviewed by a journalist who was putting together a feature on the Field Study program, a Riverland participant came to realise where her knowledge strengths lay and where those of the community lay.

...and it came home to me really strongly when I was being interviewed by Alexandra de Blas on the Renmark on the boat...I understand in general terms what causes an ecosystem in a place to look like this or look like that. But I haven't lived in those places. I don't know the sequence of events and when she [Alexandra] points to that tree over there, [and asks] why did that die, I can't say...you've really got to talk to local people...and it made me realise the strengths of my knowledge is...the big landscape view. But it always gets richer by being informed by local people who know what's happened there.

I was interviewed by Alexandra de Blas³¹⁴ too, which I found outside my comfort zone, but the experience did force me to define my research argument and narrative,

³¹⁴ Alexandra de Blas is the principal of "de Blas Communications" which specialises in communications on social and environmental sustainability (www.deblas.com.au)

and just like the first participant quoted, the experience helped me to develop my confidence for next time.

5.6.8 Long-term benefits

The long-term benefits of attending Field Study programs were myriad. As a result of their Field Study program experience participants chose to adopt a field-based approach to their art practice, “[The program]...had a pretty good impact on our long term process...when we left school we still found work in the field really important...” For more analysis see section 5.6.2 ‘Developing field-based research skills’ (page 106).

The experience of Field Study programs inspired the work of participants beyond the Field Study program and university course.

Well I think it [Field Study program] plays a significant role because I’ve only had one solo exhibition since I graduated but I based the whole thing around my sister’s property and if I hadn’t gone on that Field Studies trip and stayed there and looked at the environment and made a whole lot of sketches, you know that one I went back three times...So I thought Field Studies were very important.

A participant told me that the painting style developed during a Field Study program was carried through to later work. From my own personal experience and that expressed by an alumna, attending the program helped us figure out how to bring together our passions for the environment and the arts, “...but this kind of field study has really brought them together for me.”

5.6.9 Emergent theme: Developing professional skills

The professional development skills that the participants developed or enhanced through attending the Field Study program(s) have been summarised in Figure 5.15. Environmental awareness is considered a professional skill needed for artists wanting to engage in environmental issues with their art practice. This emergent theme is further discussed in the next chapter, discussion, in relation to additional training or skills needed to enhance a participant’s professional development.

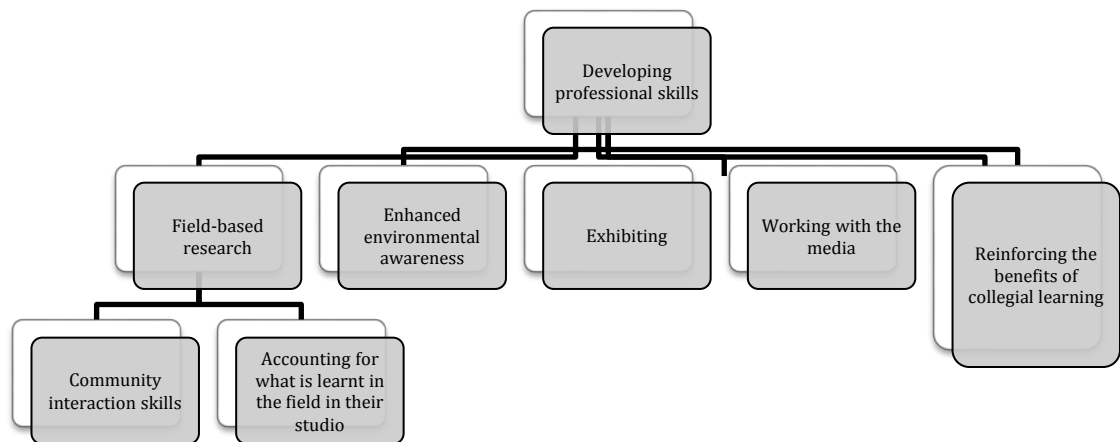


Figure 5.15 Professional development skills the artists developed or enhanced through attending the Field Study program(s)

5.7 Managing the Field Studies program

This section presents feedback from the participants on how well they considered the Field Study program - as they experienced it - to be designed and implemented. Reported are both the successes and suggestions for improving the program.

5.7.1 Convenor succession planning

Succession planning was discussed amongst the participants and the EV research team especially during the Benalla Field Study program when the convenor had to take time out due to illness. Participants felt concerned that the convenor should have a team, *“Field Studies is too big for one person.”* One participant said, *“...he [convenor] is so much a part of it [Field Studies]”* and questioned whether Field Studies could be sustained should he leave.

5.7.2 Selecting a Field Study location

What was considered desirable as a field study location varied amongst participants. Some participants had a particular landscape in mind in the hope of furthering their existing art practice, *“Well I hope there will be bush around...and rugged...because*

that's what I want..." While others did not mind where, they just want to be involved in all that the program offers.

We are interested in anywhere really...what's really interesting about this program I reckon is that if you go anywhere, it actually creates an energy to find out about it, then you will find things you are interested in...what's amazing about this is you are getting local knowledge like John [convenor] has [organised] through meeting people and stuff. You go to places you might not find by yourself...most places have a story you can tap into and find out about.

There were a couple of themes that became apparent when talking about location with the participants. Repeatedly they spoke about how "...going somewhere new...is very conducive to doing work". Comments such as these and the following quote from a Riverland participant suggest that Field Study programs should continue to be offered in new field locations.

I spend most of my life in Canberra...it is nice to get out into the rest of the world and see a different place and different people...I'd never really looked at the mallee before and tried to paint it...I was quite taken with the mallee and just the shapes of it and the red soil and everything. It was beautiful.

Field locations that offered a range of environmental and social issues were inspirational to participants. Specific issues of interest to participants prior to attending the first field trip are shown in Table 5.7. By observing the Benalla Field Study participants during the field trips, listening to their second interview and looking at the exhibited artworks, it became apparent that Lake Mokoan was very inspiring material for art production. Lake Mokoan in a relatively small area represented the competing interests' common across the Murray-Darling Basin such as land and water ownership, water security, biodiversity and recreation.

I am interested in landscape from the point of view of 'what man has made of nature', and also for the way it can be used as a metaphor for the human state of mind. My current investigation, of which the Lake Mokoan paintings are part, concentrates on anomalies in the landscape...the consequences of attempts by man to improve life by harnessing or regulating natural forces.³¹⁵

³¹⁵ AG Stokes artist statement for 'Double Portrait of Lake Mokoan', in *Benalla Field Study Program Catalogue*, 2009.

Table 5.7 Location specific subjects that interested the participants prior to attending the first field trip

Environmental issues generally, but specific issues mentioned were: • Salinity • Rivers • Water management • Land use effect on natural systems • Murray-Darling Basin in particular
Indigenous Australian culture
How environmental issues affect people, their welfare, and how they deal with the issues
Social issues, the community in general and their lives
Australian history post European settlement
No preferences
One-off interests mentioned, included making art that the community will understand and engage with, doing portraits, regent honey eater project (based on information given at briefings), and providing a cultural exchange between School of Art and regional artists.

The distance of field locations from Canberra can pose both challenges and opportunities, as already analysed in section 5.4.3 (page 81). A participant complained about the distance of St George from Canberra where travel time was between one and two days, *“There was a lot of time travelling to get there which I think took some of the fun out of it.”* A Riverland participant made a similar comment in that, *“It’s a pretty long drive and it does make it hard to go back because...you can’t just go there for a day. So I don’t know, maybe it would be better to do projects or visits in locations that are a bit closer?”*³¹⁶

5.7.3 Field Study program length

The detailed schedules for the evaluated Field Study programs are provided in APPENDIX A (page 162). The programs ranged in duration from 3.5 to 9 months starting with the survey field trip and concluding with the final exhibition. Six months was the preferred Field Study program duration (for example, the Tumut and

³¹⁶ The EV Project selected a field location from each state jurisdiction in the Murray-Darling Basin. From my experience of the Field Study program prior to the EV Project, the field locations would normally be one-day or less drive from Canberra.

St George schedules), as participants felt it allowed adequate time between field trips for art production and for momentum to be maintained with the community.

Tumut participants commented that they thought the field trips “...were nicely paced...” for both studio time and “so you could make friends with your family again after abandoning them...” The Tumut program schedule allowed between 2 and 4.5 weeks of studio time between field trip 1 and 2 respectively, and then another 12 weeks studio time between field trip three and the exhibition.

In contrast, the Benalla Field Study program was comparatively short because the convenor had managed to secure an exhibition at the Benalla Art Gallery in week 16 of the program instead of the typical week 25. A Benalla participant thought the field trips were too close together (2.5 weeks studio time between field trip 1 and 2), with the last field trip too close, only allowing 3.5 weeks studio time, before the exhibition.

...the time in between [field trips]...wasn't long to get yourself together and get ready for the next one...and also [for] reviewing what we've brought back from the previous one...It was quite tight and then you had to get stuff [artwork ready] for the exhibition.

Another Benalla Field Study participant commented on the challenge of making an artwork within three weeks and she would prefer more time.

In all it was three weeks preparation...I put together the painting that I put into that exhibition...I did it in a shorter time span than I would normally be comfortable with. I like to complete a work as far as I understand it and then put it to one side and keep looking at it because, you know, I need to know that the work is the very best that I can do before I let anything out.

Riverland participants commented that the gap of 4 months between the second field trip and final exhibition was too great, causing a lack of momentum in both them and perhaps with the community. “To me it felt too much distance...” a participant told me during an interview to which I asked, “Too much time between the producing of the work and then the exhibition?” The participant responded, “And the exhibition and also maybe for the relationships that we formed up there...To then leave it four, five months [after the final field trip] is a long time in people's [minds]...”

One Benalla Field Study participant said they liked the idea of a yearlong Field Study program for developing their art practice and *“Particularly if you want to get to know people in the area I think it takes a long time.”*

5.7.4 Convenor networking with the community

I attended the survey field trip for the St George Field Studies program and observed the convenor developing contacts, working out the salient environmental and social issues, lining up people to talk to the artists, finding out accommodation options and exhibition spaces. One participant commented, *“he [convenor] has a real talent at getting people onside to welcome the artists into the community.”* The convenor’s first main contact during the St George program was the “Tourist” information office and the mayor. He followed their leads to expand his networks to the environmental government agencies, an Aboriginal leader, advisers to local politicians and local artists. The convenor had developed a standard overview pitch in which to explain the program. The convenor’s networking skills were noted by participants, *“I thought the organisation was really, really good. How they [the survey party] pinpointed those particular people and programed them in, I was so impressed.”* By the end of the survey trip, the convenor had sorted out a rough itinerary for the first field trip and developed a logistical plan. *“...I like the fact that the advance party has gone out, sorted out the principal areas of interest to the project, and then anything that’s extraneous to that we can do ourselves.”*

As reported in section 5.4.7 (page 93) Riverland Field Study participants wanted more interaction with the Renmark community. Participants made suggestions for future Field Study programs. First, the convenor needs to network with influential people such as the town Mayor. I spoke to the convenor about this suggestion and he told me his attention and focus had been on The Australian Landscape Trust’s Calperum Station and their networks, but realised too late (when he met the Mayor at the exhibition and felt embarrassed) that he should have met with the Mayor regardless during his survey field trip. Second, Riverland participants told me how they found the established artists in Renmark reticent to assist with the program and *“...in retrospect...I think we would have done better connecting art wise with*

amateur artist groups...There were a few and quite often they wanted to talk.”

Another participant made a similar comment.

I wouldn't have minded actually even trying to meet up with the artists' society groups that were there. I think that might have been fairly good because they might have been more open to us than somebody who's already really established.

Four Riverland Field Study participants spoke in detail to me about their experience with established artists in the Riverland. “*Well, I guess we put a healthy store in our connection with [the two local artists]...but it just didn't come off.*” During the exhibition the convenor and those participants who attended “*...put together this fantastic presentation...*” with the expectation that one of the established local artists, who is also a high school teacher, would organise for a group of high school students to attend. “*But we had like six people in the audience...it was a bit disappointing but there just didn't seem to be the opportunity to liaise with the community of Renmark so much.*” On reflection a Riverland participant thought perhaps these artists wanted to use the Field Study program,

To promote themselves and their issues too, you know, out of the area, out of Renmark, out of the Riverlands whereas we were working on the reverse. We were coming in and we were basing our whole collaboration on being in...They kept saying to us, you'll have to take our work to Canberra.

Following the experience of Riverland in particular, participants reflected on the kinds of community people they hoped to interact with. In summary, participants valued community representatives who were willing to be open and exchange information, enter into dialogue, and offer their networks as further contacts.

5.7.5 Attracting participants to the program

The convenor used several methods to advertise and attract participants to the Field Study programs. The method(s) by which the participants said they had become aware of the program, starting with most common, were:

- Posters distributed around the School of Art;
- Direct communication with the convenor;

- Recommendations by students and School of Art workshop staff;
- For exchange students, information provided at their university;
- Through attending a Field Studies catchment exhibition;
- The convenor's introductory talk to new students at the School of Art;
- The Engaging Visions Research Project website; and
- Recommendations by visiting artists.

Suggestions given by participants for how the convenor could further promote the program were: give talks to students within the individual School of Art workshops; target publicity to third and fourth year students, and/or post graduates; and promote Field Studies as a complementary study.

The convenor's enthusiasm during the briefings helped to maintain the participants' interest in the program, *"He [convenor] seemed quite excited about it and that was...inspiring too."*

5.7.6 Convenor communicating logistics to participants

In the early stages of my research the convenor moved to another office outside the School of Art and participants reported finding it more difficult to keep in touch with him and find out logistical details. His old office at the School of Art had a glass front and a couple of participants made similar comments, *"...you just walk past and you could see when he was there, and he was usually in the office a lot. So he was easy to catch there..."* The convenor having a presence in the school where the program is being run assists participants in maintaining an easy contact with the convenor and with finding out logistical information.

When asked during our first interview whether the pre-field trip logistic and academic information provided at the briefings was adequate participants were on the whole satisfied and responded with comments like, *"I thought it was good"*. Those participants who had attended a Field Study program before were notably more relaxed about the Field Study organisation. Some first timers were a little more anxious about the logistical details and had additional questions for the convenor, *"about accommodation and what time we were supposed to meet next week [to*

depart on the field trip], transport and stuff like that.” Such comments suggest that the convenor needs to finalise the field trip logistics during the briefings and also be able to communicate these decisions directly via email or the website to participants who were unable to attend the briefing(s).

The participants appreciated how the convenor facilitated group decisions on logistical arrangements. “...and I liked the way it [the briefing] seemed to be run on reasonably democratic lines, that John [convenor] asked before he made any real decision about time or where we’d stay or what we [would] do.”

During field trips, on the whole participants were again satisfied with how the convenor communicated logistics, “...and he [convenor] was always pretty organised about where you were and a lot of safety issues were handled and I felt safe being there...” There were two participants who were disappointed and consequently relayed to me several recommendations for how they thought the communications could be improved. They wanted the convenor to return their phone messages and emails. They wanted more notice regarding bus departure times, more information on accommodation options and communication daily about the itinerary whilst in the field. “I think it would be really helpful if there was a notice board up that said today there is this and this and this so you can plan it...you’re not depending on someone to tell you.”

When the convenor had the role of exhibition curator all participants, apart from two, commented along the lines that they were happy with his curatorial process. One participant described the convenor as “*democratic whilst still providing leadership*”. A St George Field Study participant observed that, “*He [convenor] was really obliging and helpful and just tried to make everything run smoothly and the exhibition looked great. Exhibitions that we put on with John tend to be great.*” Two participants who expressed great disappointment and frustration to me said they wanted exhibition guidelines such as an allotted exhibition space for each artist, and clarity on who has the final curatorial role. “*I don’t think there was any clarity about the criteria for who was going to exhibit...I had no clarity of where the exhibition was going to be...No response to my emails [from convenor].*” One participant acknowledged that holding exhibitions in non-traditional spaces could make it

difficult for the convenor to know all the details, but would have liked a phone call to at least acknowledge that fact.

The Benalla Art Gallery curated the exhibition for the Benalla Field Study program and the participants experienced different communication problems. Participants liked the opportunity to have their work exhibited in a professional gallery (good for the CV), however about half of the participants expressed deep upset with how their artworks were hung. One artist said, *“I do sympathise with those people...yes, because you go in [the gallery]. You see these big works at the beginning. Then gradually sort of filters down to a back end there where they're all squashed together.”* In the lead up to the exhibition, the gallery curator had provided guidance on artwork size restrictions to each artist, but some participants told me that they had submitted more artwork because they had thought that the curator would cull. The gallery curator chose to hang all the submitted artworks resulting in some work being hung *“very tightly”* in a back corner of the gallery. One participant described the experience as, *“It was just a kick in the guts for the artists.”*

The convenor was sick during the latter part of the Benalla Field Study program and was not able to oversee the communication between the gallery and the participants. The convenor told me he had said to the gallery curator something along the lines of, *“You’re in charge. You make the aesthetic judgements. You cull as you see fit.”*

A participant, who is a very experienced professional artist, empathised with the Benalla Art Gallery curator’s decisions, saying that she had no choice but to hang all the work. She said there were a number of problems. The curator *“wasn’t part of the project”*, *“because of the tight schedule”* and *“People didn’t give lots and lots of stuff [artwork to be hung]. It was just a lot of people.”* Field Study shows are difficult to hang, according to this participant, because there is an enormous amount of variety. The curator *“wouldn’t have even had a catalogue to look at.”*

See the problem is, when you're doing a professional show, generally the curator has...considerable engagement with the selection of work...It goes on for months. So by the time it [the exhibition] happens you have a very clear idea of what's going in it.

The participant thought the curator could not cull the artwork because *“she wasn’t responsible for the show in any way until it arrived...legally, professionally she couldn’t do anything. If she did that could impact on her seriously because she would not be protected within the institution. So it’s complex”*. If she had culled the artwork, people could have been able to challenge her decisions, *“People would have then been justified in going directly to her and saying, how dare you do this?”* The participant concludes, *“So in other words those people who are really angry about that, they have no idea what the issues were.”*

Comments about the participants’ experiences with the Benalla exhibition suggest that when exhibitions are held in and curated by a professional gallery, the curator needs to be involved in the Field Study program from the start of the program. For the exhibition bump in, a participant suggested based on her experience *“The way that this type of thing frequently would be done would be a group of people would...do it co-operatively.”* In addition, good communication needs to be maintained between the convenor, the gallery curator and the participants, *“...you need to be very clear about the way you manage...Have to be very, very tight with the selection [of artwork].”*

When the exhibition is to be held in a non-traditional space the convenor needs to communicate to participants: who will be the curator (the convenor or a group effort); the ‘gallery’ attributes (for example the floor plan); and the guidelines on number and size of artworks.

5.7.7 Participants willingness to attend future programs

Nearly all the participants said they would or plan to attend future Field Study programs depending on their other commitments, the proposed location and whether the Field Study related to their art practice.

Just under a half of participants said they would be willing to return to a Field Study location and continue some sort of art practice and interaction with the communities met. The incentives needed for participants to return are given in Table 5.8. Nearly a

quarter of participants said they were not interested in returning to the same Field Study location.

Table 5.8 Incentives needed for participants to return to a field location, from most common to least

Incentives needed
None, as the participant would do a personal trip back and maybe follow up with contacts already made
If another Field Studies program was run in that area
If the participant was invited to run an art workshop
If funding for travel and accommodation, i.e. an artist residency, was provided
If a studio space was provided
If another exhibition was held in the Field Study location

5.7.8 Operating a Field Study program within a tertiary art institution

When I asked the participants, “Was the support from your workshop³¹⁷ staff adequate?” The responses I received varied. Undergraduate participants expressed less support compared to the postgraduate students. It wasn’t until a postgraduate student spoke to me about her conversations with “...a lot of...” undergraduates that I began to form a more complete picture of why the undergraduates felt less supported and perhaps more hesitant in attending the program. The issues raised highlight some of the challenges involved in operating a Field Study program within a tertiary art institution.

Despite the in-principle support from the School of Art, lecturers are concerned when undergraduates miss core study classes.

...she [workshop supervisor] really supports the Environment Studio, she thinks it is a really good thing to do. She is just a bit worried that I would lose three weeks out of my last semester but she says, if I promise to do work that was related to my honours project while I was there, which I could do if I’m doing landscape, then that would be all right.

³¹⁷ The ANU School of Art has workshops in which the major disciplines are taught.

Undergraduate participants experienced better support from their workshop supervisors program when the program was held during university break. “Yes, *they're supportive, especially as it's in the holidays...if it wasn't during the holidays it would be three weeks out of our painting.*” One undergraduate participant found that enrolling in the Field Study program complementary study held during semester break “...*a bit of a plus...*” because it freed up time during the semester week and allowed her to complete more units in the same amount of time. Conversely, an undergraduate participant who enrolled in a complementary study held during school term struggled to achieve her workload.

...I enrolled in the Field Studies as a comp and I thought I'd have heaps of time. But you're basically gone for three weeks of the semester. I had a lot of art theory units and I was doing another comp as well. I found that I actually didn't have any time to do much work on this class.

One participant enrolled in the complementary study told me, “...*there is this perception [amongst undergraduates] that you're left pretty much to yourself and then you have to produce an awful lot of work...*” This wasn't her experience, but in talking to another complementary study participant I could understand why this perception existed. The participant told me of her experience, “...*we [the convenor and her] didn't really talk about my work much. I probably talked to him once or twice about it briefly...I'm not sure how much you are supposed to meet with your supervisor*”. The participant “...*wasn't sure what to expect...*” and told me, “*it was quite a self-directed project and I don't know if John [convenor] could have really helped me that much anyway because it was drawing...*” The relevant Head of Workshop with technical expertise in drawing saw the participant's artwork for the first time during her assessment. As outlined in section 3.5.1 (page 40) the convenor's role with supervising complementary course students is to teach field-based research skills. Comments such as these indicate that undergraduate students need more guidance and would benefit from joint supervision from the convenor and workshop staff member.

I observed that the majority of artworks produced for the exhibitions were landscape based with very few figurative works. There appears to be an assumption from participants (and potentially workshop supervisors) that work produced on a Field

Study should be landscape based, which conflicted with the type of artwork expected/preferred by their Major Workshop supervisors. I recall the convenor encouraging portrait photographers to attend the Field Study program, so I don't believe he fed the landscape myth. The comments made by a postgraduate student were insightful.

What I was very surprised at was talking to other participants [undergraduates] whose work was not necessarily landscape based and...whose teachers didn't seem to acknowledge that their Field Study work was in any way compatible with the other [assessment]...work. So they had double the load [produced separate work for the Field Study exhibition and assessment], whereas for me the Field Studies slotted very nicely into my whole thing, so I could actually use that. I spoke to a lot of people whose teachers actually felt that their work from Field Studies wasn't relevant.

Similarly an alumna spoke of her experience as an undergraduate, which confirmed the postgraduate participant's story.

When I was a student at the Art School I tried all sorts of things like figurative stuff and abstract stuff and I don't think landscape was not something that, well I wouldn't say it's discouraged, but it's not something they focus on in the painting workshop, I think they're pushing more in the direction of abstraction...I just think that landscape is not an in-thing... I think landscape is not thought of as a real contemporary subject even though Australia has produced many wonderful landscape painters.

With regard to attending a Field Study program, the comments made by postgraduate students suggest that they consistently experienced positive support from their workshop supervisors.

In fact, she [supervisor] maybe suggested it, right at the very beginning. I'm an abstract painter, but based in the landscape, so she probably thought it was a good idea to do it. Some of the painters that have gone through have done it [Field Studies] especially with that environmental [theme] and picked up some good ideas from going on the trips, so she probably thought I was one of those painters.

Another postgraduate participant's experience with her supervisor was similar.

Very positive...She [participant's supervisor] has a strong history in field-based research. She has a tremendous belief in the importance of it and the

significance with respect to informing the practice...she just said you should put your name down for this...

5.8 Conclusion

The Field Study program was evaluated from the perspectives of the participating artist. In this chapter I presented my results with regard to participant attendance, the interactions that took place, the procedural elements that helped participants to develop a sense of place, the professional skills that the participants either developed or enhanced, and the participants' feedback on how the program was managed and could be improved. Four emergent themes became evident:

1. Artists were inspired by their interactions with the community (in particular), the field location landscape and each other;
2. The Field Study program facilitated a sense of place for the artist;
3. The Field Study program made the environment salient. Artist participation in the program strengthened their awareness of environmental issues;
4. The participants developed professional skills that included: field-based research; exhibiting; working with the communications media; group learning; and increased confidence in expressing ideas about the environment.

The relationship between the four emergent themes can be summarised as follows. An art and environment program that encourages artist interaction with the community, landscape and other artists leads to the artist being inspired to make art. A program that in addition facilitates a sense of place enables the participants to make meaningful art about place. When the program makes the environment salient, the participants increase their awareness of the environment and recognise the environment as an originator of ideas for art making. The professional skill acquired through attending the program develops the students' confidence to engage with the world as a stage for art making. The relationship between the themes is illustrated in Figure 5.16. On the left hand side is the key finding, which I have termed 'action summary', and on the right hand side is the outcome from undertaking the action. Each action adds a layer of complexity to the program procedure. The increasing complexity enriches the learning outcomes for the participant.

In the next chapter I discuss my findings in relation to their importance, the literature review, and my research questions. The implications of the findings are discussed within the context of art and environment education (tertiary level).

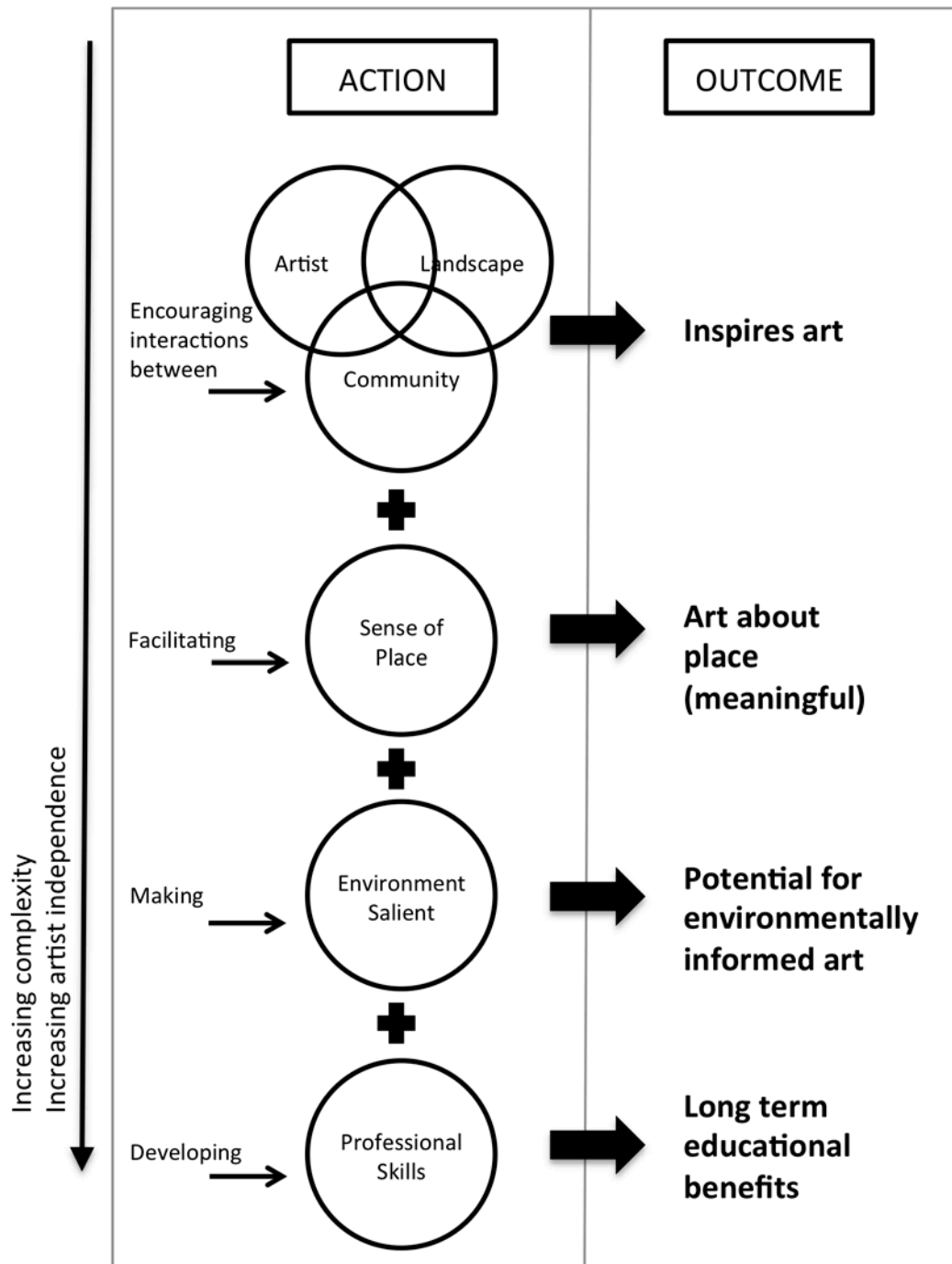


Figure 5.16 Relationship between key findings for the Field Study program evaluated

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

In the last chapter I presented my results from evaluating the experiences of artists participating in the ANU School of Art Field Study program. Four key findings emerged from my research. Interactions between the artists, with the community and the landscape inspired the participants to make art. The Field Study program facilitated a sense of place, or in other words an attachment to the field location - its people and the environs. The program was successful in making the environment salient and strengthened the participants' awareness of environmental issues. The participants developed professional skills that included increased confidence in expressing ideas about the environment. In this chapter I discuss the findings in relation to the literature review, and research questions. My research questions were as follows:

1. What was the artists' experience with place during the art and environment program?
2. How has the art and environment program influenced the artists' art practice?
3. How has the art and environment program influenced the artists' relationship with, and awareness of, the environment?
4. What elements of the art and environment art program worked and could be applied in a broader context?

6.2 Interactions

The interactions made possible through the Field Study program were key to inspiring the artwork produced for the exhibitions, and in some instances, continued to inspire the artists post the program. The participants were inspired in particular by the community they encountered within the field location, the landscape, and the other participating artists. The participants experienced these interactions either singularly or in combination. The participants felt these interactions enabled them to make meaningful art. Interactions guided artists to a sense of place, increased

environmental awareness and new professional skills. These outcomes are discussed in the following sections.

6.3 Experience of place and developing a sense of place

Participants developed attachments to the field location, which I have referred to as ‘sense of place’, through attending the Field Study program. My findings support the belief of place-based educators that place forms a good source for artwork. As shown in Figure 5.8 (page 97), it emerged that six procedural elements within the Field Study program facilitated the participants’ sense of place. These were: convenor briefings and program website; community briefings within the field location; repeat field trips to the same field location interspersed with studio time; interactions between the participants, community and landscape; travel within the location; and exhibitions. In this section I discuss each of these elements in relation to its importance and the literature. This section answers my first research question, ‘What was the artists’ experience with place during the art and environment program?’

The artists (including myself) began their relationship with the field study location (place) long before the program began. We had heard about the Murray-Darling Basin in the media and of course we lived within the Basin. But in putting up our hands to attend a field study program we asked ourselves, like Gilbert, “What does it mean to go out into the things that you’re interested in, rather than sit back and have them brought to you in a passive way?”³¹⁸ Casey writes that a grasp of one place allows you to grasp what holds, for the most part, in other places of the same region.³¹⁹ The participants’ relationship, though still passive, began to deepen when they attended the convenor briefings. The high quality documentary photographs, being enthusiastically described by the convenor, allowed them to register and anticipate the colours and forms, and social opportunities – community and collegial.

³¹⁸ Taylor and Gilbert, *Land Arts of the American West*, 378.

³¹⁹ Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena," 45.

According to the Field Study program convenor, convening a successful program involves building and managing accurate expectations.³²⁰ In the Land Arts of the American West program however, students were encouraged to be fearless and dream big, to attempt to go beyond reasonable or accurate expectations.³²¹ Steele writes that expectations are a structuring device to help with selecting what to notice and what to ignore in the world in order to avoid being overwhelmed.³²² In delivering the briefing, the convenor risks sharing too much. Steele writes that there is no simple answer to how much information and images a person should seek before entering a new place. He writes that the best strategy depends on the situation and the abilities of the person(s) involved (for discussion on this see Section 6.5, page 144). Steele suggests that the more risky the field location, the more information that should be provided up front. Like Steele, several artists recognised the importance of mystery for their creativity and deliberately switched off during the briefings. For these artists, it's a sign that they trusted the convenor and felt safe in attending the field trips.

During the journey to the field location you begin to 'unhook' from your place of home and free your mind for the place that awaits. Osborne writes about this experience from being the assistant within the Land Arts of the American West.³²³ All the preparation is done, and if done well it enables you to really focus on place without the worries and distractions of school life, home life. Artists seek this creative zone, and unlike k-12 education that focuses on the local, the tertiary level convenors deliberately selected places where the distance prevents the artists from 'ducking back' and therefore the artists are more likely to face up to the tensions that exist between each stage in the experiential learning cycle.³²⁴ Your responsibility now is to develop a relationship to a new place and make art in response to that place. But responsibility can be stressful. We aren't "*fake tourists*" as one artist put it; we are here to make meaningful art. The knowledge that one or two more field trips are to come can ease the pressure somewhat, if of course you find your inspiration. One to three participants per program didn't and discovered that that

³²⁰ Reid.

³²¹ Gilbert.

³²² Steele, *The Sense of Place*, 33.

³²³ Taylor and Gilbert, *Land Arts of the American West*.

³²⁴ Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*.

particular place wasn't for them, or their art practice doesn't work within a field-based model.

The first field trip can make you feel overwhelmed. A “*menu of options*” itinerary is organised by the convenor. Nothing is compulsory but nearly everyone attends everything: the community briefings and the catchment tours. We don't want to miss out as, who knows what will be our inspiration? The itinerary serves to extend the participants', “...perceptual field so that he/she can draw on a rich source of visual imagery as a basis for confronting experience”.³²⁵ The first trip accelerates induction, as highlighted by an artist who missed this first trip and felt at a loss. We get exhausted. The Land Arts of the American West program was designed to give students a peak experience as driven by direct engagement with the environment over extended periods of time.³²⁶ The participants learn their limitations. While travelling around place, we get disappointed by not getting to spend more time in places that interest “me”. We surprise ourselves by becoming inspired by places we wouldn't normally consider. One artist reflected that the Field Study program provides its own momentum – it almost doesn't matter where place is. Conversely, Eisenhower's research identified that people developed stronger attachment to places that were mysterious or unique to them.³²⁷ My research concurs with Eisenhower's. The places that most captivated and inspired the artists were those most distinct from Canberra and which had a significant water body that united the complex relationships present between land and people.

The community briefings, in particular hearing different perspectives on the same issue, helped us to critically consider place. My results support experiential theory: that having a direct experience leads to a rich form of learning.^{328 329} Discussions with fellow participants helped us to reflect further on what the community said and further account for what we see and hear. We look again at the landscape with almost new eyes. Things we did not notice before now present themselves upfront

³²⁵ Adams, "Art and Environment: Making Art Work/S," 14.

³²⁶ Gilbert.

³²⁷ Eisenhower, Krannich, and Blahna, "Attachments to Special Places on Public Lands: An Analysis of Activities, Reason for Attachments, and Community Connections," 432.

³²⁸ Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*.

³²⁹ David Zandvliet, "Environmental Learning," in *Ecology of School*, ed. Barry J. Fraser, Jeffrey P. Dorman, and David Zandvliet (Rotterdam NLD: SensePublishers, 2013).

and are almost obvious. We have become more aware of place. Every time we return to place, place is generous and reveals more. As described in my exegesis, this experience also resonated with my studio practice experience in documenting grassy woodlands. Casey writes that places are dynamic, allowing us to return again and again to the same place.³³⁰ We also learn that place and environmental problems are more complex than we thought. We are challenged to think critically.³³¹ Our judgements of place, made long ago before entering place, begin to shift. "*The farmer is probably more an environmentalist than me*", one artist revealed. We develop a new empathy. Graham writes, "Critical place-based pedagogies aim to build meaningful, empathic connections to natural and human communities."³³²

Artists spent a range of time in a variety of landscapes, sometimes minutes (jumping out the car to take a photograph), and sometimes days enabled by camping and making art in a "*particular spot*". Participants experienced the place passively through vehicle window, or had direct sensory experiences. Steele writes that awareness of place, which links a person to the physical setting, is stimulated by the senses, in particular sight, smell, sound and touch.³³³ Awareness through sight, Steele writes, is partly determined by what elements stand out and what remains in the background. Based on this theory, the artists' experience of the landscape becomes influenced by what the community has highlighted as important to them, and also what generates discussion within the group. One participant particularly spoke about the impact of sound on her while camping by Lake Mokoan. She surmises that if she hadn't camped at the lake, and did that midnight walk, she would not have been aware of the frogs and made an artwork that incorporated the frog calls. Like Pocock concluded in her research of tourists at the Great Barrier Reef, my findings indicate that when participants spend much of the time outdoors, such as when enabled through camping, the participants experience a diversity of haptic experiences. Pocock concludes that it's this diversity of experiences that gives the

³³⁰ Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena."

³³¹ Gruenewald, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place."

³³² Graham, "Art, Ecology and Art Education: Locating Art Education in a Critical Place-Based Pedagogy," 387.

³³³ Steele, *The Sense of Place*, 25.

visitor a strong sense of place.³³⁴ The visitor becomes informed by other human senses, informed by movement, orientation, location and time.

The interactions between participants - ensuring a collegial environment - helped the participants make sense of place. My findings reinforce Eisenhower's prior research. He demonstrated that place attachment is made stronger if your experience of place is shared with significant people: family and friends.³³⁵ From another perspective, Tuan writes that the appreciation of landscape is, "...more personal and longer lasting when it is mixed with the memory of human incidents."³³⁶ The participant-to-participant interactions happened, for the most part organically: through friendships, fireside conversations, bumping into each other at the School of Art. The participants were united by a common purpose and shared similar values about the environment.

With regard to all three interactions I have discussed (community, participant, landscape), accommodation is key for participants to develop a sense of place. To make the most of collegial benefits, participants should be required to stay together as a group. The key attributes needed are: having a natural meeting area such as the kitchen or fireplace to foster the important talk that happens around the fireplace.³³⁷ The accommodation should be located within the inspirational landscape, for example near natural features that exemplify complexity. Camping should be the preferred option because of the sensory benefits it provides. If possible, the accommodation should welcome interaction with the community.

Studio time interspersed between two or three field trips embodies experiential learning and action research principles.^{338 339} The field trips provide direct experience. The collegial environment enables the participant to reflect on and observe their experiences from different perspectives. While in the field, the participant creates concepts that integrate their observations into theories. Returning to the studio, the artist either continues or begins with active experimentation:

³³⁴ Pocock, "Reaching for the Reef: Exploring Place through Touch."

³³⁵ Eisenhower, Krannich, and Blahna, "Attachments to Special Places on Public Lands: An Analysis of Activities, Reason for Attachments, and Community Connections."

³³⁶ Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*, 95.

³³⁷ Reid.

³³⁸ Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*.

³³⁹ Zandvliet, "Environmental Learning."

making decisions and solving problems. The workshop staff can provide an important role in helping the student resolve their concept and realise their artwork. One artist learnt the importance of the studio time in coming to terms with place and commented that you have to go away from the field location to be able to absorb what you learnt and only then you are able to respond. Each field trip-studio cycle leads to further enquiry - another opportunity to observe, reflect, conceptualise, experiment and negotiate their art practice - and deepens the artists understanding of place. The Field Study program was the only program that consistently offered a repeat field trip procedure. As Casey writes, places gather experience and histories, and hold your memories, when you return to a place, it releases these memories.³⁴⁰ For the second and third field trip, the convenor does not arrange a full itinerary; the student learns through experience, with various levels of success, how to conduct their own field research. This point is expanded upon in the professional development section (Section 6.5, page 144).

Returning to place and holding an exhibition is unique to the Field Study program. I was intrigued by the experience of the participants and the convenor with the community at the St George exhibition, as relayed to me after the event (I did not attend this exhibition). The convenor and a participant felt that the exhibition enabled the artists to engage with the community as opposed to interact. The convenor concluded that if community engagement was an objective then Field Study programs should continue beyond the exhibition.³⁴¹ Perhaps it was through the act of sharing, where the participant shared their artwork, that the community felt that they could share more with 'them'. Participants who attended the St George and Tumut exhibitions developed deeper relationships with the community and a deeper sense of place followed. Vanclay writes about storytelling in relation to sense of place, which could apply to art exhibitions as artists also proffer narratives. Story telling requires an audience. As Vanclay writes, the audience provides feedback, which can validate and affirm the experience of place. Art exhibitions provide a place for the audience to provide feedback.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena."

³⁴¹ Reid et al., *Engaging Visions: Engaging Artists with the Community About the Environment*.

³⁴² Vanclay, "Place Matters."

6.4 Relationship with and awareness of environment

The Field Study program was successful in bringing the environment to the forefront of the participants mind. The participants, overwhelmingly, expressed that they became more aware of the environmental issues through attending the program. This is supported by my finding that just over a half of all artwork exhibited was inspired by the subject matter ‘environment’, with the second biggest category being nature and/or field location. In my results chapter I identified five factors that when combined helped make the environment salient for the participating artists (see Figure 5.11, page 97): artists with a prior interest in the environment; a program/research project with an environmental focus; the field study location with high profile environmental issues; artists experiencing place first-hand; reflecting on environmental issues through the making of art; and community briefings about the environment. In this section I discuss each of these influencing factors in relation to their importance and the literature. This section answers my third research question, ‘How has the art and environment program influenced the artists’ relationship with and awareness of the environment?’

On the whole, all the participants (apart from two) were aware of environmental issues, and were receptive to the environmental movement, before attending the Field Study program. I was at first surprised to find out that 16 out of the 40 participants had qualifications or work experience within the environment management profession, and that the majority of artists had made art where the environment (issues) or nature was the subject. On reflection though this finding perhaps wasn’t that surprising. The participants were perhaps exploring an art practice that melded concerns about the environment, as I have further explored in my studio practice and exegesis. After reading the literature on place-based education and finding out that the age between 4-15 is when a person’s attachment to environment has most opportunity to develop, I began to wonder about the history of the people I interviewed.³⁴³ Did they, like me, grow up with plenty of adventure in the bush? I cannot answer this question from my research findings, but think it

³⁴³ Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*.

would make an interesting research question and would assist with making a stronger case for place-based curriculum in K-12 education.

The Field Studies program having an overt environmental focus, which was nested within a broader research project with an environmental focus (see EV objectives outlined in Section 3.5.2, page 42), re-enforced the pro-environment narrative. A couple of participants mentioned to me that they understood the issues in the Murray-Darling basin to be very serious and that the artists attending the programs being run during EV Project had an imperative to engage in these issues. Such a finding indicates that the convenor successfully communicated to the participants that the program had a pro-environment narrative. I also observed the convenor persuading students to attend who may have been nervous about making environment the subject of their art. The convenor reassured students that they could interpret the environment broadly and more generally respond to place, suggesting they come along on the first trip to test their interest. I think this relaxed approach was good in that it created a space for the students to try something new.

My results indicate that first-hand (direct sensory) experience of the environment helped the participant to become more environmentally aware. My findings support Graham's research findings. Through place-base education the student is connected to real-world experiences, and from this they can construct meaningful connections between the issues.³⁴⁴ Repeat field trips interspersed with studio time also led to a richer form of experiential learning. Adams observed similar findings and writes that the studio work permits time to reflect on the experience and rework it to make sense of it and come to a deeper understanding, different to that afforded by first impressions.³⁴⁵ The process of making art, Adams writes,

...enables the individual [artist] to resolve and realise feelings and ideas about people and places, to form a personal viewpoint and take an individual stance on environmental issues. Art is used as a means to synthesize what has been learnt.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Graham, "Art, Ecology and Art Education: Locating Art Education in a Critical Place-Based Pedagogy."

³⁴⁵ Adams, "Art and Environment: Making Art Work/S," 17.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 13.

Adams argues that making artworks derived from direct sensory experience of the environment can bring about a mass shift, for the K-12 student, towards valuing nature.³⁴⁷ On the most part, the participants attending the Field Study program already valued nature. One participant expressed (unprompted) a new desire and confidence to voice her opinion on environmental issues through her art practice. Another participant expressed worry about offending the community. The Art and Environment convenor at Colorado State University mentions that several of her students changed their behaviour towards environmental activism after completing her course. The Field Study program firmly sits within place-based education as described by Woodhouse and Knapp³⁴⁸ (see section 3.3.2, page 24), and from this perspective, the participants are not taught to become transformative intellectuals as would happen within a critical pedagogy of place.³⁴⁹

My findings indicate that the Field Study program does however incorporate some characteristics of a critical pedagogy of place. The participants learn to negotiate among multiple perspectives or ideas about environmental problems presented to them by the community. But the program could encourage more critical thinking during group critiques when the participants share their artwork concepts. During these meetings the participants could be challenged to explore with the other participants how they arrived at their judgements, and be asked to explain and justify their opinions to the group.³⁵⁰ Participants who had attended Field Study programs held prior to the EV Project spoke about the convenor facilitating critical thinking amongst the group, which typically occurred at night around the fireplace. In contrast, the group critiques I observed were more about polite encouragement and sharing of information: the atmosphere was reminiscent of an evening art class. Similarly the Benalla Art Gallery director in his feedback on the Benalla exhibition said the artists were too polite and didn't engage strongly enough in the issues. One explanation could be the dominant alumni in attendance during the EV Project who

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Woodhouse and Knapp, "Place-Based Curriculum and Instruction: Outdoor and Environmental Education Approaches."

³⁴⁹ Gruenewald, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place."

³⁵⁰ Adams, "Art and Environment: Making Art Work/S," 17.

were grateful to be allowed to attend the program, and in the convenor's words were, "unwilling to rock the boat."³⁵¹

6.5 Developing professional skills

Participants developed several professional skills while attending the Field Study program, which were not otherwise acknowledged by the artists in their tertiary education. Participants reported feeling strongly affected by the Field Study program(s), leading to fundamental impacts on their art practice, for both the subject matter (inspiring their artwork) and the method in which they conceptualised their artwork. In my results chapter I identified five professional skills that the participants developed or enhanced through attending the Field Study program(s) (see Figure 5.15, page 119): field-based research; enhanced environmental awareness; exhibiting; working with the communications media; and collegial learning. In this section I discuss these and other developments informed through reading the literature and in conversation with convenors. This section answers my second research question, 'How has the art and environment program influenced the artists' art practice?

Participants reported feeling strongly affected by the Field Study program: they felt inspired by the subject matter and enjoyed the field-based approach. The first field trip is about seeing and hearing – having what you are looking at explained by local experts. For visual artists because they are visual learners, the Field Study program is the perfect vehicle for orientation to a place.³⁵² As one participant said during an interview, field-based research is how she wants to work, "*...mostly visual research and talking to people rather than reading heaps.*" The convenor observed students on the point of failing at university because of the writing assignments, but who flourished while attending the place-based programs.³⁵³

To varying degrees, participants learnt how to undertake field-based research and bring that learning into their studio practice. The learning was made possible by the

³⁵¹ Reid.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

convenor following an action research model. The itineraries for the second and third field were left mostly blank. Unscheduled time within the itinerary allows the mental space for fantasy, which is important for the artist in developing a short-term response to a setting, "...the imaginings, daydreams, and scenarios that occur in our heads but using our immediate surroundings as the stimulus."³⁵⁴ The convenor as catalyst assists the participants in the program, helps them define their own problems, to monitor and support their activity as they work towards an effective resolution.³⁵⁵ Some participants new to the Field Study program were disappointed that a full itinerary wasn't organised for all trips – that was their expectation. It wasn't until they had finished attending all the field trips that they "*got it.*" A seminar beforehand on expectations and basics on field-based learning may benefit students, however, as demonstrated in my research findings, the best learning was achieved through repeat experience opportunities.

Even when a program is based on experiential learning some leadership is needed by the convenor, in particular when young and inexperienced participants attend, to 'round people up', guide them.³⁵⁶ Several alumni participants, who had attended multiple programs during their studies, had adopted field-based research as their modus operandi after leaving university. Stringer writes that, in action research, the development of the participants' professional skills, such as field-based learning, could be considered more important than the actual work produced.³⁵⁷ My conversation with the Land Arts of the American West convenor suggests that he had the same philosophy to that of Stringer. Gilbert would assess the students on the totality of the field program experience, and not just the artwork produced.³⁵⁸ Perhaps art and environment courses at the tertiary level should have this goal: to focus on equipping the student for their post-university art practice, and leave for the most part the teaching of art itself to the discipline specific lecturers.

My research supports observations that the convenor needs to participate in the program as an artist. This is important for group sharing to take place, and provides

³⁵⁴ Steele, *The Sense of Place*, 132.

³⁵⁵ Stringer, *Action Research*, 20.

³⁵⁶ Reid.

³⁵⁷ Stringer, *Action Research*.

³⁵⁸ Gilbert.

the participant with a mentor on field-based art practice. The running of art and environment courses where the convenor is not a participant, but rather responsible for assessing the students' work, including undertaking one-on-one critiques during the field trip(s), would most likely have adverse learning outcomes consequences for the student in comparison to the Field Study program procedure. During a field trip the student would be required to simultaneously have sensory experience of place, reflect on their experience and conceptualise their artwork in conversation with the convenor: which effectively collapses the experiential learning cycle. In addition, one-on-one critiques in place of group critiques would forgo the collegial benefits of the group sharing, which is greatly enriched by the convenor also sharing his or her artwork.

Meeting with and listening to the community was essential to the participants learning about place. Three ways in which the participants' relationship with the community could be enhanced were identified. A key interest of many participants in attending Field Studies is Indigenous Australian culture. However questions directed to Aboriginal people about the location of sacred sites during one program suggests that participants need to be carefully managed or should undertake cultural sensitivity training. Participants should be encouraged to share their previous artworks and works-in-progress when in conversation with the community, not just within the showcase and final exhibition. Visual art is a powerful communication aid and can hasten the understanding between artist and community. In addition, through the sharing of their artwork in conversations, the artist can also share their knowledge about art with the community. To continue the ethic of sharing, participants should also consider inviting the community (members of) to their studio. Participant run art workshops were mooted by an EV Project colleague. However, the priority for the participants was to make art for their studies, and time was not allowed in the curriculum for the running of workshops. Running an art workshop was not part of the participants' assessment or learning requirement. Also, the undergraduate participants in particular were either not interested or did not have teaching skills. The Field Study program would need to alter the procedure and student responsibilities should the program take on running art workshops in the communities visited.

The participants developed professional skills through their experience of exhibiting and interacting with the communications media. Exhibitions (in all their facets: artist run space, public gallery, private gallery) and media interaction should continue to be included in the procedure. I was surprised to learn from the undergraduate students that exhibiting is not taught in core studies, when exhibiting is essential to being an artist. Similarly, participants often had their first experience with the media during the Field Study program. Exhibiting and media experience developed the participants' confidence. Exhibiting in the field location, in addition or instead of the School of Art is important as it expands the artist experience of audience, enabling feedback from a different audience as well as feedback on their interpretation of place. Students were reluctant to interact with the media, but after having done so were glad. The convenor should continue to encourage (persuade) students to move outside their comfort levels, and in doing so help build their professional skills.

The professional development skills that collegial learning provides have been discussed in relation to sense of place and environmental awareness. In summary, participating with a group developed the artist in several ways: helping them to understand place including environmental issues; furthering artwork conceptualisation and realisation; feeling safe in a new place because they are within a group; and developing networks of support, which often continued beyond the program. Because of the collegial and collaborative nature of action research there is a primary interest or need in establishing and maintaining positive working relationships.³⁵⁹ The convenor found that it took only one person to impact on the collegial environment for all.³⁶⁰ Convenors work hard in promoting feelings of equality for all people involved, maintaining harmony, avoiding conflicts where possible, resolving conflicts that arise, accepting people as they are, encouraging personal and cooperative relationships, and being sensitive to people's feelings. Responsibility also lies with the participants to embrace these principles.³⁶¹ In the Land Arts of the American West course, students and convenor share the responsibilities of camp - the aim is to build trust, community and culture. The convenor for Land Arts of the American West course found that if there is a quorum

³⁵⁹ Stringer, *Action Research*.

³⁶⁰ Reid.

³⁶¹ Stringer, *Action Research*.

of participants working well together, then the group overcome disruptions caused by a few dissidents.³⁶² To safeguard against dissidents attending the program, which can drain the convenor's energy away from all the other students, the convenor needs to have complete control over deciding who can attend.

6.6 Limitations to research

In this dissertation I set out to communicate the experience of the participants' of the Field Study program (including my own), as well as convey the wisdom of experienced convenors. An irony exists: the best way to learn about place-based education is to experience it. These research findings provide a guide or tool for artists who have experienced place-based education, and want to build on theirs and others experiences. Artists who haven't participated in a place-based art and environment course should do so first before applying my research findings.

One participant during an interview asked me what I meant by environment, which I explained as in Section 2.2 Definitions (page 5). This participant was an exchange student and I discovered through our discussion that she used the word in a different context to me. I then wondered how sure I could be about the other participants' meaning for environment. In hindsight, I should have explored in more depth during the interviews participants' meanings for environment and nature. To help validate the participants' meanings, I read through the artist statements in the catalogues, and re-read through the interview transcripts with a focus on the context surrounding the discussion when the word 'environment' was used by both the interviewee and myself. The term 'sense of place' emerged from the data during an interview with a Tumut Field Study program participant. With more experience in the grounded theory technique of 'theoretical sampling', I would have explicitly explored, in the remaining interviews, the participants' meanings around place and what 'sense of place' means to them. My research findings indicate environmental awareness, but do not explore directly transformative learning with regard to changes in attitudes or behaviour towards the environment. Participants wanted to discuss during the interviews meanings around community engagement, as made salient through conducting the research within the auspices of the EV Project and repeat discussions

³⁶² Gilbert.

led by one of the EV Project researchers. Given my limited resources and the dissertation word limit, my research findings with regard to the artist and their perceived role with the community are not fully presented in this dissertation.

As highlighted in Section 5.7.8 (page 129) my research findings indicated that the level of support provided by School of Art workshop staff towards students in attending the Field Study program was varied. Interviews with heads of workshop would have provided another perspective to this finding. By the time I had realised this opportunity, I had already expended my limited resources with interviewing the participants. In hindsight, a potential solution would have been to interview fewer participants, in order to free up resources for interviewing workshop staff. The interviewing of workshop staff could form part of future studies into these programs.

In my literature review I began my discussion on sense of place by considering the definition presented by Steele (see Figure 3.1). The theme ‘sense of place’ as it emerged from my data focuses on the physical setting: the participant’s physical interaction with the landscape, and the social interactions with other participants and the community. Steele also puts equal emphasis on the person’s psychological factors: what the person brings to the setting. My research does not, and cannot (as it is outside my expertise) explore in depth the psychological factors that a person brings to a setting / or place.

The conclusion chapter follows.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of my dissertation research was to explore art and environment education at the tertiary level to better understand the artists' experience. The research findings are addressed in three stages in this chapter. In the first part, the conceptual background and methods applied in this dissertation are summarised along with the key findings. In the second section the implications of my results are discussed within the context of tertiary level art and environment education. In the final section of the dissertation the broader implications for the findings with regard to the environmental movement are considered along with recommendations for further research.

This dissertation comprises 40% of my PhD thesis. The other two elements are the studio practice and exegesis (60%). My participation in the ANU Field Study program was important to developing my "Grassy Woodlands" photography series, which forms the studio practice component of my PhD.

7.2 Summary of approach and findings

In this dissertation I have explored the art and environment phenomenon by focusing on art and environment education at the tertiary level from the artists' perspective. Coming from a natural resource science background and now working as an artist, I was initially drawn to this research area because I wanted to explore the role of the artist in the environmental movement. The opportunity to pursue the research formally arose with the commencement of the Engaging Visions Research Project (EV Project) in which a model procedure for visual artists to creatively engage with Murray-Darling Basin communities and assist with environmental concerns was sought. In this dissertation I evaluate the experiences of the participating artists.

The background and context to the dissertation was outlined in Chapter 2. The world is undergoing an environmental crisis. Science has communicated that this is happening, but there is failure to act accordingly. Artists are needed in the

communication of complex environmental problems because they communicate values, engage the emotions (emotions drive decision making), help people to make sense of complex and abstract concepts, and contribute to a pro-environment narrative. Ecological art has an important role in the environmental movement. Art and environment education has the potential to provide artists with the necessary skills to develop an aesthetic visual approach to environmental issues.

In Chapter 3, the art and environment courses that met the following criteria were outlined: tertiary level; fine art; focus on place, with an environmental theme; and artwork informed by field research, which involved briefings from the local community. The theories underpinning these courses were reviewed: place-based education; critical pedagogy of place; action research; and sense of place. Much of the literature focuses on K-12 and very little at the tertiary level. Tertiary level convenor anecdotes and course surveys provide some insights, but systematic research was needed to explore the art and environment phenomenon formally.

The methods were outlined in Chapter 4. In order to address the knowledge gap and explore art and environment courses (as defined above), a qualitative research design was chosen based on: a multiple-case study strategy to frame my research; and grounded theory to guide data collection and analysis. Multiple methods were used for collecting data comprising interviews with participants (primary method), participant observation, informal conversations, artworks, exhibition catalogues and memo notes. The ANU School of Art Field Study program, operating within the EV Project, was the overarching case study. I explored, recorded, analysed and evaluated the experiences of the participants across four programs. Not enough was known about the phenomenon to develop hypotheses, and therefore my research was guided by the following questions:

1. What was the artists' experience with place during the art and environment program?
2. How has the art and environment program influenced the artists' art practice?
3. How has the art and environment program influenced the artists' relationship with and awareness of the environment?

4. What elements of the art and environment art program worked and could be applied in a broader context?

In Chapter 5 the results were presented with regard to participant attendance, the interactions that took place, the procedural elements that helped participants to develop a sense of place, the professional skills that the participants either developed or enhanced, and the participants' feedback on how the program was managed and could be improved. The findings were synthesised into four emergent themes: the importance of interactions; facilitating a sense of place; developing professional skills; and making the environment salient. Four key findings emerged from my research. Interactions between the artists, with the community and the landscape inspired the participants to make art. The Field Study program facilitated a sense of place, or in other words an attachment to the field location - its people and the environs. The program was successful in making the environment salient and strengthened the participants' awareness of environmental issues. The participants developed professional skills that included increased confidence in expressing ideas about the environment. After completing my data analysis I returned to my literature review, refining my searches based on the themes that emerged from my data.

In Chapter 6 the findings were discussed in relation to the theory and research questions. The Field Study program successfully delivered a place-based art curriculum. The participants increased their awareness of the environment and developed professional skills in field-based research, exhibiting, working with the media, and collegial learning.

The components of the Field Study program procedure that should be embedded to enable the students to develop a sense of place are: first-hand (sensory) experience of place; participating within a group of artists from the art institution; studio time between repeat field trips; and holding an exhibition of ensuing artworks within the field location. First-hand experience of place, including meeting with and being briefed by the community on environmental issues from a range of perspectives resulted in the participants developing attachment to place (empathy), making nature and environment the subject of their art, the artist realising the complexity of environmental issues, and for some participants their judgements about place

(people, environmental solutions) began to shift. Camping should be the preferred option as it enhances sensory experience. Unscheduled time within the itinerary allows the mental space for fantasy, which is important for the artist in developing a short-term response to a setting. The studio time, specifically having time away from place between the repeat field trips, is essential for the student to reflect on what they have experienced, conceptualise their artwork, experiment and negotiate their art practice. The exhibition within the field location validates and affirms the participants' experience of place and opens opportunity for the participant to engage with the community. These outcomes affirm the known benefits of place-placed education cited in the literature for k-12 students. Furthermore for the first time, these outcomes are shown to apply to learning outcomes from tertiary level place-based art and environment courses.

The Field Study program was successful in bringing the environment to the forefront of the participants mind. The participants, overwhelmingly, expressed that they had become more aware of the environment (including ecological science and environmental problems) through attending the program. Art was used as a means to synthesize what had been experienced (felt) and learnt. Over half the artwork exhibited was inspired by the subject matter 'environment'. The second biggest inspiration was 'nature'. The Field Study program should embed direct sensory experience of place and choosing field locations that are within the region in which the students live. Before entering the field location, the participants benefited from being already passively aware of the regional issues through the media in particular and living within the region. Repeat field trips enabled the student to experience a place over time, and see seasonal changes and effects of environmental decisions, all of which lead to richer learning about the environment. A program with an overt environmental theme (which was reinforced by the Engaging Visions Research Project having an environmental focus) excited some participants, whilst made others nervous. The convenor encouraged the nervous students to attend through suggesting they focus on 'place' rather than 'environment'. The achieved increase in environmental awareness across participants, regardless of their focusing on place or environment, confirms that 'place' is powerful for tertiary students to learn about the environment.

The findings indicate that the Field Study program sits firmly within place-based education. The Field Study program model evaluated was successful in teaching the participants skills in: field-based research; exhibiting; communications media interaction; and collegial interaction. The components of the program which enabled this and which should continue to be bedded into the procedure are outlined here. The program should continue to follow action research principles, in particular where the convenor also participates in the program as an artist. The program (and its evolutionary off shoots) should continue to embed experiential learning principles where the field trips enable the student to solely focus on sensory experience of place, with no pressure to begin reflection on their experience and conceptualise the artwork while in the field. Participating with a group developed the artist in several ways: helping them to understand place including environmental issues; furthering artwork conceptualisation and realisation; feeling safe in a new place because they are within a group; and developing networks of support, which often continued beyond the program. Students learnt field-based research skills through attending repeat field trips (which had a combination of structured and unstructured itineraries) and repeat attendance of program. The goal of art and environment courses at the tertiary level should be to focus on equipping the student for their post-university art practice, and perhaps leave for the most part the teaching of art itself to art discipline specific lecturers.

7.3 Implications for art and environment education

7.3.1 Implications for Field Study program

In this and the next section I continue to answer my fourth research question, ‘What elements of the art and environment art program worked and could be applied in a broader context?’ Recommended are ways in which the Field Study program could be enhanced and extended from the perspective of the artist developing stronger professional skills relevant to the environmental movement.

Based on my research findings, the pedagogic features outlined in Section 3.5.1 (page 40) and the procedure steps outlined in Table 3.3 (page 45) are about right. The program offers a curriculum encompassing: primary source experience; time for and access to complex, real-world experiences; and provision to undertake collegial,

field-based, action research. The findings indicate that the procedure could be enhanced through making the following adjustments within the existing procedure:

- Field locations with an obvious town centre and a population of less than <10,000 people should be selected. The participants felt the response from the St George community to the exhibition was very positive. St George has a population of approximately 2500 people (2006 census). Riverland Field Study Program town centre, Renmark, lacked an obvious centre and community interaction proved challenging.
- Accommodation whilst in the field that allows the participants to interact with each other, the community and the landscape should be prioritised. The key attributes recommended are: natural meeting area, i.e. kitchen, fire place; within the inspired landscape, preferably camping to the increase sensory experience; and if possible, within walking distance to members of the community, for example staying on a farm or research station.
- The number of alumni participants should be limited to ensure that the program is focused on the undergraduate and postgraduates' education. Alumni attendance should be allowed through invitation only (as a visiting artist), and in which their role is both participant and mentor.
- To encourage the sharing of knowledge on art and environment education, the program should continue to encourage exchanges for students and staff with other universities.³⁶³
- The convenor should consider briefing students new to the program the basics of field-based research prior to field trip two. The briefing should include clear communication on the role of the convenor and the role of the participant in order to assist with managing student expectations (i.e. to avoid the student expecting the convenor to organise a complete itinerary for field trips two and three).
- The first field trip should be made compulsory to speed up student induction to place.

³⁶³ Exchanges have already taken place between the ANU Field Study Program and the programs: Land Arts of the American West (New Mexico), and Landmarks of Art (California).

- To maximise collegial benefits all participants should be required to stay at the same accommodation during the field trips.
- To allow enough time for the participants' studio practice, the convenor should aim to allow two to six weeks between each field trip, and a longer gap (12-weeks was preferred) between the last field trip and the exhibition.
- The convenor, field coordinator and/or designated mentors should convene group critiques, both informally (in the field around the camp fire at night) and formally (within the art institution). The critique sessions should introduce and encourage critical thinking.
- The convenor (who is appropriately experienced in cultural sensitivity) should be present during community briefings given by Aboriginal people.
- Participants should be encouraged to have a genuine dialogue about art (a real exchange of information) with the community. Participant's showing the community examples of their artworks and explaining the making process during one-on-one conversations encourages the sharing of knowledge. Similarly, wherever feasible participants could invite community members to their studio.

The EV Project objective of configuring a model procedure for visual artists to creatively *engage* with MDB communities at times dominated discussions between EV Project colleagues and fellow students. In discussing how the Field Study program could be modified to encourage artist engagement with the community, the convenor (and seconded by a student) proposed that the exhibition in the field location form the halfway point for the program. The first six months would focus on interactions with the community (including consulting), and after the exhibition, the program could focus on community engagement.³⁶⁴ The solution proffered was based on experiences at the St George exhibition where the convenor and participants felt it was only during the exhibition that opportunities to engage with the community arose. Alternatively, a program that returned to the same community such is done in other art and environment courses may make possible engagement within a 6-month program. A quid pro quo would need to be negotiated with the community to sustain the relationship. The mechanisms for engagement could take

³⁶⁴ For a definition of community interaction and engagement see Section 3.5.4, page 37.

many forms. Smith presents thematic patterns for place-based learning that can be adapted to different settings, and potentially relevant to art and environment education.³⁶⁵

1. The students could be required to undertake real-world problem solving by community identified issues;
2. Internships and entrepreneurial opportunities; and
3. Induction of students into community decision-making processes, which helps students to learn to do things that contribute to the well-being of others.

7.3.2 Implications beyond Field Study program current curriculum

Other ways of extending the Field Study program include: a curriculum based on the theory of critical arts pedagogy of place; opening the participation to disciplines from across the university; and the students being required to work in collaboration on a project. One participant suggested that the artists' work within a multi-disciplinary project team with the community (similar to that proposed by Smith above), for example designing and building an architectural structure that the community needs. The artist would work with the town planner, architect, and community artists for example. The University of NSW ILIRI program offers a similar idea where the students work with each as a team to solve a problem (see Section 3.2 page 14, and Table 3.1 page 17). Making students from different disciplines work together to realise a solution brings new ways of thinking and insights. Solving environmental problems will need a multi-disciplinary approach. When considering complex problems, such as climate change, artists need to draw information/knowledge from: scientists (who inform us); social scientists (who measure impact); historians and archaeologists (interpret what's gone on before); and indigenous knowledge (well-tested experimental action research).³⁶⁶ A critical arts pedagogy based in place (such as the approach adopted by the Land Arts of the American West) emphasises the teaching of students to be critical thinkers: responsive to ecology, community and culture, and through transformative learning develop the skills to challenge boundaries and assumptions. The Field Study

³⁶⁵ Smith, "Place-Based Education: Learning to Be Where We Are."

³⁶⁶ Reid.

program convenor has taught critical thinking skills informally through fireside group discussions. A desired outcome for a critical art pedagogy based in place would be for students to not only increase their environmental awareness, but also to become capable of identifying and redressing injustices to the environment.

I propose that the Field Study program be extended as outlined in Table 7.1 into three courses. The first course, based on the Field Study program procedure, would teach field-based research skills. The second course would embody the theory of critical pedagogy of place. The third course would teach collaboration within a multi-disciplinary group. The collaboration could extend to a community engagement option as outlined in the three numbered points above. Each course would contribute towards building the student's professional skills for being:

- Field-based researchers;
- Environmentally aware;
- Critical thinkers, working within the nexus of environment and culture;
- Exhibitors of ecological art;
- Educators with ecological principles;
- Collaborators on environmental solutions; and
- Activists.

Table 7.1 A proposal for a multi-course program for developing place-based ecological artists

Number	Course outline
Course one	Field-based research (based on the Field Study program procedure) A place-based education model, where the objectives include teaching field-based research, and increasing the students' environmental awareness. Critical thinking skills would be introduced.
Course two	Critical art pedagogy of place

	A transformative education that enables students to critically examine the place-specific nexus between environment, nature and culture.
Course three	Collaboration project A project that requires collaboration across disciplines to solve an environmental problem.

These research findings present a model procedure for place-based education in art and environment at the tertiary level. The findings are useful to art and environment program convenors wanting to develop a better understanding of these programs. The results show what elements of a procedure are important to develop the student artists' ability to respond to place through their art practice, understand field-based research, develop greater awareness of environmental issues, and develop professional skills, all of which will assist their professional practice. The research findings offer a resource to professional artists and academics wanting to establish a tertiary level visual art and environment course that values environmental sustainability.

7.4 Broader implications and future research

In Chapter 2 (page 5) I proposed four reasons why the communicating of scientific fact alone has failed to bring about behavioural change towards the environment. With regard to communicating values, artists have (by representing nature in their art) invested nature with meaning and cultural value, and helped to communicate that nature is valuable. Through participating in a well-run place-based education program, artists emotionally engage with place, and clarify and present these sensations to an audience.³⁶⁷ The third point I make is with regard to framing environmental issues with metaphor and analogy. Art was used a means to synthesize what has been learnt about complex environmental problems. Through

³⁶⁷ The research results from the EV Project evaluation of the community's experience could assist with understanding the strength in which the participants' artworks engaged their viewer's emotions.

attending the Field Study program artists increased their environmental awareness. Further research is needed to explore the metaphors and analogies sought by the participants, and how they affect the viewer's sense of the world. The fourth point considers the need for disciplines to jointly communicate a dominant narrative. My findings indicate that the Field Study program assisted the participants with developing networks with other artists of similar values and interest in the environment, and these networks have the potential to support an artist collective that communicates a pro-environment narrative. Learning about place through interactions with people from different disciplines introduced the artist to the possibilities of making material the knowledge from other disciplines. Developing a course that brings different disciplines together could teach students to work effectively in teams dedicated to solving complex environmental problems.

Based on my research findings I offer four recommendations for future research:

1. Explore curricula at the tertiary level that embody the theory of critical art pedagogy of place, and teach collaboration in solving environmental problems. Participating in and studying courses that offer these principles would be a good place to start exploring the effectiveness of these curricula.
2. Compare the artist experience with the community experience using the Engaging Visions Research Project community data to explore perceived roles and preferred relationships between artist and community, and provide a better understanding and model procedure for how visual artists can effectively engage with communities on environmental issues. Also of interest would be a comparison between engagement and interaction in forming a sense of place for both the artist and the community visited.
3. Explore the role of the artist in developing a community's sense of place, including the artist working with others to create new myths about place that will help understand the nexus between nature and culture, and lead to living sustainably.

...in order to create new myths for white people we have to somehow engage in what the Aboriginal people have been doing because it's about land and country and with the drought and global warming, trying to understand how this land works as opposed to how Europe works...

4. Explore artist use of metaphor and analogy in communicating about the environment, and how they affect the viewer's sense, and understanding of the world.

The purpose of my research was to explore art and environment education at the tertiary level from the artists' perspective. To the best of my knowledge, research such as this had never been done before. My research findings indicate that the case study The Australian National University Field Study program was, for the most part, successful in achieving a place-based art curriculum. The research findings are useful to art and environment conveners' wanting to develop a better understanding of these programs, in particular helping them to link action to outcome and adjust their curriculum accordingly. The United Nations Agenda 21 argues that education is central to achieving environmental sustainability. The research findings assist with bridging the gap between education as we know it and education for sustainability.

8 APPENDIX A

The detailed schedule for each of the Field Study programs is provided in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Schedule for each Field Study program evaluated, broken down into the procedural elements

Procedural element	St George (Semester breaks)	Tumut (During semester)	Riverland (Semester breaks)	Benalla (During semester)
Total program duration (including survey field trip)	6 months	6 months	9 months	3.5 months
Survey field trip	26 May to 3 June 2007	11-15 February 2008	7-15 June 2008	27 June to 1 July 2009
Duration between survey and field trip 1	~3 weeks	~3.5 weeks	~3 weeks	3 weeks
Community meeting	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	21 July 2009
Field trip 1	26 June to 6 July	12-16 March	5-15 July	29 July to 2 Aug
Showcase exhibition	Not applicable	13 March (1 evening)	6 July (1 evening)	21 July (1 evening)
Studio time	8.5 weeks	2 weeks	11 weeks	2.5 weeks
Field trip 2	7-16 September	2-6 April	1-10 October	19-23 August
Studio time	8 weeks	4.5 weeks	20.5 weeks	2.5 weeks
Field trip 3	NA	7-11 May	NA	9-13 September
Studio time	NA	12 weeks	NA	3.5 weeks
Exhibition	23 Nov to 1 Dec	6-10 Aug	11-16 Mar 2009	10-31 October

9 APPENDIX B

Summarised in Table 9.1 are the attributes of the main accommodations used.

Table 9.1 Attributes of each accommodation arrangement

Accommodation attributes	St George Field Study	Tumut Field Study	Riverlands Field Study	Benalla Field Study
Accommodation type:				
Field trip 1	Empty Queenslander house	Camping: Thomas Boyd on the Goobarragandra River	Calperum Station research quarters, shared accommodation, communal kitchen	Caravan park, Benalla Showground
Field trip 2	As for 1	Scout facilities with kitchen and bunk house with camping option adjacent	As for 2	Camping by lake and caravan park
Field trip 3	NA ¹	As for 2	NA	Camping by lake
Independent trip				Camping on farm
Distance to township (approx.)	2km	23km and 26km	18km	20km (Lake Mokoan)
Proximity to ‘inspiring landscape’	Next to river, with undeveloped land directly around	Within National Park next to river	Within the Mallee reserve, nearby creeks and lakes	During latter field trips, direct access to Lake Mokoan
Opportunity for spontaneous interaction with local people	None, except when walking into town	None	Direct opportunity to meet with scientists and other workers at Calperum Station	Direct when staying on the farm

1. ‘NA’ means not applicable.

10 APPENDIX C

The community briefings were given priority in the first field trip as shown by the example itinerary in Table 10.1. The second and third field trip itineraries were scheduled lightly, where a few group activities were organised by the convenor depending on the participants' interests.

Table 10.1 Tumut Field Study program field trip one itinerary

Day	Time	Briefings and tours
Wednesday	8.00 am	Meet at front entrance, School of Art. Load vehicles/trailer
	8.30 am	Depart SoA, ANU
	11.15 am	Tumut Region Visitors Centre Mark Lees, Visitor Services Manager
	12 noon	Tumut River at Old Bridge Park, Tumut Tim Smith, NSW Department Water and Energy
	1.30 pm	Orchard, Batlow Gene Vanzella
	3.30 pm	Riverglade Wetlands, Tumut Cherie White, Riverina Highlands Landcare Network
	6.00 pm	Track Head, Hume and Hovel Walking Trail, Goobarragandra River, NSW NPWS Camping Ground Set up camping
Thursday	8.00 am	Plantation for forest tour 4-5 hrs Duncan Watt, Forests NSW
	2.00 pm	Dean Freeman and Brungle (Aboriginal) community
	6.00 pm	Showcase exhibition, The Connection, Tumut Engaging Visions Research Project web launch
Friday	Early am	Natural history / wilderness walk Matt White, National Parks and Wildlife Service
	2.30 pm	Talbingo Mt / Journama Creek Tour Snowy Hydro Talbingo Power Station Talbingo Township
Saturday	Early am	Light Aircraft flights
Sunday	Noon	Depart for Canberra

11 APPENDIX D

The location of the showcase and concluding exhibitions, the gallery attributes and attendance numbers are given in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1 Location of exhibitions and gallery attributes

	St George Field Study	Tumut Field Study	Riverland Field Study	Benalla Field Study
Showcase exhibition				
Location	Not applicable	The Connection, Tumut	McCormick Centre for the Environment, Ral Ral Ave, Renmark	Benalla Art Gallery meeting room
Gallery attributes	Not applicable	Building near main street	Education centre	Public art gallery
Location			Work-in-progress exhibition during Field Trip 2	
Gallery attributes			Empty shop in Riverland	
Concluding exhibition				
Location	Webster's Building	Ex-State Bank Building and Tumut Art Society Gallery	McCormick Centre for the Environment, Ral Ral Ave, Renmark, and 'Jeenaz'	Benalla Art Gallery
Gallery attributes	Empty shop in main street	Empty shop in main street, and gallery	Education centre and empty shop in main street.	Public art gallery

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