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THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



SCHOOL OF ART

VISUAL ARTS GRADUATE PROGRAM
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (in VISUAL ARTS)

JAN MARGARET HOGAN

EXEGESIS
PRESENTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE
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2009



THE AFFECTIVE GROUND

POSSIBILITIES FOR CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE

ABSTRACT

The Affective Ground: research into the possibilities for cross-cultural dialogue through the visual arts. The work explores how drawing may be used as a model to have a cross-cultural dialogue about space, place and spirituality between artists in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. It takes the form of an exhibition of prints and drawings exhibited at the ANU School of Art Gallery from June 17 to 27, 2009, which comprises the outcome of the Studio Practice component, together with the Exegesis which documents the nature of the course of study undertaken.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, *J. Hagan*.....(date *26/10/09*) 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.

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Introduction: Beginning the Dialogue

On Gundaroo Common, in the far back corner, past the cemetery, past the ruined stables and sitting next to the enclosure for the protection of the sun moth, stand some old remnants of the native bush that once inhabited the land around Gundaroo. These trees are on the rise of the escarpment and have a view over the hollow in which the town of Gundaroo sits. Nearby, there are signs of an old creek bed that still flows during heavy rains but which remains dry for most years due to the number of dams built on its path. The villagers' cattle are moved from paddock to paddock leaving tracks and traces of their presence but they particularly love this corner and the soil here is softer and darker than the rest of the common. This is where I usually stop on my walks around the common and it becomes an important site in my investigations into how drawings may develop a sense of place in both artist and viewer and the possibility of the visual arts acting as a model for cross-cultural dialogue.



Fig 1: Aerial view of Gundaroo Common and the village of Gundaroo

Gundaroo Common is the site I have chosen for my investigation as I had recently settled here after years of living in Northern Australia and I was interested to see if I could develop a way of being in the land that was sensitive to the environment. I wanted to become 'placed' in this specific environment, to have a sense of belonging that I had witnessed in the Northern Territory. Would it be possible for a settler Australian to develop a commitment and a responsibility to a piece of land and communicate that in the visual arts?

The pre-historian John Mulvaney suggests that the concept of an inspired landscape may be one of the greatest gifts that Indigenous people have given to civilization.¹ I wish to acknowledge the Indigenous presence and shift my way of thinking about the country to be more empathetic to other worldviews. As part of this research I believe it is necessary to enquire about the nature of an inspired land as it recognizes the precedence of Indigenous Australians and allows for an open enquiry into different worldviews held by the people of the Asia Pacific region.

In my Exegesis I show my conceptual and drawing ideas as they develop and change. In the first chapter, *Touching Ground*, I discuss the beginning of my investigation and how I started with a narrative framework for my drawings. I discuss how this framework shifted through my engagement with the materials and processes of drawing to a phenomenological framework where the dialogue between materials, the site and the body create meaning in the works.

With each chapter I attach a visual essay of the works in progress as my process of drawing is the research for my thesis and these visual guides enable a realisation of how I arrive at my decisions. Throughout the three years of my candidature I documented the many experiments I engaged in. I do not include all of these; the images I have selected are mainly relevant to the work I present for examination.

In the chapter on *Shifting Ground* I discuss my initial concept of visual language as a type of creole or 'lingua franca' that could be read across cultures. I had hoped to develop a framework based on linguistic systems being applied to the visual arts. I discuss how this was applied to the site and how it developed into a sensation based framework. Once again the process of drawing developed my initial ideas into a system that I hope will be more conducive to a cross-cultural dialogue.

With a focus on sensation in my work I begin to investigate how the materials and site of a drawing add to the meaning of the work. In the *Porous Line* I describe how I analyse a mark and the surface it is placed on. From a wall drawing in my studio to a roll of paper on Gundaroo Common I examine what constitutes a mark, a surface and a space. With a better understanding of how the basic elements of drawing may constitute meaning I further my dialogue with works of art from the Asia Pacific region.

In the final chapter, *Rhizomes versus Trees* I analyse the shift in my thinking produced by working directly on the site of Gundaroo Common. I describe how my thinking is still structured by my western art training and how the land gradually reveals its nature through my drawing. From standing under a tree looking at the view from a vertical optical understanding of the world I begin to look at the shadows on the ground and then to the rhizomes below the shadows. I discuss the importance of this development for my work and for the possibility of a cross-cultural dialogue in the visual arts.

My Dissertation on Peter Adsett explores the possibility of painting as a means of cross-cultural dialogue. My discussions with Adsett were influential in the development of my own work as they revealed to me the difference in materials and how meaning comes in through the dialogue between artist, place and materials. In my Exegesis I explore drawing and process as a model for changing our

way of thinking to be inclusive of difference and to allow differing worldviews to live together and to have a say on how we live on this land.

Whilst living and working alongside Indigenous Australians I became interested in how the process of art may become a possible means of dialogue to talk about this land and how we may arrive at a way to live on it together. I found Gundaroo Common a particularly challenging site as the land has been cleared to make way for cattle and any historical markers that exist are concerned with the exploration and settlement of Australia rather than the presence of Indigenous Australians. Paul Carter, in the *Lie of the Land*, writes:

The result of ground-clearing was to institute one system of memorialization at the expense of another. It was as if the colonists set out to erase the common ground where communication with the 'Natives' might have occurred.²

Gundaroo Common has been modeled on an English pastoral scene; there are a few stands of large trees and great expanses of ground for stock to graze on. The land now shows the damage of an inappropriate vision being placed on the land with large tracts reduced to dust and erosion. My aim is to investigate the possibility of this land revealing traces of its history through the processes of drawing. I wish to have a dialogue with the land itself to explore the possibility of finding a new way of being in the land.

The concept of dialogue was developed by David Bohm in his book *On Dialogue* and is the same one I pursue in my Dissertation about Peter Adsett's work. Bohm argues that dialogue is an open sharing of knowledge and way of being in the world. He sees communication as 'making something in common, creating something new together'.³ In this way meaning is arrived at in the interaction between artist, artwork and viewer. It is not a culturally fixed meaning to be conveyed and imparted on the viewer but something to be worked at together. Any misunderstandings are also revealing as they expose the way we think or produce new meaning.

I pursue this concept in the context of an artist's dialogue with materials and processes and also a dialogue between cultural groups through the visual arts. Is it possible to look into the work of another artist and realise the depth of their knowledge and understanding of how materials can communicate their investigations? As a printer I have worked alongside artists from other cultures and been amazed at the solutions given to a new process and how the mark making is intrinsic to the process and also communicative of another way of being in the world. In working alongside artists there is often a visual dialogue occurring, as Bohm suggests, like '*a stream of meaning* flowing among and through us and between us'.⁴

To have a dialogue with the land I use the process of drawing to record the marks, indexes and traces of the land and myself as we meet in differing conditions. I use the materials of drawing, such as the paper, the charcoal and the ink to be sensitive and responsive to the environment they are worked in. In this Exegesis I show the parameters I set up for the dialogue to take place.

The land of the common has been a site for human habitation by different cultural groups over time. Part of my investigation is how the land retains traces of the past and how it informs the present. Throughout my thesis I explore what place means and how it affects us. My exploration is based on the writings of the philosopher of place Edward S. Casey. He describes what it means to be in place and the importance of place on the development of humans and their cultures. He writes,

Even if we vacate a place and it stays unoccupied, it does not become an instant void or revert to being a mere part of space. So long as we (or other living organisms) have once been there, it has become a place – and it remains a place, insofar as it bears the sedimented traces of our presence. These traces, which act to shape and identify a place and not just to haunt it, need not be externally, much less eternally, engraved; they can be inward memory traces by all who have shared that place.⁵

As part of my dialogue with place I test the site for traces of prior inhabitation and attempt to retain these discoveries in my work. My Exegesis follows the development of my work and the decisions I make to strengthen my thesis. I focus on place as I believe it is an important aspect for Indigenous artists and artists of the Asia Pacific region. Through an exploration of place and how that can be communicated in the visual arts I aim to find a zone for dialogue between artists of the region. Through this dialogue perhaps it is possible to develop a more suitable view of the land, a view that allows the land to be more active.

I am interested in the idea that place has an active effect on people and civilizations. Settler Australians are still a young community in this land. Perhaps the land will begin to have an influence on the way we live. Paul Carter suggests

For restoration of the ground does not mean treading it down more firmly or replacing it; it means replacing it for movement – in the same way that metre or speech pattern releases language for movement.⁶

In a similar sense I aim to engage with the ground through process to see if it can be moved and become active. I am working with the notion that the land bear traces of events and people that have crossed over it. The drawing medium reveals these traces at a ground level. I aim to play on the common knowledge of the human condition of mortality and that we will end up as matter back in the earth. Our cells will mingle with the trees as we go through a continuous cycle of life and death, as our atoms are transformed continuously in patterns that fleetingly pass into our subconscious.

My research focuses on how, through our bodies, we gain an understanding of place, how memories of place influence us and how a sensual understanding of the world shifts our attitudes to land. By placing my body in the land I learned to *experience* the world and investigate through process how this informs my visual work. I began to work towards something I did not know rather than drawing what I had already perceived in the world.⁷ I learned to allow process and materials to develop meaning rather than trying to force them to take on the idea I had in my mind. In this Exegesis I will show how this shift occurred and its significance in developing the potential for a cross-cultural dialogue. I aim

to show how Gundaroo Common has affected me. Through each chapter I follow the influences of artists and theoreticians on my work but the common thread is the presence of the land. I journey through the work over the past three years and focus on the areas that have developed traces of the land and the people who have been here. Like an archaeological dig I hope to uncover layers beneath the surface that reveal the importance of the land and how we might interact and be in it in a new and more sustainable way.

Endnotes

¹ Read, Peter, *Haunted Earth* UNSW Press, Sydney, 2003, p. 34

² Carter, P., *The Lie of the Land*, Faber & Faber, London, 1996, p. 6

³ Bohm, D., *On Dialogue*, Routledge, London, 1996, p. 2

⁴ Bohm, D., *On Dialogue*, Routledge, London, 1996, p. 6

⁵ Casey, E.S., *Getting Back into Place*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1993, p. 103

⁶ Carter, P., *The Lie of the Land*, Faber & Faber, London, 1996, p. 5

⁷ This idea of working towards something unknown was articulated by Peter Adsett in conversations at his home in Victoria. I felt it applied to the processes I was using compared to my previous working method where I solved the problem in sketches and then realised the idea in a larger work.

Chapter 1: Touching Ground

The process of drawing began as my means of research; it is how I engaged with the thesis and the site I chose for investigation. In this project I pursued a phenomenological process of drawing where the materials and the trace of the body's movements become part of the visual field and an intrinsic part of the meaning of the drawing. Watching an artist draw has also been influential in my understanding of how meaning comes in to a work. It is fascinating to watch an artist's hand transforming matter into a visual language. As Charles de Tornay states 'Half matter, half spirit, the drawing is for us a symbol of a world in formation'.¹ As a drawing reveals its structure the way it was formed is able to be read and the possibility of changes or different decisions keeps it active, giving it a sense of becoming, of hovering between material and creation.



Fig. 2: Artist drawing on Gundaroo Common, 2006

In this chapter I will discuss my shift from a narrative framework for drawing to a concept of 'touching' ground. I started to pursue the concept of an inspirited land in my drawings and thought that a story was needed to activate the ground. I researched the idea that a story from the dominant mythology of Christianity, if placed in the land, would make it more relevant to settler Australians. The philosopher of place, Edward Casey writes,

Rather than being one definite sort of thing – for example, physical, spiritual, cultural, social – a given place takes on the qualities of its occupants, reflecting those qualities in

its own constitution and description and expressing them in its occurrence as an event: places not *are*, they *happen*. (And it is because they happen that they lend themselves so well to narration, whether as history or as story.)²

However, through my drawing I came to realise that the stories of the land need to happen in that place. My drawings were made on site and recorded the traces of events that happened during the drawing process. I began to sense that the Christian narratives were not part of the land except in the way that they were part of the structure of my thinking, the very structure that I wished to challenge.

My interest in narrative had developed through my time working in the Northern Territory. Indigenous artists would often accompany their images with the story that informed it. When visual anthropologists such as Howard Morphy with Yolngu artists and Geoffrey Bardon with Papunya Tula artists began to document the artwork emerging from Indigenous communities in the 1970's they set up a framework that is still in place today. Specific icons are identified, along with the site and country and the Dreaming story behind the image. This framework developed within a specific political context. They emerged at a time when establishing rights over land became important in the negotiations between Indigenous and European Australians. Many of the artworks are considered deeds of title and are often used in courts to establish rights over land. The outstation movement urged many artists to paint their Dreamings and their rights and obligations to land in order to support their claims.³

I started my investigation into narrative by going through many of the rituals and traditions from my Catholic background. I 'baptised' the sheet of paper by dipping it in the dam, it was then placed on the land and ink washes were put down that I believed corresponded to the nature of each day of creation. For instance the first day of creation is about light being created from the dark of the void. I allowed the land to have an input into the process, letting the weather affect ink washes and the lie of the land to push and puddle the ink. After the ink had dried I would rub charcoal and dirt over the surface and then 'anoint' the drawing with fingerprints. This ritual came from the tradition of Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent in the Christian calendar where ashes are placed on the forehead of the faithful

by the priest, accompanied by the words, 'Remember, O man, that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return.'⁴ It is an act of repentance and seemed a fitting response to the Pastoral state of the Common.

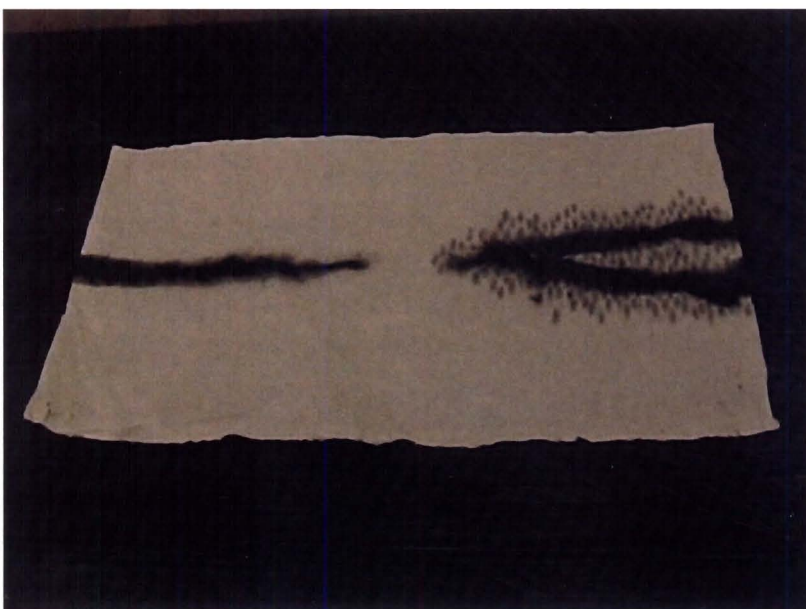


Fig. 3: Jan Hogan, Day II in progress, ink and charcoal on Rives BFK, 120 x 80 cm, 2006

The response to these works was completely dominated by the Christian narrative and had little to do with the site. Many people did not know or care about the Christian creation myths and were concerned with getting the story 'right' and how the work illustrated the story rather than with any engagement with the drawing, its materiality and possible meanings. I soon realised that any engagement or suggestion of Christianity narrowed the work down to that reading. Rather than a critique or a questioning of how Christianity informs our ethics and moral views, it was considered a slightly embarrassing topic in a contemporary art context. This challenged me to investigate what I meant by spirituality and place in order to engage the viewer, from within my own culture and from other cultures.

I had also begun to feel that the Christian narrative was not a helpful framework for my investigation into the possibility of visually activating for settler Australians the notion of an inspired land. Even the spiritual story of European culture was of little interest for many Australians. However, the rituals and processes that I had developed as part of this investigation had potential for making the land 'active' in the drawing. I began to realise the importance of my physical engagement in the processes, of how my body informed the mark and how the place informed my body. The fingerprints of charcoal on the sheets of paper placed me personally in the land and through their multiplicity signaled the presence of others.

A video work by Israeli artist Michal Rovner titled *Overhang* shows people moving in slow motion across what looks like a snowfield or desert, in a continuous stream. Swarms of insects are overlaid but they are not easily recognised and give the video the static and shake of old footage. Michael Rush, in his book *Video Art*, suggests this makes the work seem timeless. He writes,

Given Rovner's nationality, associations with images of Holocaust prisoners and other victims of war come easily to mind. Rovner, however, refuses to be specific about the meaning of her work, preferring to allow her seamless mixture of realism and abstraction to address universal emotions . . . Rovner's figures are suspended somewhere between being and non-being, reality and fantasy.⁵

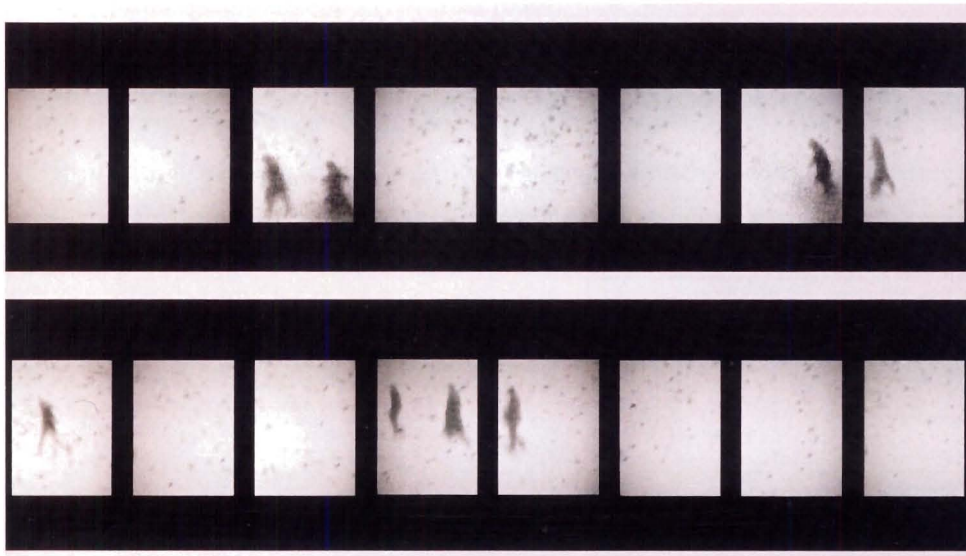


Fig. 4: Michal Rovner, *Overhang*, video, 2000⁶

The ambiguous figures continuously marching across the land, sometimes shifting but never concluding their journey are extremely poignant. Their individuality is lost but the viewer is affected by a sense of humanity, of the endless procession of people through the land with an unknown end. This is the association that I think my fingerprints may bring into a drawing. At times they appear like an indexical mark on a paper but they can shift, suggesting that there is a presence on the land.

The further I continued drawing the more I enjoyed the connections the work was making between touching the ground, to touching the viewer. These fingerprint drawings were very meditative; they gave me plenty of time to be in the land, allowing its natural ebbs and flows to enter my senses. I particularly liked the way in which the fingerprints were like a blind person probing the world, touching it to make sense of it. I felt as if I was blind and needed to make a leap from a visual, perception based process of drawing to a sensual understanding of the world. Rather than drawing what I saw or an idea I had conceptualized I started to learn from the materials and the site. As my fingers rubbed the paper they felt the ground beneath, the lumps of grasses, the dips and hollows from cattle and people. The dirt from the ground became part of the drawings intermingling with the charcoal. The paper acted like a membrane between the land and myself; an epidermis that was porous allowing sensual knowledge to cross its boundaries. Diderot's *Letter on the Blind for those who See* describes

this vision 'by the skin'. Not only can one see 'by the skin' but the epidermis of the hands would be like a 'canvas' stretched taut for drawing or painting.⁷

Through the process of drawing, of making a mark on a surface, I began to work my way into the land and I started to find another way of thinking about spirituality. Rather than it being placed in the land through narrative, I blindly probed the land for what it might contain, to try and discover the mystery of what we cannot see made present through the creative process. In my drawings I began to open up the line, thinking of it not as a boundary or a contour but an entry point, a fertile zone for negotiation. I allowed chance to inform my work and constantly reworked the drawings taking them back to the dam for another dip and layer of mud. The elements of Gundaroo Common, the grasses, trees, animals, insects, geology and weather were all finding their way into my work. I had finally started a dialogue with materials and place.

I have continually worked the same drawings over the period of my PhD research. I tore the paper down to a square format so that the work could continuously be shifted in orientation. The works are done on the horizontal allowing them to be constantly rotated rather than considered in a landscape or portrait orientation. I show this process in an attached visual essay exposing the works in different stages. There are now at least 30 drawings on Rives BFK, approximately 80 x 80 cms that will continue to be worked on in the series *Emergence*.



*Fig. 5: Jan Hogan,
detail from
Emergence series,
ink, charcoal
& dirt, 2006
– present*

These works contain the memory and traces of the drawing events that they have been through. Rather than being a 'view' of the land, they become a record of the negotiation between place and culture. The invisible forces in the land have merged into the materials on the paper becoming part of the work. I do not try to 'resolve' these images in the sense of composition or aesthetics but rather work at them until they 'resonate' indicating that there may be the presence of something invisible. I enter the void discussed by so many art commentators and allow it to make its presence felt as part of what we face as the human condition.

In my pursuit of what an inspirited land could mean I began to become aware that all the forces, seen and unseen, activated it and kept it alive. I needed to acknowledge the Indigenous presence, my own presence but also the grasses, trees, birds and insects that informed this site. Sensitivity to the elements of place helped to develop sensitivity to materials and the potential they held within them.

The work of Giuseppe Penone was influential as he continuously pursued an investigation of materials to get an understanding of their nature and the links between elements of the world. He would make the viewer aware of the intricate nature of matter by exposing them to its workings. He would carve large logs of wood exposing the cores of branches and the nature of growth. He did a series of large-scale drawings done from enlargements of cello tape that contained traces of his skin enveloping the viewer.

Catherine de Zegher writes about Penone's work,

The medium here is considered as touch, though Penone's work extends beyond the realm of the haptic. In his frottages, he exposes what lies under the paper, under the skin: the veins and nerves, the vessels of life permeating all of nature, fleshing out the world.⁹

In a similar way I am searching the site of Gundaroo Common, testing it for 'spirit', to see if it is still alive, still capable of a dialogue about its nature. The work of Penone shown here is a large wall

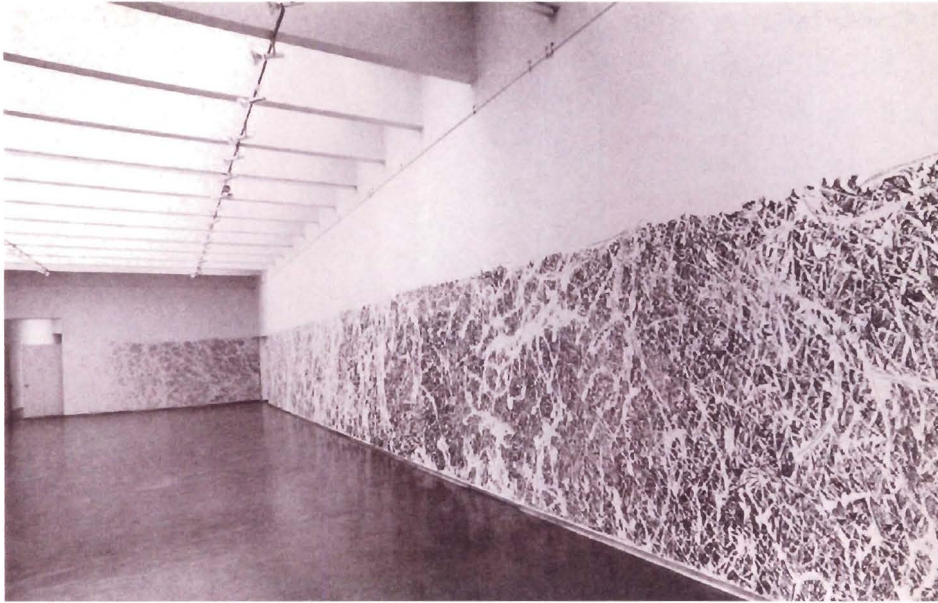


Fig. 6: Giuseppe Penone, Pressure No. 2, 1977⁸

drawing of his skin but it is not about an image of his skin but how it operates. He places the viewer into his very membrane and they can travel the many connections and discoveries buried in this layer. His work is about systems of growth but it also hints at its eventual death and decay back into matter. As skin continuously grows and sheds itself, the art gallery wall will shed his work and he will start again.



Fig. 7. Jan Hogan, untitled from Emergence series, Ink, charcoal and dirt on Rives BFK, 80 x 80 cm, 2006 – present

In the *Emergence* series the paper acts like the surface of skin, revealing the structure beneath and constantly receiving new marks and shedding old layers. In Fig. 7 the drawing begins to billow out as if there is a pressure behind it making its presence felt through the membrane of paper. The square format echoes an archaeological dig mapped out for investigation. Layers have been added on and erased repeatedly until some of the knowledge contained in the land is revealed.

An important influence in this tactile engagement with the land is Judy Watson. As an artist I often feel that I am following in her footsteps and yet I acknowledge that I cannot have the same understanding



Fig. 8. Judy Watson, black soil plains, pigment and pastel on canvas, 187 x 129 cm, 1991

of the land that she does. Her sense of country comes from an Indigenous perspective that inspires me and has shifted my worldview leaving me with a desire for a sense of belonging.

I am very aware of the materials and processes that Watson uses having seen her working on many occasions, but I believe I have only made a true understanding of the significance of these processes through the *Emergence* series. Watson's work is on the horizontal, which I often read as a stylistic solution for her aims but I now appreciate the merging of the body with the land and the work that drawing on the ground entails. Watson states,

When people fly over the country, they see the country through Aboriginal eyes. I think that has changed people's perceptions of Aboriginal art . . . I try to paint the land from both above and beneath to integrate the body with country.¹⁰

I believe that Indigenous Australian art has changed the way we look at the land. We now recognise the aerial perspective and the sense of a presence beneath the surface informing what lies on top. The fecundity of what was once seen as arid country by settler eyes is now apparent and makes us look at the minutiae of the country as well as the spectacular formations. Whilst I was doing the *Emergence* series I was not consciously using Watson's technique but in retrospect the process has given me a deeper understanding of the significance of process in generating meaning in her work. Watson's sophisticated and empathic approach to the land is a significant influence on my work as I struggle with finding my own place in the land.

In the *Emergence* series I developed a process that allows me to engage with the land. Through the materiality and sensuousness of drawing I entered into a dialogue with the land that was through my body rather than a realisation of an idea before the drawing. This ongoing dialogue is generating for me a new way of thinking about the land through drawing. Touching becomes an inclusive exchange of materials and understanding of the world.

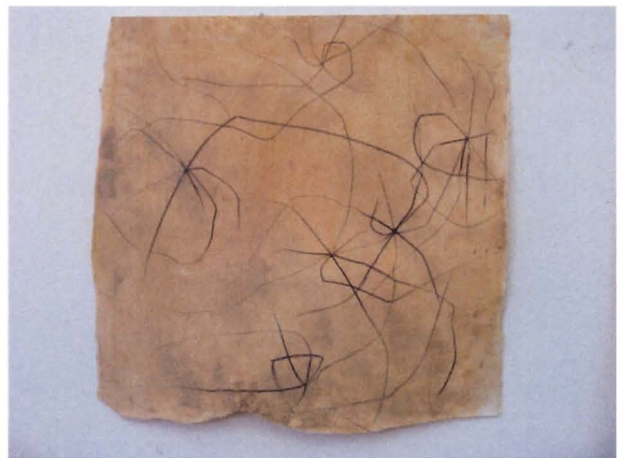
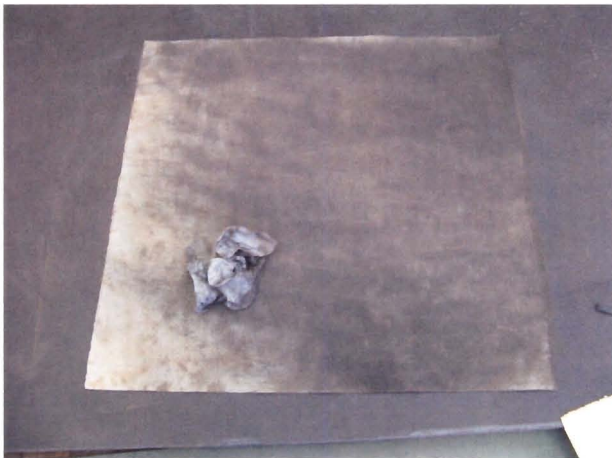
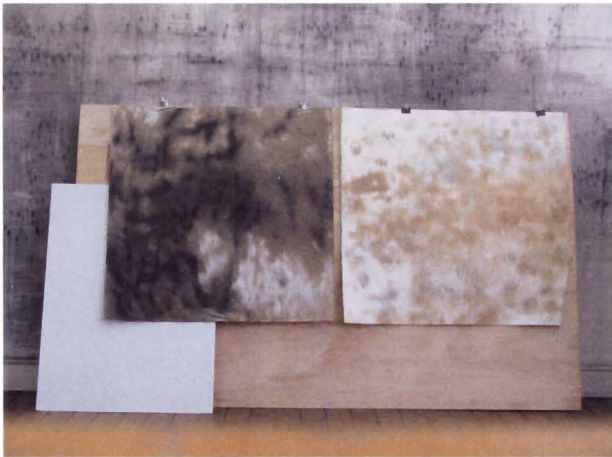
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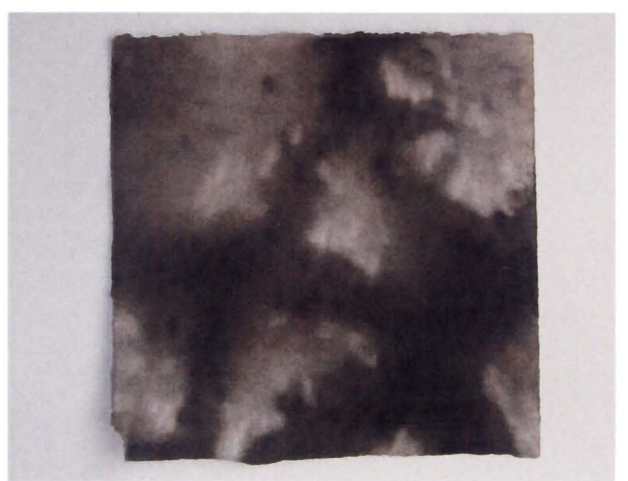
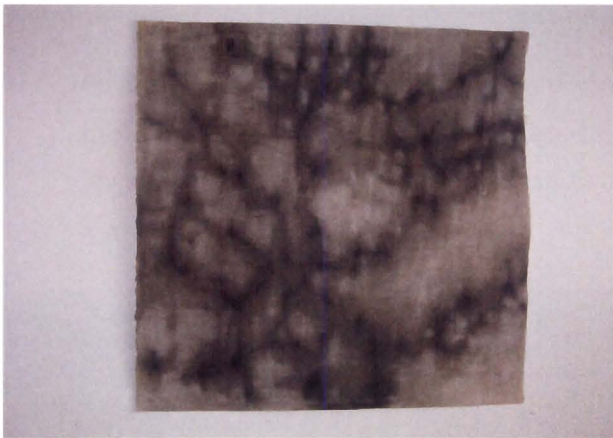
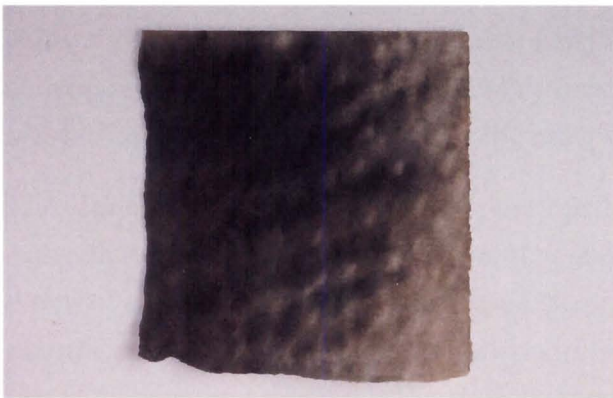
- ¹ de Tolnay, Charles in Rosand, David, *Drawing Acts*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002
- ² Casey, E.S. 'The Fate of Place: A philosophical history', University of California Press, Berkeley California, 1996 cited in Langton, M. 'Sacred Geography' in Perkins, H., *Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius*, Art Gallery of NSW, 2000, pp. 26–27
- ³ This history and many of the artworks are recorded in Perkins, H. *Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius*, Art Gallery of NSW, 2000
- ⁴ Genesis 3; 19 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ash_Wednesday, accessed 10.04.09
- ⁵ Rush, M. *Video Art*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2007, pp. 158–9
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Derrida, J. *Memoirs of the Blind*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1993, p. 101
- ⁸ Bradley, J., *Giuseppe Penone*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1983, p. 29
- ⁹ Zegher, C. De in Penone, G. *Giuseppe Penone: The Imprint of Drawing*, Drawing Centre, New York, 2004, p. 13
- ¹⁰ Judy Watson quoted in *Sacred Ground Beating Heart: Works by Judy Watson 1989–2003*, John Curtin Gallery / Asialink, Western Australia, 2003, p. 6

Visual Essay 1: *Emergence*

In which the artist is shown drawing on Gundaroo Common. The paper is 'baptised' in the dam and then Sumi ink makes the first mark on the wet paper. As the paper dries, charcoal and dirt are rubbed on and begin to reveal aspects of the ground beneath. Charcoal fingerprints respond to the traces and over time are erased and re-emerge in the studio only to be taken to the site for another layer.







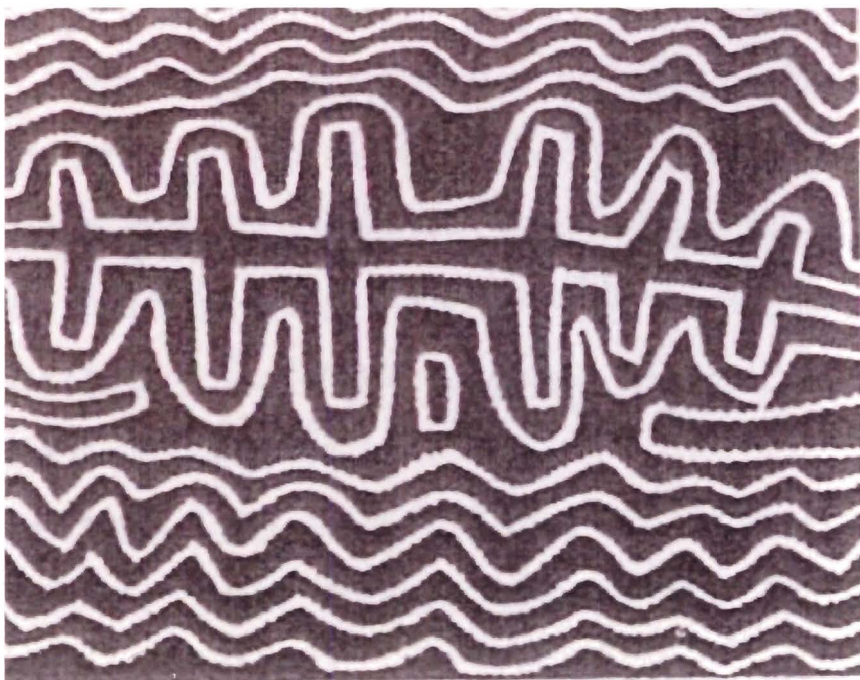
Chapter 2: Shifting ground

My research began with an enquiry into the possibility of a visual language that could be read across cultures. Initially I was thinking of abstraction being developed into a kind of 'lingua franca' that could be read across cultures. My research has focused on place, space and spirituality as a common ground for visual language to develop. I believe these areas are of importance for artists of the region and may allow a dialogue communicating how place was conceived by differing worldviews.

In the book *Discrepant Abstractions* various writers discuss how abstraction was developed in different cultural contexts and the influence these developments had on Modernism. The historical arguments concerning the fertile exchange of ideas through abstraction between Asia and the West reveal the way in which the dominant power writes the other out of history.¹

The idea of a shared visual language developed through my reading and interaction with Indigenous Australian artists. I was vaguely aware that Indigenous language systems constructed the world in a different way from the English language. Stephen Muecke in his book *Textual Spaces* gives different examples of Indigenous use of signifiers, as he believes the Aboriginal semiotic system was divided into two with 'meanings as encoded in spoken language, and meanings as pictured in designs (carvings in wood or stone, sand paintings, body markings and so on).² One is that

terms like the Pitjantjatjara *tjukurpa* or the Nyigina *bugarregarra* mean all of the following: talk, marking, dream, dreaming site, dreaming track, songline, sacred object, system of laws. These terms, as signifiers, may be thought of *as not separate from the things they signify*. (Muecke's emphasis)



The other example is a design created by Jimmy Pike for use in fashion.

Fig. 9: Jimmy Pike, *untitled design*, c. 1990³

Muecke states,

While spoken language can also be used in relation to this sign – stories can be told alongside it, or the sign might be the occasion for speech – the sign has a special significance in itself; the relationship with the units of spoken language is not one-to-one.⁴

I applied this linguistic analysis to the process of drawing. I thought of marks in a work of art as multivalent; they could shift in meaning as the viewer went deeper into the work. So that a zigzagging line could be a wave, a series of hills, or a body design with associations to different viewers each bringing their memories and their cultural knowledge to the work. From this interpretation I worked on the site of Gundaroo Common doing sketches directly on the ground, trying to develop a series of marks that would develop meanings with different associations.

These were a series of small drawings titled *Phonemes*. In linguistics a phoneme is the smallest distinctive unit of sound and in sign language it refers to the ‘basic elements of gesture and location’.⁵ I was attempting to devise a visual language around a linguistic system. The drawings were useful to me in developing marks and processes that were suitable for my investigation but I found myself struggling with the language metaphor. The more I looked into how language was structured, the more I found how culturally specific it was and how it seemed to operate quite differently from the visual arts. The further I worked on the drawings in the land I realised I was actually trying to break down the signs and symbols which structured my thought processes. Rather than building a new language I needed a new way of thinking. The metaphor of language broke down for my research and I searched for another way of thinking about the visual arts that would be more appropriate for a cross-cultural dialogue.

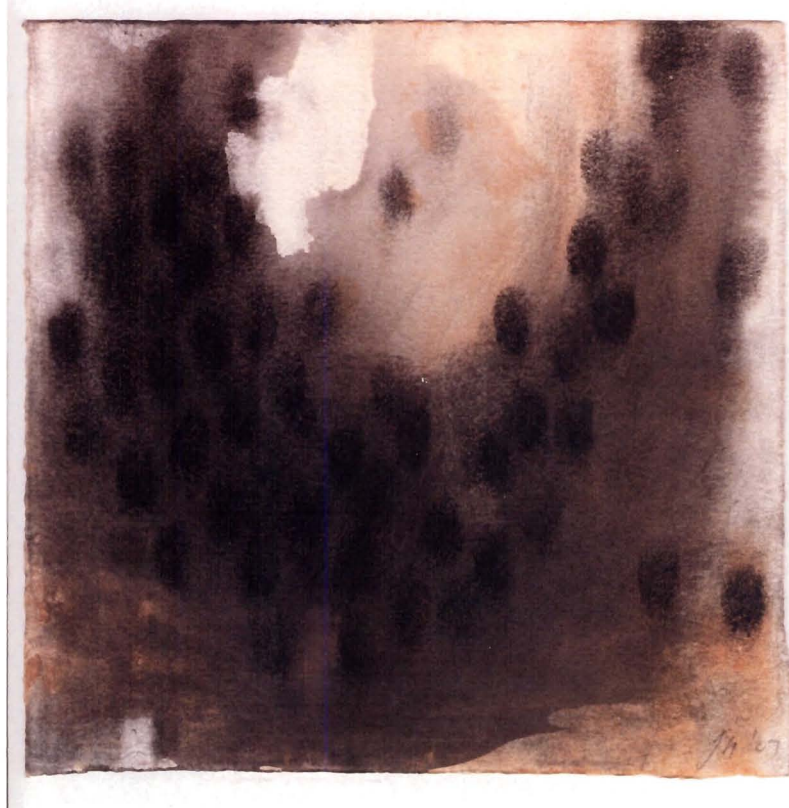


Fig. 10: Jan Hogan, Phoneme V, Ink, charcoal and dirt on Rives BFK, 15 x 15 cm, 2007

As I looked back at Muecke's writing I realised that not only are our linguistic frameworks completely different to that of Indigenous cultures, so is our concept of abstraction. Many works of art by Indigenous Australians have been compared to the great works of modernist abstraction from the west but the marks were specifically informed by the land and not developed with the same concepts of abstraction that developed in the west. My idea of a 'lingua franca' started to break down as I realised there would still need to be translation of the visual works into verbal or textual form to ensure the reading or interpretation was correct. I began to search for another possibility for a dialogue to develop through the visual arts, away from the emphasis on sight and analysis towards an understanding through the human body.

Working continuously on the site I became more sensitive to shifts and changes in the environment. The phrase 'sense of place' is a poetic shortcut to describe a personal interaction with a site. Human interaction with nature is intrinsic to this study, the many different ways in which humans find their way to live in this world. Often a 'sense of place' implies a way of knowing that is not completely rational or empirical, it cannot be analysed with naming and categorizing, its hard to 'put your finger on it'. Other senses come into play, the sense of smell and touch, and the awareness of surroundings, instincts and memories.

The process of art making led me to a new way of thinking. I started to learn about the land through all my senses and this was realised in my drawings. The action of touch, the movement of my hand, the horizontality of the paper on the land can all be read in the work and develop the meaning in the work. This tracing of the motions of the human body is what can be read in an artwork across cultures. The philosopher Merleau-Ponty in his treatise *Eye and Mind* suggests,

It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working actual body – not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement.⁶



Here was the direct link I needed for a dialogue. By using the body directly on the land, the interaction between the two could be read in an artwork. Through my practice as an artist I started to learn how marks were developed through this interaction and I could begin to read this 'intertwining' in other artworks. I could start to read the positioning of the body when an artwork is made and this hinted at the artists positioning of themselves within the environment.

Fig. 11: Jan Hogan, *Traces*, Ink, charcoal and dirt on Kozo, 97 x 64 cm, 2007

With the constant drawing I was doing on the Common I became aware in the shift in my thinking. I was no longer trying to translate ideas about the land into art, I was learning about the world through art. Jill Bennett in her application of affect theory in the visual arts writes of art as 'engendering a way of thinking . . . art is not conceptual in itself but rather an embodiment of sensation that stimulates thought; the 'intelligence' as Deleuze puts it 'comes after', not before.'⁷ Bennett discusses contemporary artworks concerned with trauma as developing an empathetic response in the viewer. There is a 'conception of empathy as a mode of seeing . . . which argues for the capacity of art to transform perception.'⁸

I began to think that this way of considering art was appropriate for a cross-cultural dialogue. Perhaps the knowledge contained in a work of art can cross cultural boundaries through the body and through empathy. The viewer may be touched by sensation, through a remembering of the body and through emotions. In order to communicate a worldview, the work needs to shift the existing worldview of the viewer. Bennett argues,

affective imagery promotes a form of thought that arises from the body, that explores the nature of affective investment, and that ultimately has the potential to take us outside the confines of our character and habitual modes of perception.⁹

By placing my paper on the ground and working on all fours in the dirt and manure of a cow paddock I was challenging the assumption of our vertical position in the world where we are separated from the environment by our emphasis on our use of vision. We have divided our visual selves from the space our bodies occupy. The work starts to reflect the anxiety and confusion I have about my position in the world, the interior/exterior boundary of the land and the body is called in to question. This is what my work tries to explore working on the surface with a fine membrane of paper, tracing events from both the past and the present. I am blindly probing with my fingers, trying to read what the land has to say.

Part of this project is to find a way for settler Australians to accept the notion of spirituality especially in relation to place. One of the avenues I decided to investigate came through the process of placing myself in the land. As I drew I thought of all the people who had been in this land and wondered what traces they left. I realised that part of Gundaroo Common is a cross-denominational cemetery and that there are literally traces of the settlers within this site. Land that contains the buried remains of humans is still considered sacred within contemporary Australian life. We respect sites of fallen soldiers and sites where Indigenous Australians are buried and so I began to think of this as a common link between cultures: the respect we all have for life and for the body even after death.

Charles Taylor in his inquiry into modern identity in *Sources of the Self* supports this notion of the spiritual being involved with discriminations of right and wrong that stand independent of our own desires. There is a moral structure built around spirituality that develops 'respect for the life, integrity, and well-being, even flourishing of others' and these moral intuitions are recognised in most cultures.¹⁰ Our intuition not to kill each other and sympathy for other humans is defined differently in each culture but Taylor suggests that it is,

Inseparable from an account of what it is that commands our respect. The account seems to articulate the intuition e.g. Humans are ‘creatures of God’ with immortal souls, emanations of divine fire or rational agents that have a dignity which transcends any other being.¹¹

It is this same impulse I am interested in crossing over through visual works of art. The reaction in each culture may differ but the meaning is communicated. I began to focus on sensation caused by a work as the means of dialogue that avoids translation of stories and myths.

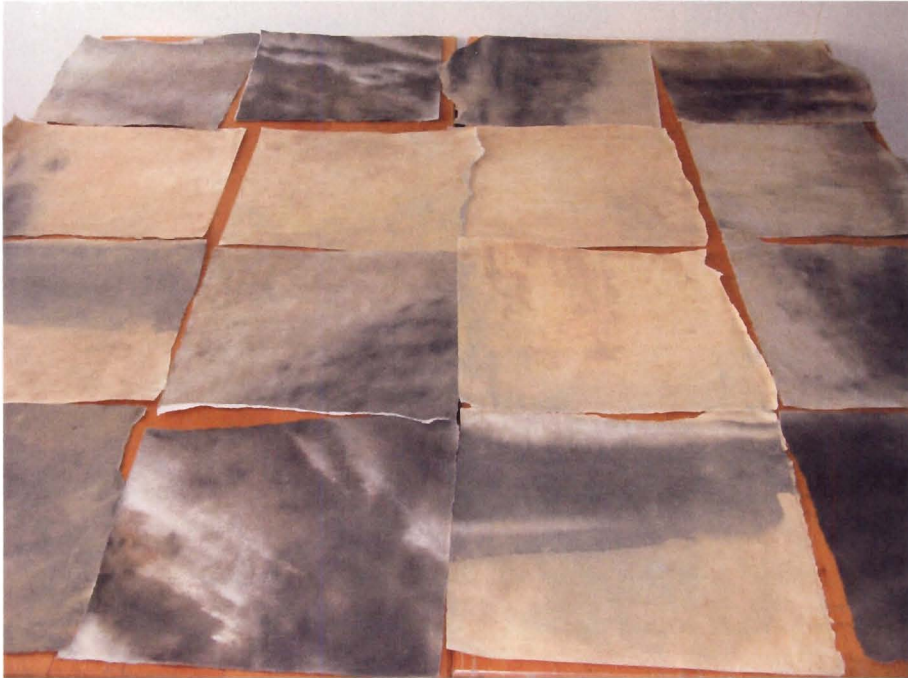


Fig. 12: Jan Hogan, *off-cuts* from *Emergence series*, each 40 x 40 cm, 2008

With the smaller off-cuts created as I tore the *Emergence* work down to a square format I began to investigate the land in a more meditative manner. The larger drawings require a strong physical engagement but the smaller pieces are easy to engage with in a quiet reflective way. With these off cuts I decided to reply to a series of drawings done by Montien Boonma titled *Drawing of the Mind Training and the Bowls of the Mind*. The drawings were of alms bowls done each morning as part of meditation. He wanted to place his mind inside the bowl, it was a shape that fascinated him and through which he could explore ‘the ephemeral and impermanent nature of life’.¹² The drawings were arranged in a group of 56 with sculptural vessel forms placed on a wooden plank underneath. The arrangement continues the meditative and offertory nature of the work.

As I continued working with the materiality of my drawings especially with the nature of the charcoal I felt that there was a connection in our investigation of the fragility of human life and an awareness of our mortality. I had literally looked at the form of the bowls that Montien Boonma had drawn rather than how they were operating or what their job was. I kept remembering Boonma’s quote ‘I gazed into the bowl, after a while, the bowl gazed back at me’.¹³ I applied this quote to the land I was drawing, then to the paper I was working on and asked what was the drawing doing? Like Boonma I was going beyond the material surface, he was going into the bowl, which had so many significant connotations for him,

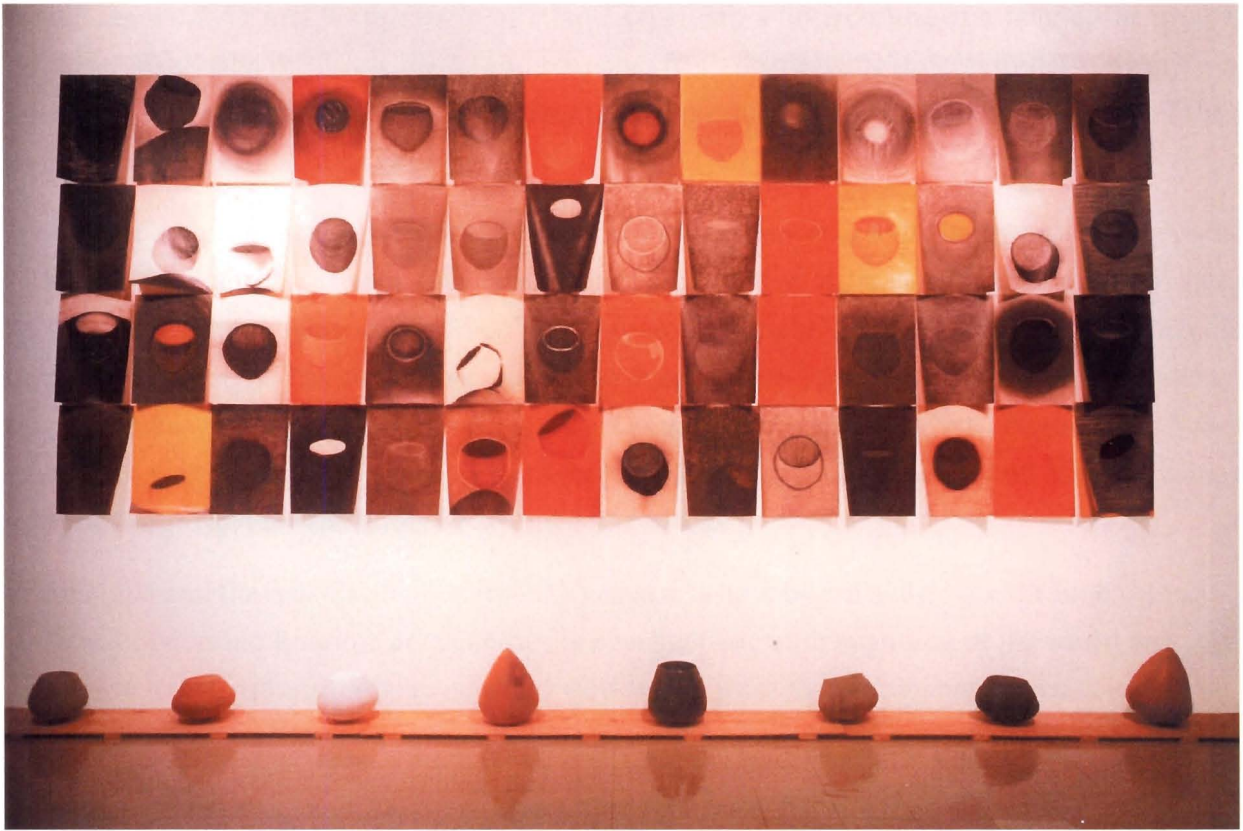


Fig. 13: Montien Boonma, *Drawing of the Mind Training and the Bowls of the Mind*, 1992.¹⁴

and I was going below the surface of the land. My desire to be placed in country was made apparent to me. Much as I may meditate on the site, something was between us, and the process revealed that;

between the paper and myself was the land. This became the title of the series and the focus of my meditation: *The Land came between us*. Much as I may desire to be part of the land, to feel a sense of belonging, that cannot be truly achieved whilst there lies such violence and disruption to the land and its original inhabitants. But I was beginning to see the land differently.

In Figure 14 the torn edge gives the sense that it is a remnant, that it is part of a larger meaning. The space shifts



Fig. 14: Jan Hogan, *untitled from The Land came between us series*, Ink, charcoal and dirt, 40 x 40 cm 2008

within the work, at first it appears to be a landscape with a horizon line or a river at the bottom but on closer inspection the finger marks and scratches from the drawing process undermine this reading. Once again the view flips back to the horizontal and the atmospheric effects become part of the worn down land that informed its creation.

In these links between what a work does there is a participation in a dialogue through the visual arts rather than a linguistic system. Our way of thinking is tested as we contemplate a work's operation. As Bohm suggests a dialogue should be "participatory thought" a mode of thought in which discrete boundaries are sensed as permeable, objects have an underlying relationship with one another, and the movement of the perceptible world is sensed as participating in some vital essence.¹⁵ As I continue my sustained inquiry in *The Land came between us* I use the drawings as a 'ground of being' using them as a 'testing ground for the limits of assumed knowledge'.¹⁶

In Australia and the Asia Pacific I believe the visual arts have begun a dialogue through the visual arts. Artists like Montien Boonma are generous in sharing their understanding of the world and using the visual arts to help others understand other worldviews from the dominant western culture.

Through my process oriented research and my academic reading I have shifted from a language based model for a cross-cultural dialogue to a sensation based one. Within my own art practice it has shifted the way I think about the land and it has opened up the way I view art. As a practitioner I have always looked at how a work was made and I often accepted its affect on me without any critical awareness. Now I look at works and question what their job is and how they affect me.

Endnotes

¹ Mercer, K. *Discrepant Abstraction*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2006

² Muecke, S. *Textual Spaces: Aboriginal Cultural Studies*, NSW University Press, Kensington, 1992, p. 7

³ Jimmy Pike design in Muecke, S. *Textual Spaces: Aboriginal Cultural Studies*, NSW University Press, Kensington, 1992, p. 8

⁴ Muecke, S. *Textual Spaces: Aboriginal Cultural Studies*, NSW University Press, Kensington, 1992, p. 8

⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoneme>, accessed 10 April, 2009

⁶ Baldwin, T (ed) *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings* Routledge, London, 2004, p. 294

⁷ Bennett, J. *Empathic Vision, Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2005, p. 8

⁸ Bennett, J. *Empathic Vision, Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2005, p. 10

⁹ Bennett, J. *Empathic Vision, Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2005, p. 44

¹⁰ Taylor, C., *Sources of the Self*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989, p. 4

¹¹ Taylor, C., *Sources of the Self*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989, p. 5

¹² Poshyananda, A. *Montien Boonma Temple of the Mind*, Asia Ink, London, 2003, p. 79

¹³ Poshyananda, A. Montien Boonma *Temple of the Mind*, Asia Ink, London, 2003, p. 125

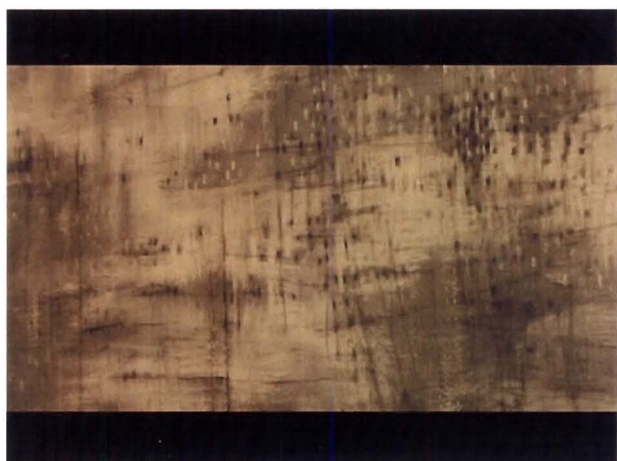
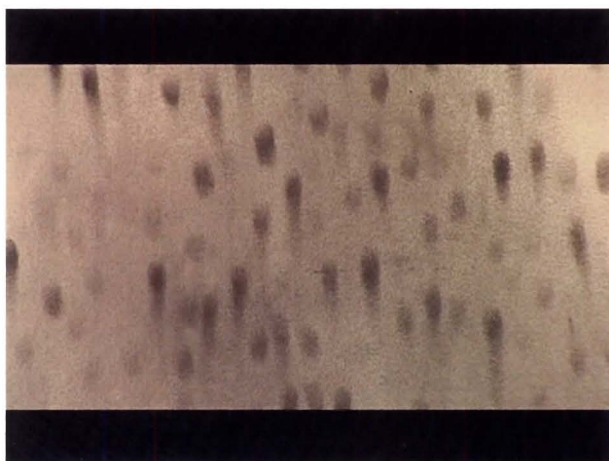
¹⁴ Montien Boonma, *Drawing of the Mind Training and the Bowls of the Mind* 1992, crayon on paper, terracotta and wood bases, size variable cited in Poshyananda, A., *Montien Boonma: Temple of the Mind*, Asia Ink, London, 2003, p. 79

¹⁵ Nichol, Lee (ed) *On Dialogue*, David Bohm, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, p. xiv

¹⁶ Ibid.

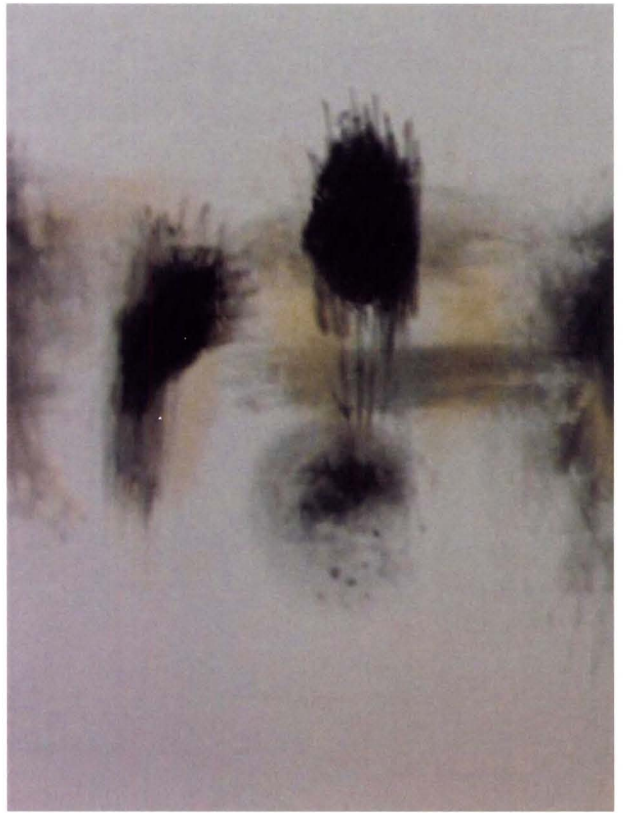
Visual Essay 2: *Wall Drawings*

In which the artist draws on the wall of her studio with powdered and compressed charcoal, erasing and redrawing areas over a 3 year period.

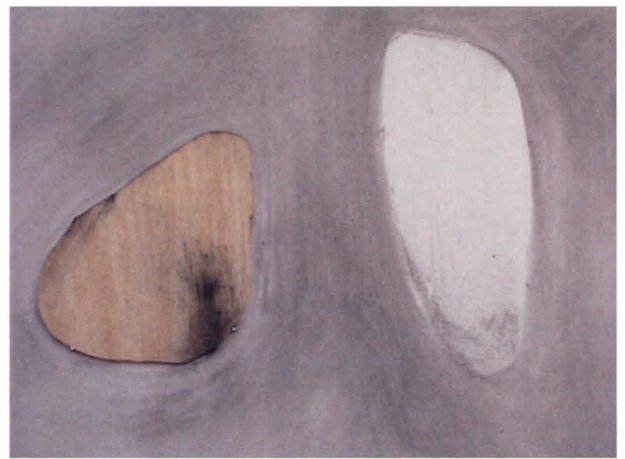


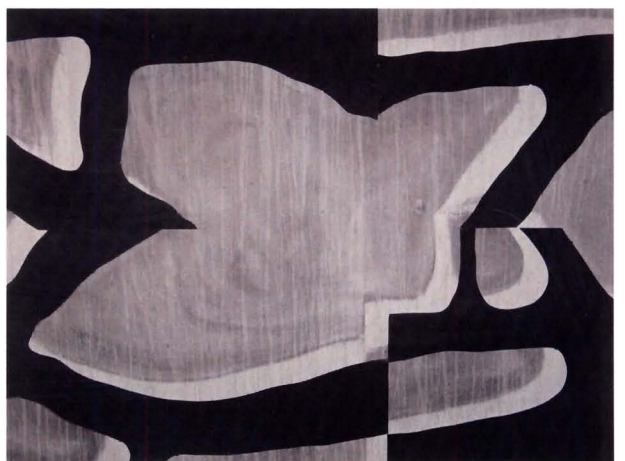
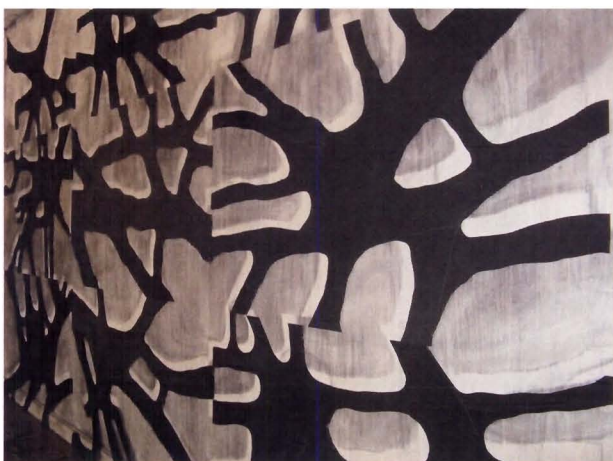
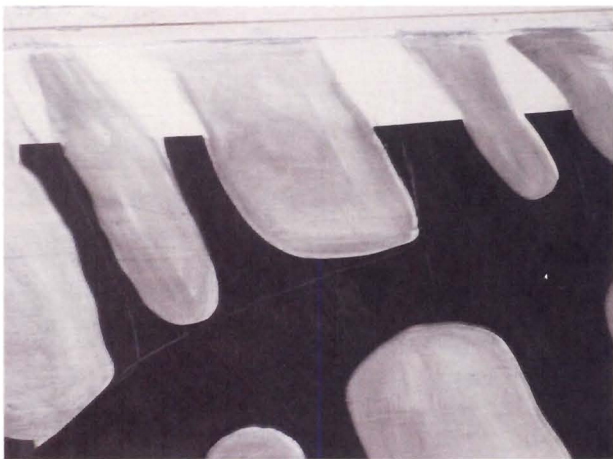
A drawing collaboration with Antonia Aitken done initially on another wall in the studio with Gundaroo dirt and charcoal from Namadgi National Park that culminated with a drawing on a wall of the ANU School of Art Gallery, Canberra.





The artist uses wood off-cuts as stencils for a wall drawing. The wood is nailed onto the wall and powdered charcoal is thrown at the wood and rubbed around them by hand. The wood is removed and the next layer is applied using *The Shadows* woodcuts.





3: *The Porous Line*

After working through concepts of language and narrative I began to focus on the possibility of sensation as being a tool for cross-cultural dialogue in the visual arts. Sensation holds the potential of direct communication from the work of art to the viewer. If this occurred there would be no need for translation between cultures. Differing worldviews could be opened up to a viewer, affecting them directly through all the senses of the body. I investigate the potential of sensation through my drawing processes and attempt to open up a porous line that will activate the space between the work of art and the viewer and speak about place. A porous line is when the mark becomes a zone of negotiation, the boundary is opened up and difference can occupy the same space to discover the meaning of the mark.

An intrinsic part of my research has been an investigation of the nature of drawing and how meaning comes in to a work. I continually investigate the nature of my marks and the surfaces I work on. Working both on the site of the common and in my studio at the Art School, I was able to see the different ways in which marks allow meaning to come in. I have discussed how the environment and the site of the common made its presence felt in the drawings done on site but at the same time I was investigating the possibility of opening up the knowledge I had gained into the domain of the studio and gallery.

Part of this process was a wall drawing that I started 3 years ago in my studio. I was interested in the wall paintings done by women in India, who paint their immediate environment in a daily prayer. Rice paste designs are made on the walls and entrance to the house. The designs are handed down through the family and village, each one slightly different as the signature of the hand makes itself felt. I wanted to use my wall as a site of experimentation but also an offering, a daily contemplation of time and matter shifting. I made marks, erased them, tried new ones, washed them off, each time the surface of the wall retained traces of these events. In much the same way as Gundaroo common, pathways and histories developed on the surface until it began to resonate with the history of the events on the

surface and the possibility of new events and pathways. The wall does not become finished or resolved, like the land we see it in the present moment aware that it is in an active state of becoming.



Fig. 15: Painted Prayers, Kerala, India

The breadth of this practice and the inclusion of the visual arts in the everyday and the spiritual fascinate me. The physicality and the humility required by the women to continue this practice showed

me a way to include meditations of the spiritual into my art practice. The offerings by the women are ephemeral; their cyclical repetitive nature reflects the rhythms of the environment and how the visual arts become part of the system of living and dying. They are a way of thinking and praying as the body and the environment become entwined in the system.



Fig. 16: Jan Hogan, detail of Wall Drawing, 2007

Part of my investigation with the wall was taking the experience of the mark making from the common on to the white wall of a studio/gallery space and transforming it. The finger marks act like magnified particles of the wall, showing that the 'solid' wall is still the same matter of the world around only more firmly compressed and will have the same fate eventually. The marks question the solidity of the wall and make it a possible passage through the room, a pathway through the wall where the surface materials are made to shimmer to question its nature. From a solid support the wall is made active, it shifts from being an enclosure to being part of the environment.

The nature of my lines also echoed my vertical stance as I drew. I began to really comprehend how meaning shifts due to the way the body is used in the drawing process. As Peter Adsett pointed out to me the lines were more like Tony Tuckson's who, when asked what he was doing, replied 'The same old thing. Up and down and across and back,'¹ whilst making the gestures with his hand. By standing close to the wall this was the gesture that I felt most comfortable with and that gradually added a weave to the wall, shifting its texture and materiality from a solid support for a drawing to the nature of a drawing in a state of perpetual becoming. The wall drawing will not be finished, it will just be transformed; until the wall's demolition this drawing will be under the surface.



Fig. 17: Jan Hogan, Wall drawing *in progress*, 2007

With the process of drawing on the wall I became interested in the possibilities of the transformation of space. The space that informs the work is from a horizontal view of the world and it is transformed by being worked on to a vertical ground where it can go through further transformations according to the intention of the artist. Elements of the drawing can take on an ambiguous nature. The place we live in and the ground of a drawing can be called in to question. Marks on the surface can reach out in to the physical world of the viewer and the world of the viewer can fold in to the drawing. The space of the drawing can call in to question the body's relationship to the world. Meaning and mark are intertwined with every process and surface used and the ambiguous nature of some marks can make the space seem a very strange place.

I wanted to expand my investigations of drawing from what I had learned from the wall. I wanted to see if I could really look into how a line works, to open it up for investigation both in the Common through process and in the gallery through its operation. I became interested in the work of Richard Long especially his work about walking and pathways. His work visibly shows the traces left by someone traveling a path as he records his own pathways through sites. However, he was not only concerned with placing himself in the land, he was also interested in the greater reading of a path, of a line made by humans. In *Walking in Circles*, documentation on a series of his works, it is emphasised that

The idea of the path or way has meaning in all cultures from the most material to the most spiritual. It is both something real and something symbolic, something seen and unseen. To the Christian it is the Pilgrim's Way, the way, the truth and the life.²



Fig. 18: Richard Long – A Line Made by Walking, England, 1967

Such lines and tracks are very similar to those I walk on each day on the common. I am interested in how they reveal the multitude of forces walking on the land. On the common, the cattle have predominantly created the paths and so they weave slightly with the lie of the land rather than taking the direct route from gate to dam. I imagine these paths as recording the traces of the people and animals that walk on this site. They reveal the history of the place from Indigenous Australians who may have

wandered along the stream that once ran before dams were put into place, to the drovers and villagers who created this fenced off zone for the protection and survival of cattle.

I often worked on these paths allowing their indentation to influence the flow of the inks. I created a few artists books where I carefully touched the paper placed on the path with Grass clumps, charcoal and pigments. I became fascinated with how the fingerprints became a multitude, acting on a microscopic and a macroscopic level. They could be either the particles made to form the material of a line or a view of people traipsing across the path in an endless procession. In this process the land and the body were in a constant negotiation. The interaction started to shimmer, showing the ground becoming activated by human presence.

I experimented with these ideas in the lithography



Fig. 19. Drawings on a track, Gundaroo Common, 2006

medium. The large limestone blocks take sensitive marks from the body and can repeat the mark through the printing process. The mark can be overprinted creating a 'shimmer' on the surface. I found this shimmer causes a particular sensation in the viewer, it hints at an active ground or a body in motion as the ground becomes blurred when moving.

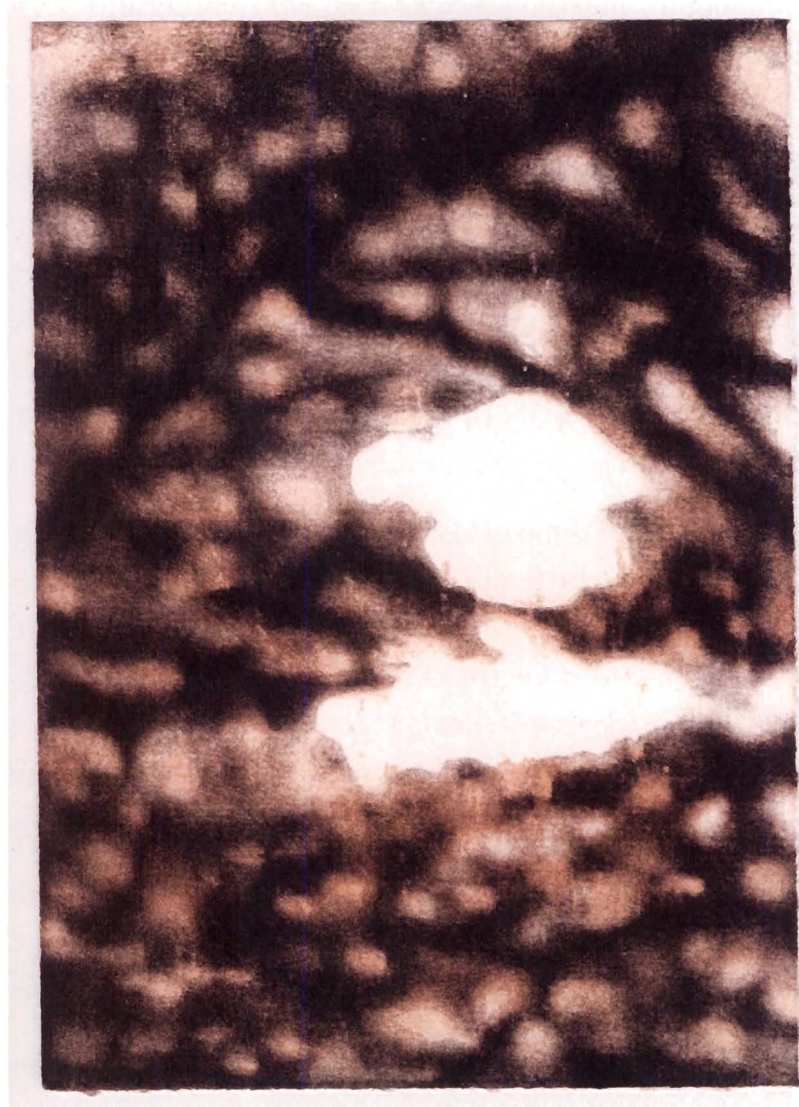


Fig. 20. Jan Hogan, untitled, lithograph, 34 x 24 cm, 2006

It was Howard Morphy who described shimmer as being a highly prized property of Yolngu art. He argues that 'Yolngu see paintings as transformational. They had their origin in the ancestral past when they arose out of ancestral action.' In the painting process the Yolngu transform the ancestral power into the structure of the work.

Yolngu paintings move from a state that is relatively speaking rough, dull and ill defined, to one of shimmering brilliance in which the elements are nonetheless sharply defined. The process of painting is seen as adding ancestral power.³

As the work begins to shimmer with the final layer being applied, it is interpreted as a 'manifestation of ancestral power'. Within the painting layers are built up which inform the final work, adding a resonance, a feeling that the land is active. The marks echo the land created by the ancestors and the marks painted on the body during ceremonies. The paintings intertwine place and culture, land and body, both informing and activating each other.

Just as Morphy's interpretation of the effects of cross-hatching revealed important dimensions of meaning and associations in the art of the Yolngu people, so the qualities of a line may be seen to carry the equivalent potential in other cultural contexts. In this sense I imagine a line may become a porous zone where meaning and interpretation may be opened up to different cultures at the same time. Hence this is what I think of as the 'porous line', the artwork informs the viewer of the place and the

worldview of the artist. The meaning seeps through the surface of the work but can shift due to the viewer, the artist or the context of the work, the place where it is shown. Howard Morphy states that,

The optical effect of this technique is to create a painting in which the surface shines. The underlying pattern is clearly defined yet the surface of the painting appears to move; it is difficult to fix the eye on a single segment without interference from others – indeed, in some paintings the image seems unstable, almost threatening to leave the surface of the painting.⁴

Morphy continues his discussion about the meanings the work contains, what the connotations of the images are. Whilst this is important for anthropological analysis I don't believe it is the only means for a cross-cultural dialogue in the visual arts. The Yolngu paintings convincingly evoke the relationship between the visible and the invisible. The story and the iconography are not needed to convince the viewer that the dialogue between the land and the people is an active one, with the past and the invisible present in the 'now' of the painting. As Morphy states the paintings reveal 'the belief that the surface forms of things derive from underlying structures and relationships'.⁵

While the process of lithography held so much potential my experimental pieces did not seem to engage with the sensation that I hoped to create. They continued to work in the realm of representation. Their 'real' meaning appeared to lie elsewhere than in the work of art. Whilst there were some pleasing optical effects they did not indicate the presence of anything beyond in the way the shimmer in Yolngu paintings do. I wanted the lithographs to have the sensation that a structure beneath and around them informed their construction and their reading

This led me to do a lithograph called *The Common Touch*, which I show in an attached visual essay. Like the *Wall Drawing* I worked the stone with my fingerprints only in this case the prints were forming a line. The porous nature of the fingerprint allows the surface to be seen through and with it. The mark and the surface bind together on the stone reading as if they were created together. I created many

stones with these lines of prints ensuring that they could meet up together to become one line.



Fig. 21. Jan Hogan, The Common Touch, Gundaroo Common, dimensions variable, 2008

I printed the lines on Japanese Kozo paper, which is a thin but strong mulberry paper. I also printed on newsprint to experiment with different possibilities of working with the line. I sewed the lines together in strips and into a large 'shroud' that I took out to the common to see how they would operate. After the quantum of labor required to make the work I was surprised to see how they were completely overwhelmed by the land. The sensitive, porous nature of the marks was lost in the environment. The only line was the line of paper as it meandered across the track making little impact on its travels, but rather emphasizing the foreign nature of the paper in the environment. In a similar way the 'shroud'



Fig. 22: Jan Hogan, The Common Shroud, Dimensions variable, 2008

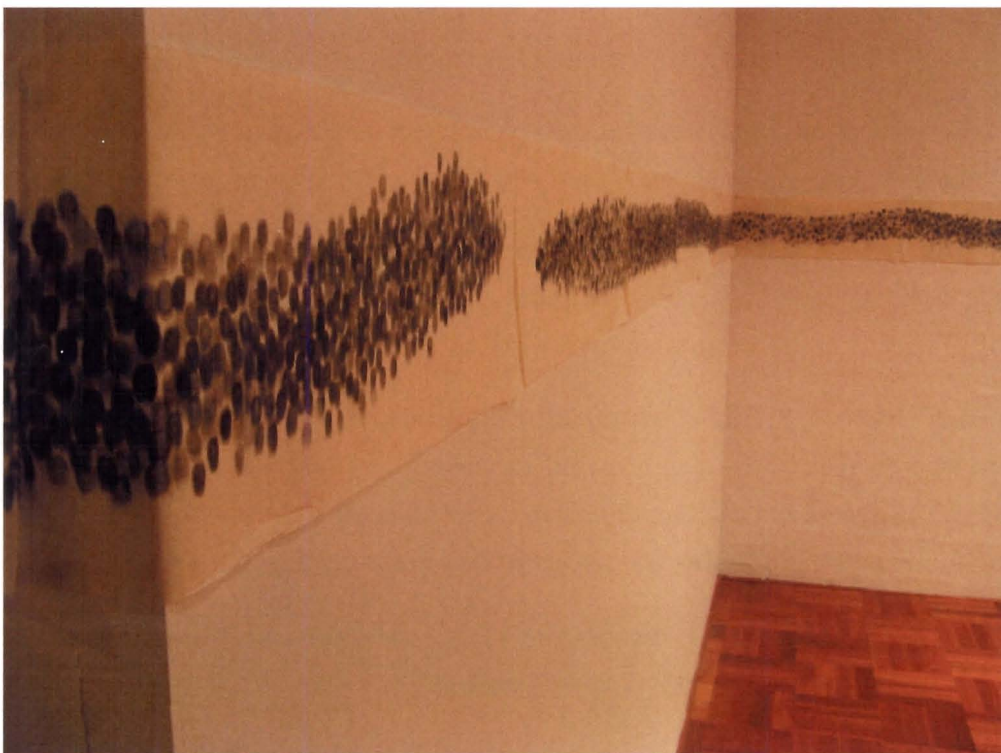


Fig. 23: Jan Hogan, The Common Touch installation view, School of Art Gallery, 2008

that I had imagined would ceremonially blanket the land, revealing the lie of the land below it and the painstaking work above it, looked like a lost handkerchief on the land.

However, when the work was displayed in the School of Art Gallery, it became animated. The context of the gallery gave the line a tenuous searching nature as it traversed the hard white walls. The thin paper shifted slightly with any breeze and took on the quality of skin, a thin membrane trying to connect two places. The place of the common and the place of the gallery were brought together momentarily. The paper's ephemeral quality accentuated its eventual decline back on to the horizontal ground that formed it. The fingerprints shifted and meandered across the surface taking the viewer on the journey with them. They managed to create a sensation of becoming and loss as the viewer traveled along the line.

With the experience of taking *The Common Touch* out to the common I began to work on the idea of the paper itself as an initial mark on the land, which I explore in *The Common Line* using a 10-meter roll of Rives BFK paper. I was aware of the importance of paper, through its lightness and moveability as a medium once used to spread knowledge and to take possession of a distant land. The map was an instrument used to colonise Australia by mapping new names and boundaries on the land to place a land under new names and new systems.⁶ I felt the need to shift the nature of paper, to be in the land, to be creative; to create something new from what has happened.

However, with my reading on the tree and the rhizome by Deleuze, I began to see the potential of the mapping form. In his essay *Rhizomes Versus Trees* Deleuze writes that the rhizome is a map and not a tracing like a tree that 'represents the process of its own generation in terms of binary logic.' He urges,

Make a map, not a tracing. The orchid does not reproduce the tracing of the wasp; it forms a map with the wasp, in a rhizome. What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real.⁷

I was particularly inspired by this description as it described the process I was doing with my drawing on the Common, especially the large drawing I started with a whole roll of Rives BFK.

For me this roll of paper became a 'map' of what a line may contain after intensive transformative processes. It shows a part of what is needed in order to draw about land. Some aspects of Deleuze's rhizome theory particularly apply to *The Common Line*.

The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields . . . It is itself part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting.⁸

The Common Line became all of these things for me, it works on the site of Gundaroo and it could be shown in a myriad of ways at other sites and each time would reveal another part of its nature.



Fig. 24: Jan Hogan, The Common Line, in progress, Gundaroo Common, 2008

The work developed through my thinking on what was a line, what was a surface and what was a space. Everything I did I began to question to see how it influenced meaning coming in and also its integrity to my project. As I read more I was constantly surprised at links in my ways of thinking with artists from other cultures. This gave me support for my thesis that a dialogue is possible through the visual arts. In my shift from trees to rhizomes I decided to look again at the work of Emily Kngwarreye. It also coincided with a major exhibition of her work at the National Museum in Canberra so I was able to spend some time with the works. I especially enjoyed the way her 'yam' line opened up the space of the work. It cut through the surface enlivening the canvas.

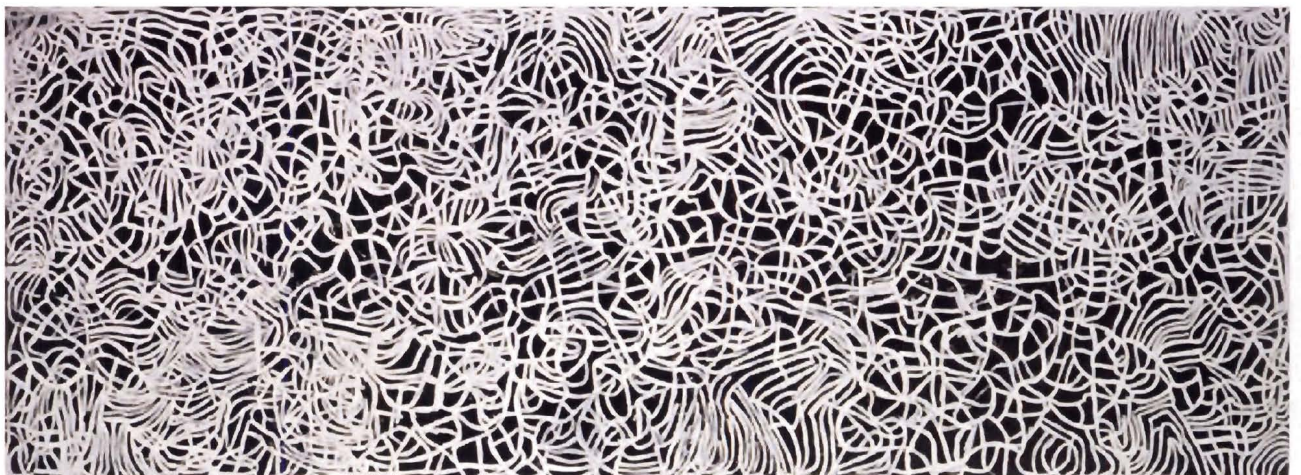


Fig. 25: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Big Yam Dreaming, 1995⁹

I had been interested in Peter Adsett's description of his drawings as making a cut through the surface. A line made on a surface, changes that surface forever. It makes a cut and leaves a trace, which must

then be negotiated. Jennifer Biddle points out that Emily Kame Kngwarreye spoke of her work 'as representing the "scars, fine line or marks made with stone knives"'.¹⁰ This suggests the body becomes a part of country through the scarring process. The skin is cut and meaning and relationships are made active on the body. Biddle writes,

The skin itself is libidinally and affectively enlivened by the entry of the social, of country itself, into the subject: an affective marking that equally displays these relations to others. Cicatrices create a permanent lived textual relationship between country and bodies, a marking and making of country alive literally.¹¹

From different cultures comes a similar way of thinking about rhizomes, a philosophy that can be viewed in visual art terms by people looking for that knowledge. After years of drawing on and in the land I feel significantly closer to an understanding of such an artist's worldview and what is required by settler Australians to empathise with that view.

Wall Drawing, *The Common Touch* and *The Common Line* bridge the two places of my investigation revealing to me the different ways in which a line can be read in different contexts. Place informs the development of the work and the place of viewing informs the way the work is experienced. I am interested in this porous zone of communication and believe it is an area for cross-cultural dialogue. As the process of a work of art is read it affects the viewer and helps them to position themselves in relation to the work. It is a bodily sensation that informs the way we think, the work of art can reveal the relationship between the body and the world.

Jill Bennett discusses this concept stating that,

The kind of identification facilitated here does not presuppose a body unified under a single coherent image, but rather a body that acts in multifarious spatial relationships: a body that impresses its form in space, and that is simultaneously penetrated and invested by space and time. These interactions within space give rise to the 'space of the body' – a realm that is neither subjective nor objective but a space of intermediation¹²

Through the process of art making I am starting to open up possibilities for cross-cultural dialogue. My idea of a porous line allows meaning to be encountered through the body and the context in which it is also viewed. The anthropologist in the field encounters artwork in a different setting to the viewers who encounter the work in an art gallery. The knowledge that is meant to be transmitted changes in context, any secret or sacred knowledge of a culture may be given to someone who has made commitments to that culture but the absence of this knowledge for another viewer does not render the work 'speechless'. In a gallery or a studio setting the work of art stimulates sensation, affecting the viewer directly through the senses, evoking their thinking and challenging their perceptions of the world.

Endnotes

¹ Cited in www.balgal.com/?id=tucksontony

² Long, R., *Richard Long, Walking in Circles*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1991, p. 27

³ Morphy, H., *Becoming Art*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008, p. 92

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Morphy, H., *Becoming Art*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008, p. 109

⁶ This concept of naming is written about poetically and informatively by Paul Carter in *The Road to Botany Bay*, Faber & Faber, London, 1987

⁷ Deleuze in Boundas, Constantin V., *The Deleuze Reader*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, p. 35

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Emily Kame Kngwarreye, *Big Yam Dreaming*, 1995, synthetic, polymer paint on canvas, 291.1 x 801.8 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne cited at www.abc.net.au/.../2008/08/21/2342678.htm accessed 13/04/09

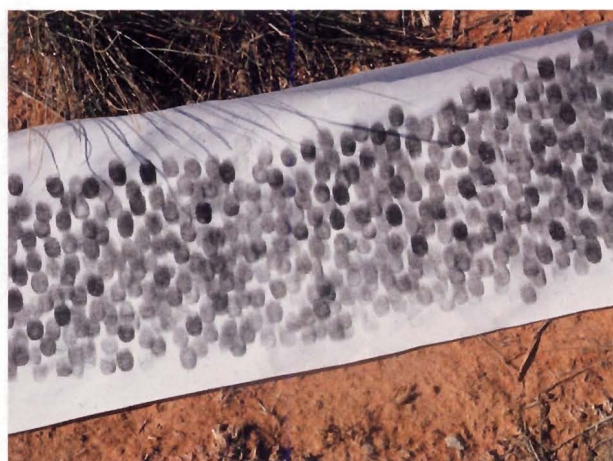
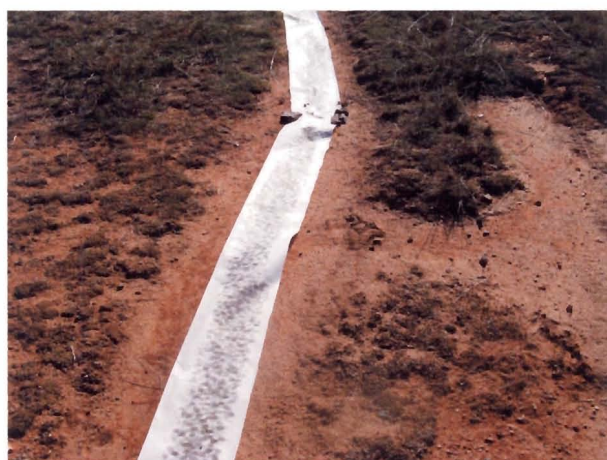
¹⁰ Biddle, J. *Breasts, Bodies, Canvas; Central Desert Art as Experience*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2007, p. 60

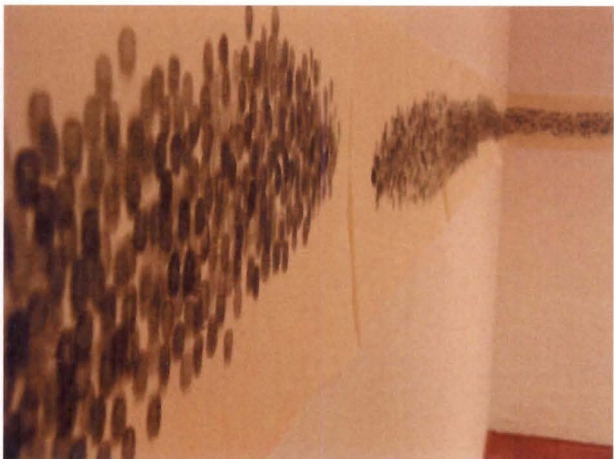
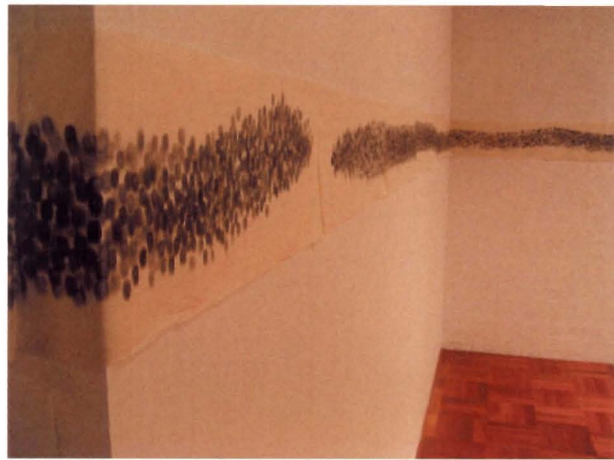
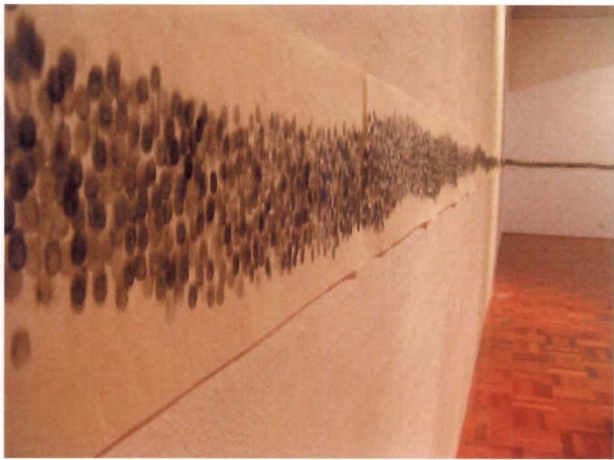
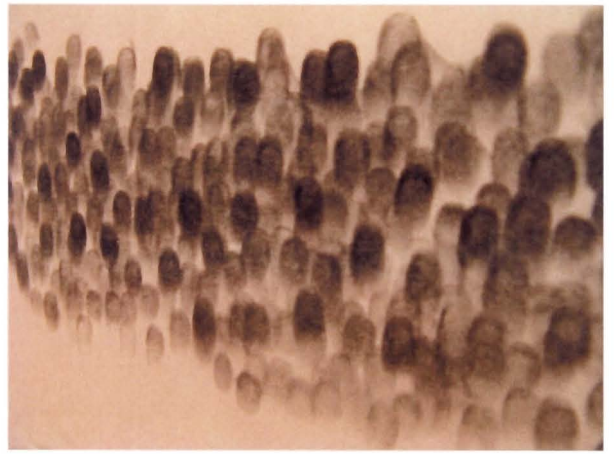
¹¹ Ibid.

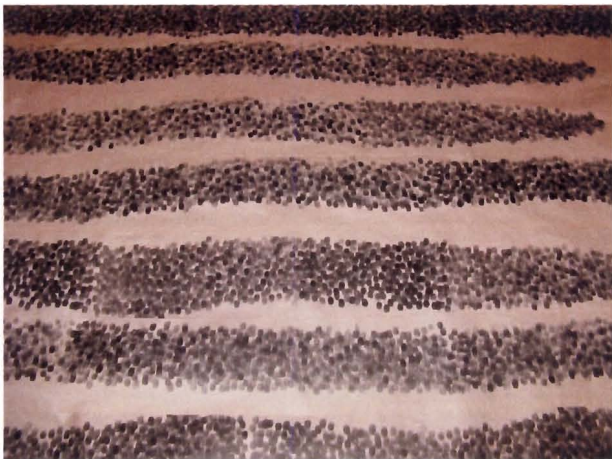
¹² Bennett, J. *Empathic Vision, Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2005, p. 75

Visual Essay 3: *The Porous Line*

In which the artist is humbled by the land and returns to the gallery walls.



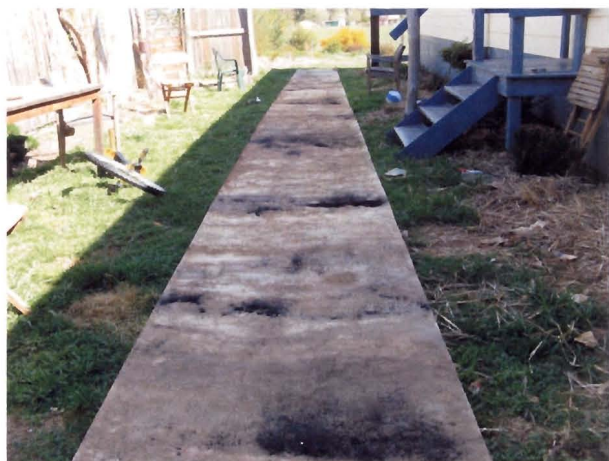


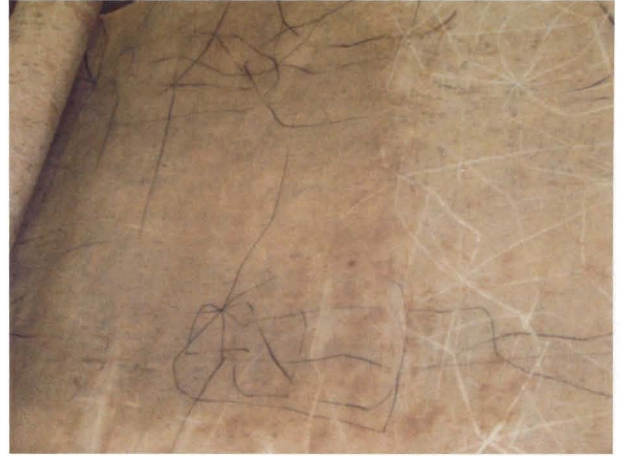
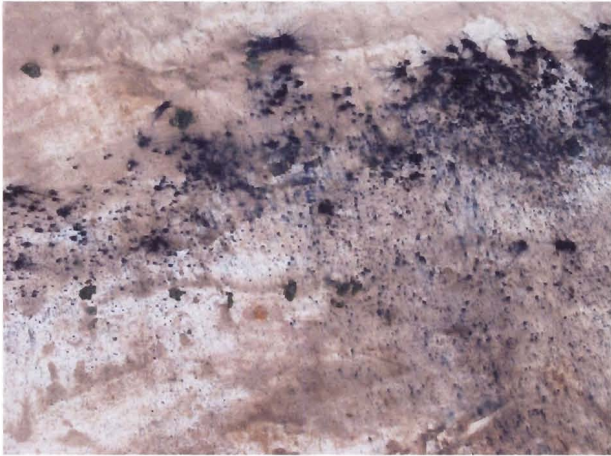


The artist returns to the site accepting the paper as the first mark on the land rather than a surface to be marked. Gradually the paper develops a space between the site and the artist that is opened up on the gallery wall.











4: *Rhizomes Versus Trees*¹

In my research towards the possibility of a dialogue in the visual arts I became interested in pursuing the notion of affect and sensation as a means for a direct dialogue without the need for a textual or verbal translation. I also believed the concept encompassed the parameters I had set for my investigation - place, space, spirituality and process. Through the avenue of sensation these could become part of the meaning of an artwork transmitted to a viewer. One of the models I had investigated as part of place was the tree. It had been an important tool for investigation of the particularity of materials and marks and had helped me to place myself in the land rather than separate to it. Through these processes however I had come to doubt the model, due to the possibility of its cultural specificity and its strength as an image. To activate sensation in a viewer I found that the ground needed to be ambiguous so that when the viewer recognises a tree they feel on safe ground and are no longer affected. In this chapter I discuss my shift from a tree model to a rhizome way of thinking.

One of my favourite drawing sites on the Common is at the far south end under some remnant trees from the original ecosystem. These offer significant shade in the dry dusty conditions of the past three years. The cattle have also softened the ground through years of gathering here. Initially when I started working on this site I was interested in activating a figure/ground shift in my work to get the work to pulsate and cause sensation. I began looking up at the canopy and drawing the branches and the light as forms. I looked into the work of Mondrian and worked hard at getting my drawings to operate in the same way his trees did. These trees were influenced by Mondrian's engagement with cubism. John Milner in his discussion of Mondrian's work writes, 'As Mondrian's own Cubist techniques evolved, the image of the tree provided a kind of armature within the painting, organizing the relationships of the rhythmic arcs and almond-shaped spaces which they encompassed.'²

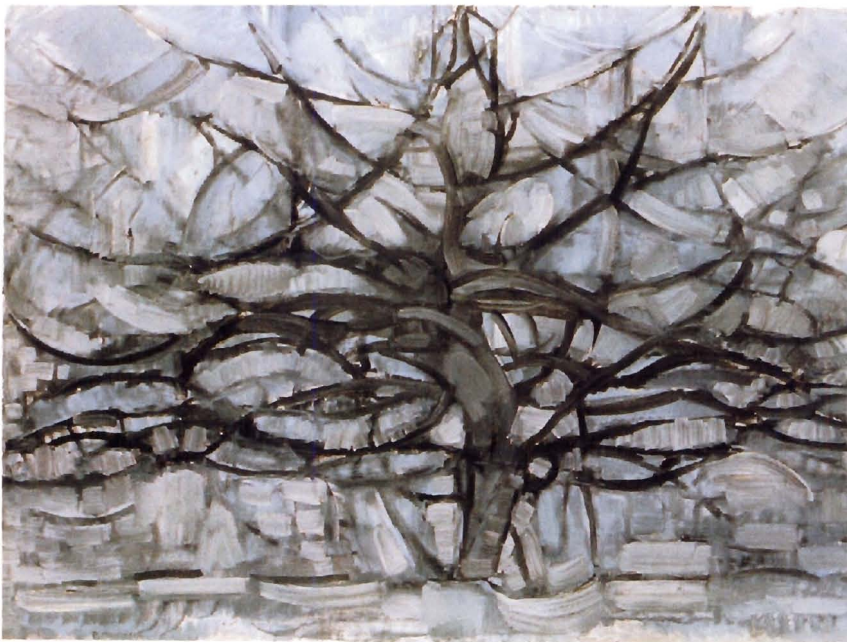


Fig. 26: Mondrian, Grey Tree, 1912

Deleuze discusses Mondrian's work in relation to attaining sensation. The form of abstraction that Mondrian developed was still related to optics and thought rather than material and sensation. According to Smith's interpretation of Deleuze

‘an abstract art like that of Mondrian or Kandinsky, though it rejected classical figuration, still retained an arsenal of abstract forms that tried to refine sensation, to dematerialize it, to reduce it to a purely optical code. It tended towards a plane of architectonic composition in which the painting became a kind of spiritual being, a radiant material that was primarily thought rather than felt, and called the spectator to a kind of ‘intellectual asceticism’.³

Mondrian's work kept the West's vertical and separate view of the world. It encouraged a view of place as managed and constructed by humans. I wanted to challenge this view and so I looked away from the vertical tree and its canopy and looked back down on the ground where I became mesmerised by the shadows. Here at my feet was the shifting shimmering world I was looking for. The shadows swayed and moved in the wind and were broken by the undulating terrain they fell on. And so I began two new series of works titled *Traces*, 2007 and *Dancing with Shadows*, 2007.

A book by Inga Clendinnen titled *Dancing with Strangers* recounted first contact stories of Europeans and Indigenous Australians dancing in some attempts at cross-cultural communication.⁴ These stories along with Tim Flannery's speech to Indigenous Australians, encouraged the possibility of using the model of the village common as a way of living on the same land but having different rights and obligations which could overlap and co-exist. This gave me hope that I could find a visual language that could develop a space for Indigenous and settler Australians to have a dialogue about the Land, a space that would acknowledge a spiritual presence in the land and a respect and acknowledgement of our obligations to the land and to each other.



Fig. 27: Jan Hogan *Dancing with Shadows in progress*, 2007, Gundaroo Common

The drawings of *Traces* and *Dancing with Shadows* were done on Japanese paper with Sumi ink, charcoal and dirt. The paper was dipped in the dam and placed under the shadows of the trees. I quickly reacted to the shadow forms tracing them on to the paper with Sumi ink and allowing them to

dry. Their fragile nature made them like a thin translucent membrane covering the earth showing the nature of the land beneath, accentuating the dips and bumps from the root system and also reflecting the shadows from the canopy. They exposed to me the lung-like nature of the tree with the paper as a



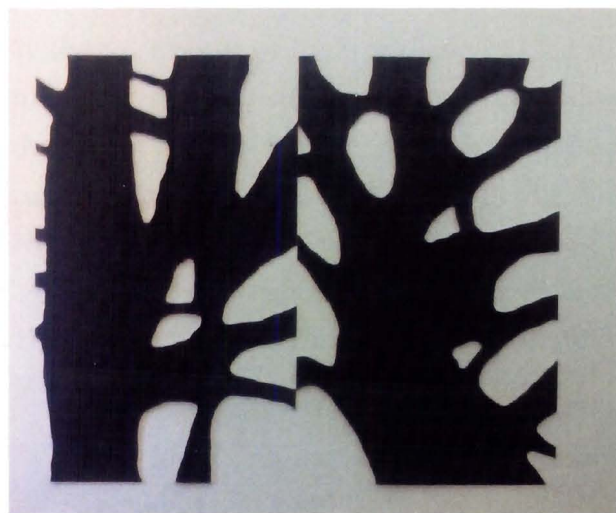
membrane between the lung in the roots beneath the ground and the lung in the leaves cleansing the air for us.

Fig. 28: Jan Hogan from Dancing with Shadows series, 2007

It was working with these shadows directly on the surface of the ground that enticed me further below the surface with a gradual awareness that the shadowy canopy was mirroring the sinuous root system that wound its way below the surface. For a while I lost my vertical, optical view of the world and enjoyed the sensual, physical world of the horizontal where particles of skin, water, charcoal and dust drift in the air settling and becoming transformed into the Land.

The remnant trees were to be a site of reverie but now they are in a state of flux where the shadows detach themselves from the ground and seep into my dreams. The crust of the earth no longer contains what lies beneath; it becomes a fluid boundary where different material realities intermingle. Matter is transposed from ground to tree to human in a continuing cycle. The fragile membrane of paper bears the traces of events, past and present, intentional and catastrophic. And floating to the surface in the detritus of our dreams is the past we have tried to bury.

I also started to do some woodcuts at the same site. The shadows of the trees seemed to have a presence. At times they were like liquid flowing across the ground and at other times they were like figures that could get up and follow me. The year before I had seen work done by an honours student, Antonia Aitken, where she made the negative spaces between the large rocks in Namadgi National Park into



positive forms. She drew the forms on large sheets of paper and then cut them out on large sheets of plywood. The unnerving spaces under the rocks formed themselves and took on the gallery wall. I was inspired by this technique of doing a woodcut and so I took large sheets of plywood out onto the common and painted the shadows directly on to the wood, which I cut out later with a jigsaw.

Fig. 29. Jan Hogan, woodcuts from The Shadows Form Themselves and Go, 2007

I show the process of these woodcuts in an attached visual essay. I did these pieces with no real concept of how I would work with them, whether they would be prints or sculptural forms. Aitken had presented hers in both formats and they worked quite differently. I titled these woodcuts *The Shadows Form Themselves and Go* after a stanza from Tennyson's *Memoriam* that I had often read.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands;
They melt like mist, the solid lands.
*Like clouds they shape themselves and go.*⁵

This stanza had often reminded me of my experiences in Central Australia where the hills and their shadows are remarkably mobile, traveling long distances across the desert plains. The shadow of Uluru seemed to haunt me when I lived there. In the afternoon I would drive towards the rock and just before the T-intersection at the rock the shadow would rush towards me. As I entered the shadow I would feel the presence of the rock and be silenced. This experience helped me to understand not only the work of Central Desert artists with their fields of shifting colours but also the work of Rover Thomas from the Kimberley. I would often think of his work, *The shade from the hill comes over and talks in language* when I was in the Northern Territory. I often recognised the presence of the land that it accentuated and its influence over the people who lived there.

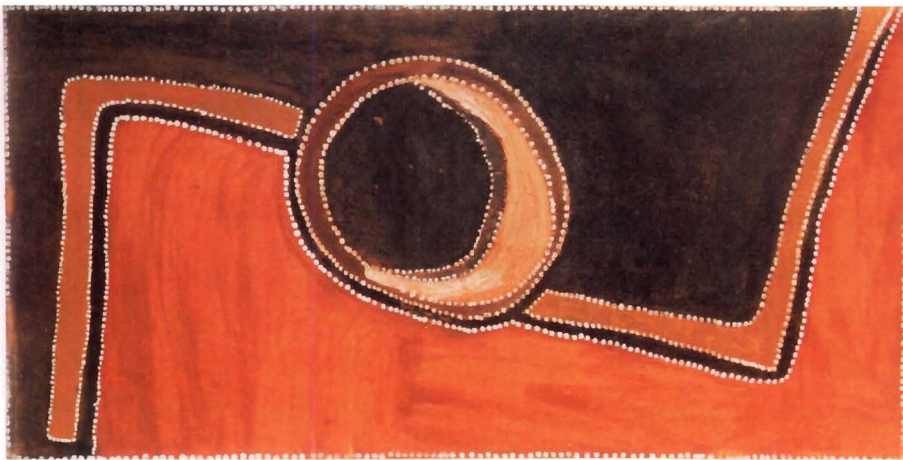


Fig. 30: Rover Thomas *The shade from the hill comes over and talks in language, 1984*

With the cut-outs of the tree shadows I felt they had this same seeping presence, the sensation that the shadows in the land could get up and follow us. I thought this was significant as the land contains the history of what happened to the Indigenous people even if it goes unacknowledged in European colonial histories. Many of the paintings by Indigenous artists recognise this history in the land. Louis Nowra wrote about the use of black by Rover Thomas and the white dots marking the boundaries as 'they corral the blackness – which then testifies to the solid permanence of the spiritual site'.⁶ In Rover Thomas' paintings of the Ruby Plains Killings, Nowra writes,

For Thomas the murdered have become part of the land. Travelling through this region is to know that the landscape has become an act of remembrance. The western painters would urgently tell us to remember this present incident. Thomas is telling us that the

victims, and therefore the memory of the killing times, have become one with the land and will always be remembered.⁷

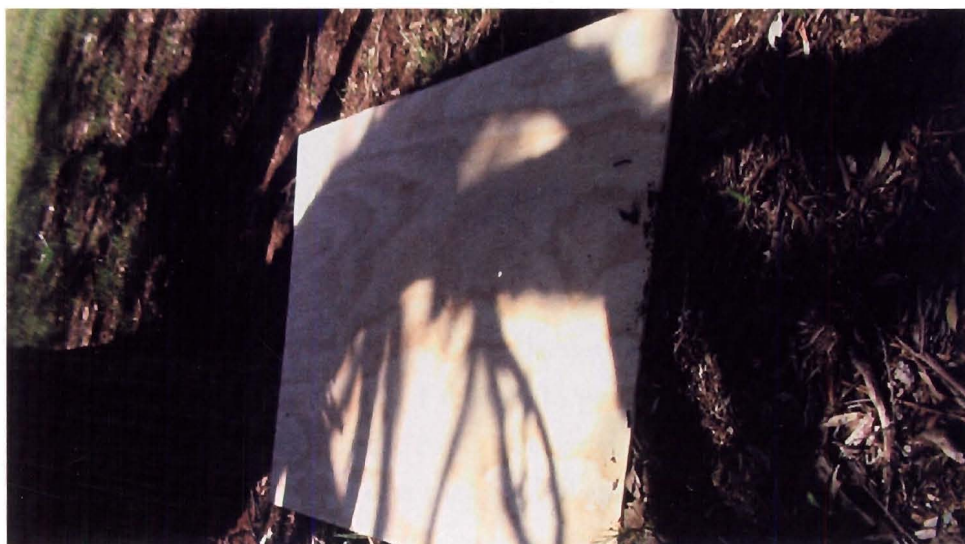


Fig. 31: Jan Hogan, work in progress, Gundaroo Common, 2007

For me these tree shadows have formed that significance. As I lay the plywood on the ground they seemed to be the lids of coffins waiting to be buried in the land but instead they stand up and follow us into our cultural institutions. However, the response to *Traces, Dancing with Shadows* and the tree cut outs was that they still seemed to be occupying the same space in the western art canon. The drawings could still be seen as if they were windows to a view separate from the viewer and the shadows were constantly recognised as trees. They were representations of trees that were easily and safely recognised.

Even though I was working from the shadows of a tree they still operated as a sign for 'tree'. This was problematic, as a symbol for a tree would have different connotations in different cultures. Its significance would be culturally bound, linked again to a narrative or to something that existed elsewhere, taking the power away from the work of art. However, I am still mesmerised by these shadows and will continue a negotiation with them until they start to resonate in a way that can be read across cultures. I am particularly interested in how they are directly informed by the Place of Gundaroo Common but are also informed through memory of my experiences in the Northern Territory and my readings of Indigenous Australian artworks.

By working with the shadows of the trees as they lay on the ground I became aware of the significance of the grasses. These grasses were constantly making their presence felt in my work. Their bumps would make black marks as I rubbed charcoal fingerprints on the paper and I gradually began to see these marks as a network of relationships connecting themselves through the drawing. I realised that more than anything on the Common, the grasses were the link between past and future and between the many uses of the land.

The Common contains native grasses that were part of the original woodlands of this area. They would have attracted wallabies and kangaroos and may have been an attractive hunting ground for

Indigenous Australians. These same grasses would have been attractive to the explorers and settlers as they traveled through the area as being suitable feed for cattle. As the common has been separated from the village, the native grasses have survived and become protected by legislation thus making the site important historically and environmentally. These grasses insure the survival of threatened species such as the Golden Sun Moth, Superb Parrot and Hoary Sunray.⁸

At this time I also did some drawing workshops with my son's Year 2 class. We did investigative drawings of the historic buildings in Gundaroo and also of the trees and plants found on their school grounds. These quick workshops reminded me of the fun of doing research drawings from nature. Like a scientist or botanist, I extracted the grasses from their environment and began to draw them. Whilst these drawings enabled me to understand the nature of an individual rhizome they maintained my western view of the world. I needed to go with them underground to see how they operated. I began by 'imprinting' with the roots of the rhizome on to the paper. This left a fine indexical mark of the roots and the actual dirt they moved through. I did several of these on the page and worked on connecting them and seeing how they travelled across the page. I was excited by the similarity in which a rhizome worked and the line worked. Both travelled through a surface, bringing meaning and animation to the ground. They 'cut' through the ground changing it forever and opening it up to many possibilities.



Fig. 32: Jan Hogan, grasses sketch, dirt and graphite on Arches, 2008

In my reading of Deleuze I came across his theory of *Rhizomes Versus Trees*, which mirrored exactly the shift I was going through in my drawing as I moved away from the tree references to what was happening under the ground. I had become fascinated in the way that rhizomes travelled in every direction; they had roots travelling down and across and grasses coming up into the air. They operated in the way I wanted my drawings to operate; they travel across and open up the surface but they could also reach out into the world of the viewer and include them in their system of operation. They also included the history and political systems reflected in the Common.

Deleuze summarizes

the principal characteristics of a rhizome: unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states . . . It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle [milieu] from which it grows and which it overflows.⁹

Taking on this shift from the tree to the rhizome I started a woodcut from my drawings on the grasses but not in a representational or mimetic way, I wanted to start an operation where the woodcuts took on the wall. My aim was to keep printing the woodcuts developing layers so that the wall would have a net or the possibility of infinite nets on it. As the woodcut was developed through multiple squares of wood due to the size and nature of the paper, I thought of the infinite ways in which it could be potentially printed. Each section could be printed on both sides and each of these sides printed in every direction and then printed on top of other sections in a myriad of ways. Certainly my mathematical skills were beyond working out the number of variations so I thought 'infinity' was a good description.



Fig. 33: Yayoi Kusama, *Infinity Nets*, 2005

and her obsessive compulsive disorder but I am far more interested in how they affect us, taking us into a different way of viewing the world. One that many of us may have experienced or if they haven't the works may develop an empathetic response from the viewer.

The artist Yayoi Kusama also did a series of drawings and installations based on infinity nets that were quite influential in my work. I was particularly inspired to take my work from a 'print' on a wall to taking on the nature of the wall itself. 'Infinity' reminds us of our small time on earth and I liked the way in which rhizomes taking on the wall hints at the eventual fate of the wall, it reminds us of the materiality of the world and its cyclical nature. The obsessive nature of Kusama's work also takes us into the realm of sensation and the psychological. Writings about her often refer to biographical details

In my woodcut *Infinity Nets*, 2008, I printed them according to an adaptation of a Japanese woodblock method shown to me by Wayne Crothers. In this technique the blocks are printed with Sumi ink on a thin Japanese paper, the ink is water based and can be watered down to make different tones. I particularly like the organic nature of this technique, which introduces elements of chance into the print. Each print is slightly different and bleeds slightly into the surrounding field, echoing more offshoots from the rhizomes. I printed the blocks several times and then glued them to the wall, taking away the 'preciousness' of the artprint and reintroducing its democratic and multiple nature. I also added the woodblocks over the prints, nailing them on to the wall seeing what happens when the matrix is included in the work.



Fig. 34: Jan Hogan, Infinity Nets, studio installation with matrix beneath, 2009

Whilst this seemed quite effective I was concerned with the 'mimetic' quality this introduced to the work and the way in which the matrix 'screened' the print. I preferred the organic, dancing quality of the prints by themselves and the way the paper took on the material qualities of the wall.

From this print I have decided to do a larger work that will take on a wall of the gallery where I present my final exhibition. This work is in progress but has been planned to take on the whole wall and so it will not have the framing edge of the smaller woodcut, the work will stop where the wall stops and hopefully hint at its continuation into its surrounding environment. At this stage the wood blocks will be placed on the ground beneath the wall, accentuating the source and the place of eventual rest. The development of these works is shown in an attached visual essay.

In my shift from the tree to a rhizome as a point of inquiry I hoped to isolate the work of art from a symbol or sign bound to a cultural reading to an understanding of the work through sensation. Through the process of working with materials through the body I wish to engage with the work in the

present , to engage with the space created by the artwork and to empathise with the work, stimulating a new way of thinking about the world. I believe that if the work is experienced it will be capable of having a cross-cultural dialogue.

Endnotes

¹ 'Rhizomes versus trees' is the title of an essay by Giles Deleuze cited in Boundas, Constantin V., *The Deleuze Reader*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993

² Milner, J. *Mondrian*, Phaidon Press, London, 1992, p. 98

³ Smith, Daniel W. 'Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality' in Patton, P. (ed.) *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1996, p. 43

⁴ Clendinnen, Inga, *Dancing with Strangers*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2003

⁵ Tennyson, Lord Alfred, 1809–1892 from *In Memoriam A.H.H.* (XXIII), no. 123, published 1850

⁶ Nowra, Louis 'Blackness in the Art of Rover Thomas', *Art and Australia*, Vol 35 No 1 1997, p. 94

⁷ Nowra, Louis 'Blackness in the Art of Rover Thomas', *Art and Australia*, Vol 35 No 1 1997, p. 99

⁸ Sign on Gundaroo Common erected by the Gundaroo Common Trust with a grant by NSW Department of the Environment, 2002

⁹ Boundas, Constantin V. *The Deleuze Reader*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, pp. 35–6

Visual Essay 4: *Rhizomes versus Trees*

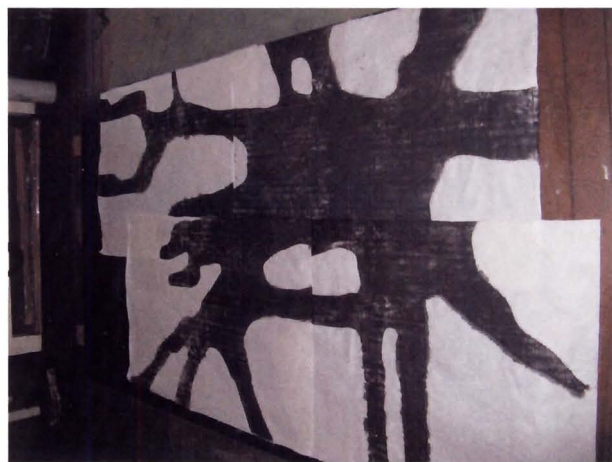
In which the artist makes woodcuts from the shadows of remnant forest on Gundaroo Common.



Visiting artist Wayne Crothers demonstrates his printing technique with artist's woodcut.

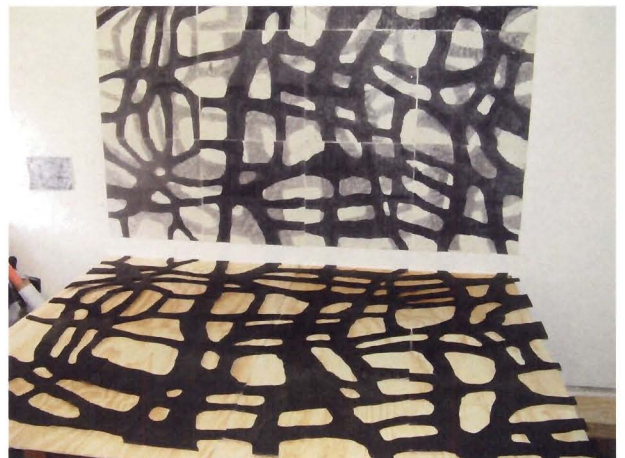


In which The Shadows are placed in different circumstances.



In which the process of drawing, cutting, printing and hanging *Infinity Nets* is shown.



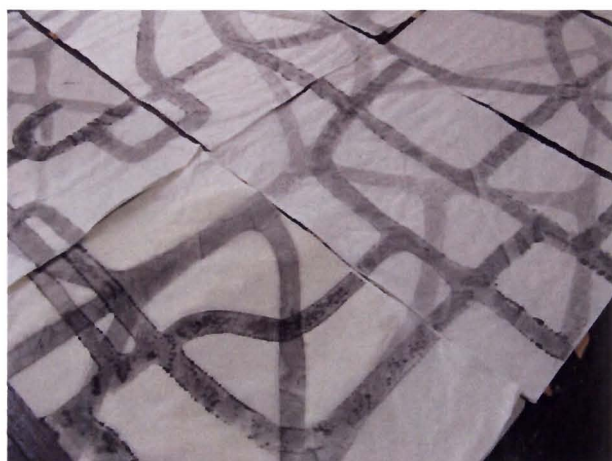
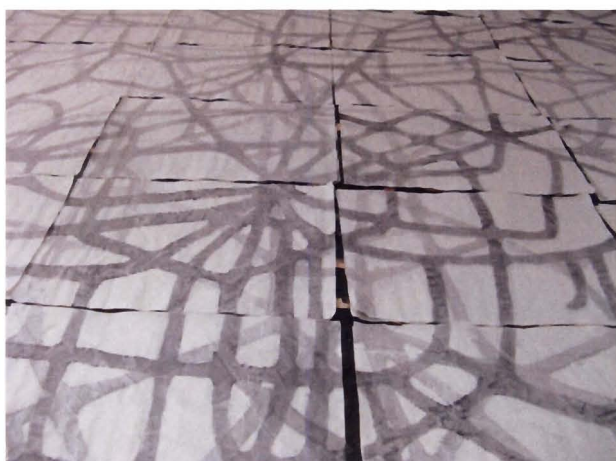




The process of the large site-specific woodcut is shown.







Conclusion

I began my research into the possibility of a cross-cultural dialogue in the visual arts through the site of Gundaroo Common with the hope that I would learn a new way to be in the land. I have been excited by how much has shifted for me in my understanding of how art can be a form of knowledge, a way of learning about the world. Rather than drawing being used to depict the world conceived *a priori* to material constraints, drawing has become for me a model for learning about the world and for having a dialogue with the land and its inhabitants. By using the process of drawing as the way of developing meaning rather than representing meaning held elsewhere I believe it can be a model for cross-cultural dialogue.

Through a shift away from narrative held within a work of art which remains culturally bound and needing translation across cultures I began to focus on how sensation within an artwork may allow a dialogue to develop. In my first chapter I showed how I developed a way of working and thinking that focuses on how the body interacts with the world and develops a sense of place. Using a phenomenological understanding of the world a work of art may be understood across cultures as the commonality of the human body accessing ways of being in the world. How the body learns and operates in the world may be a common ground for a dialogue.

Jennifer Biddle argues that contemporary women's paintings from Central Australia have moved away from the story and are interested in causing sensation in the viewer. The artists began to realise that the paintings directed the attention to the story, away from the work to something that exists elsewhere. Biddle argues that white Australians have privileged the story but not understood its importance; they have not understood the worldview on offer. She writes,

I am not concerned with what these paintings mean but what they do. And what they do, to put it crudely, is to engender a way of being that is otherwise at threat. These paintings have arisen in a context of ongoing assailing effects of colonialism – dispossession, displacement, land rights, native title – and can be seen as a writing back to an institutionalized incapacity of Europeans to 'recognise' Aboriginal ways of being (von Sturmer 1995). If these works operate to induce a profusion of bodily responses and experiences, they do so in a climate where indeed there has been a failure to hear otherwise.¹

I propose that the work generated by this research project is a reply, an engagement with the dialogue initiated by Indigenous Australians. I do not wish to appropriate designs or to engage with what happens visually on the surface of Indigenous paintings but rather explore another way of being in the land, one in which our bodies are immersed in the land with responsibilities and commitments to the environment around us.

By immersing myself in Gundaroo Common and exploring it with the processes and materials of art making I have developed a new way of drawing and thinking that I believe is more conducive for

a dialogue. Edward Casey provided a framework for me to approach place through the body rather than through an optical and intellectual analysis. In this way I became immersed in the common and developed sensitivity to its many nuances.

In the series *Emergence* I developed a process that enabled me to learn from the land. Through drawing directly on the ground the paper became a sensitive membrane that could hold traces from the land and from me. This interaction revealed many aspects of the ground that I had not been aware of and allowed traces to become sedimented layers in the work. In this series I learnt to consider drawing as a generative tool in research, it moved from research and experimentation to developing meaning and creating a new space for dialogue. The nature of the process with its continual mark making, layering with dirt and erasure reveals many of the processes that allows humans to make a site into a place of significance.

As my work developed I began to see the possibility of sensation as a way to communicate the potential presence of the spiritual in the work. Howard Morphy's explanation of how the Yolngu use 'shimmer' in their work as a means of making the viewer aware of an ancestral presence suggests ways in which we may communicate across cultures the significance of a place. Once again it is how the body responds to sensation in a work that allows a dialogue.

In the 2nd chapter I elaborated on the importance of space to a dialogue in the visual arts. By unnerving the viewers understanding of space they may begin to question the world and their understanding of it. I show how I changed from a linguistic framework for my research to a sensation based one. Affect theory as Jill Bennett discusses it allows for works of art to be understood through memory and all the senses. The work does not need to be translated as the emotional and physical affect it has on the viewer can communicate its meaning.

With the smaller off-cuts of the *Emergence* series I started a dialogue with the work of Montien Boonma. Through the process of drawing I managed to get a greater understanding of his work *Drawing of the Mind Training* and realise the differences and commonalities in our worldviews. Boonma was very generous in opening up his culture for understanding by other cultures and I tried to develop a similar openness in my work only to discover that I still had a lot to learn about the land I live in. The series *The Land came between us* is a continuing investigation of my understanding of my culture. Like Boonma's drawings they are a meditation but they have not yet arrived at a stable state, they continue shifting as I search for what the land means to settler culture.

In the 3rd chapter I revealed how I still had important issues to deal with in the visual arts and how I worked through these. Drawing's fundamental exploration of mark and surface became an intrinsic part of the meaning to my work. The mark shifted from being charcoal on a paper to being the paper on the land. This enabled me to really question aspects of my art practice and how it exposes my worldview. I believe these discoveries continue the dialogue across cultures through the visual arts. They have assisted me in viewing works of art about country at a deeper level. Through my drawing on a site for over three years I realise how much knowledge and understanding of the interaction between humans and place that an artist like Emily Kngwarreye brings to a work.

In my final chapter I discussed the development of my work from a tree metaphor to a rhizome way of thinking. This shift took away the difficulty of signs and symbols that need translating across cultures or that have significantly different meanings. The tree is a powerful symbol in many cultures and may have closed the work down to an interpretation of the sign. By focusing on the operation of rhizomes and how they open up a ground for many different layers of meaning I hoped to allow a zone for difference to be able to occupy the same space. In this way a dialogue may be initiated.

I aimed for the works to bear traces of the processes used, and to occupy an ambiguous space. In this way the works pose questions about our relationship to place and challenge our visual readings of the world around us. They develop a space between matter and perception that opens up a negotiation with a spiritual understanding of the world or at least allow the possibility for a space for spirituality to occupy.

In an inquiry into my own understanding of place and through an investigation of other works of art I want to see the possibilities of what will develop from a cross-cultural dialogue. According to Jennifer Biddle in her discussion on contemporary Central Desert women artists the dialogue is already underway,

A gift is on offer. What is being asked for here is our participation in this ongoing responsibility to make, to remake, country: to partake in what amounts to a denial of differentiation of body from canvas, country from Ancestral body, viewing subject from painting subject, Kardiya from Yapa, Whitefella from Black.²

Perhaps Indigenous artists are painting for a white audience to get us to understand the importance of the land we all live on. My aim is to investigate this possibility and find a way through process to engage ethically with the land and all its inhabitants. To develop a visual language that settler Australians can recognise as a way of belonging in the land and to continue a dialogue to find a way difference can sit together in the same space. I believe there is a moral responsibility for settler Australians to engage with Indigenous worldviews and learn new ways of understanding the land we live in. As Biddle states 'a gift is on offer' and we need to reply in the same generosity of spirit and try and find a space that can open up for negotiation.

This approach to art is the outcome of my research questions and methodology. I set in place the parameters of place, space and spirituality as possible common areas of interest to investigate. My focus has been to occupy a site and work my way in to the land through the materials and processes of drawing. I entered into a dialogue with the land and managed to shift my Eurocentric vision enough to consider other ways of being in the land. Rather than relying on sight and rational analysis I began to learn from the land through other senses. My research led me to the pursuit of sensation as a reaction to my work. I learnt that the inclusion of the viewer in the work is required for a dialogue. To engage all the senses allows the viewer's body to understand the work and opens up a zone for negotiation across cultures. Rather than my work becoming resolved in the sense of a composition I have endeavoured to make my works remain active, to appear as if they are in a state of 'becoming'

or decay. This active state enables the viewer to make their own decisions about the land and their relationship to it. Hopefully the response will be an ethical and moral one.

Endnotes

- 1 Biddle, J. *Breasts, Bodies, Canvas; Central Desert Art as Experience*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2007, p. 39
- 2 Biddle, J. *Breasts, Bodies, Canvas; Central Desert Art as Experience*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2007, p. 105

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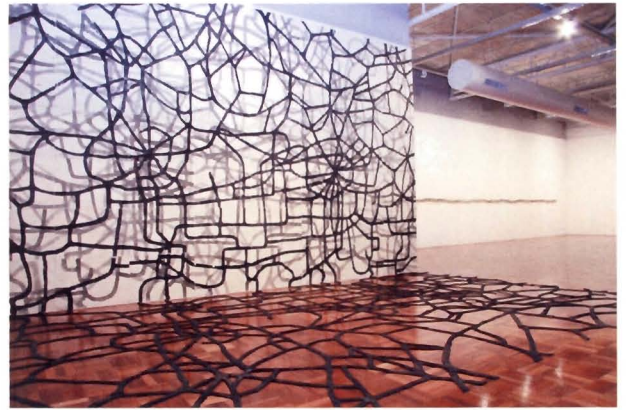
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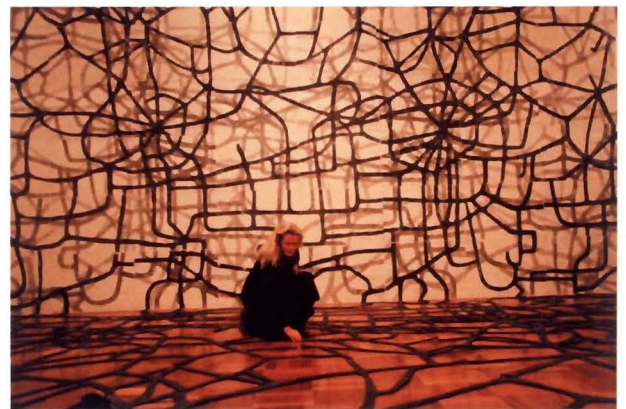
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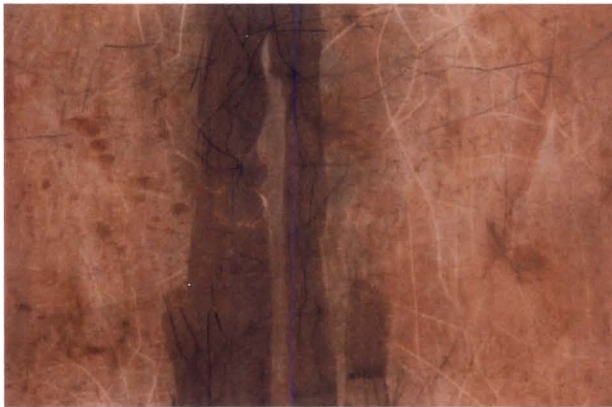
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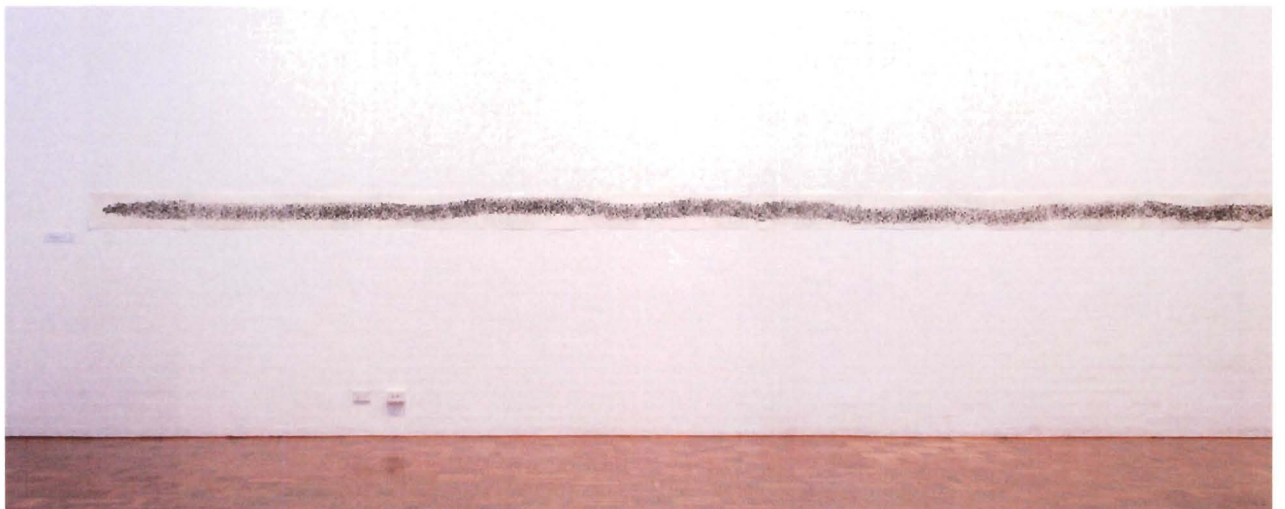
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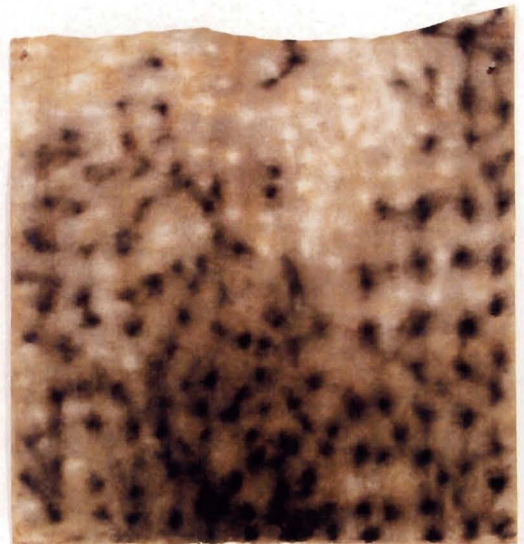
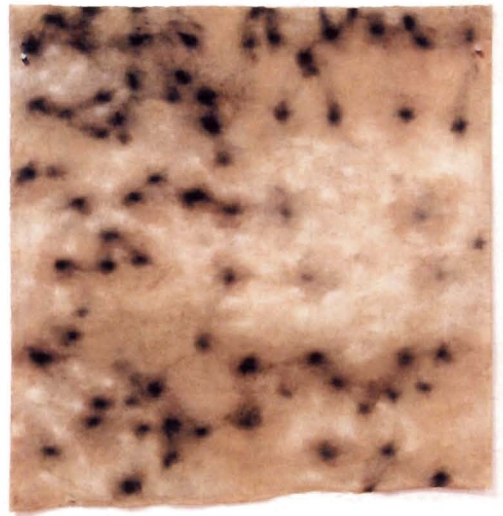
Common Line



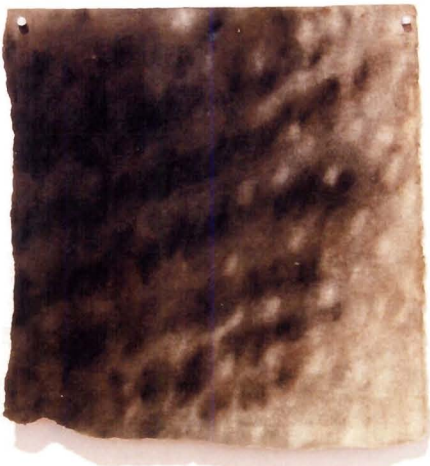
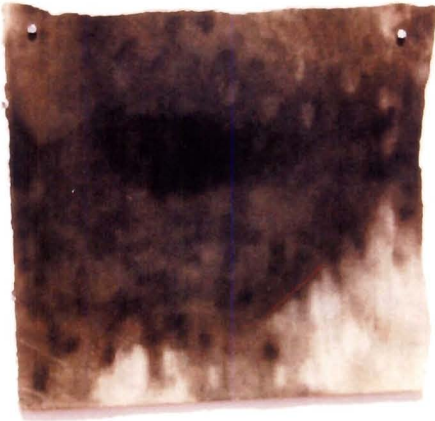
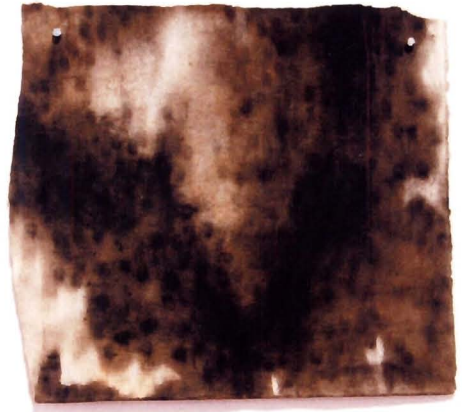
Common Touch



Emergence



The Land Between Us



Curriculum Vitae

JAN HOGAN

BORN 1963, Sydney, New South Wales

EDUCATION

- 2006–09 PhD, candidate, Canberra School of Art, ANU
1992–95 Master of Art (Visual Arts)
Canberra School of Art, Institute of the Arts, ANU
1987–89 Bachelor of Arts (Visual)
College of Fine Arts, University of NSW.
1984–85 Art Certificate
East Sydney Technical College

EMPLOYMENT

- 2006–08 Occasional guest lecturer, ANU
2005 Visiting Artist & Lecturer, Printmedia & Drawing
Canberra School of Art, ITA, ANU
2002 Visiting Artist & Lecturer, Printmedia & Drawing
Canberra School of Art, ITA, ANU
1999–2000 Lecturer, (P/T), Printmaking Department
College of Fine Arts, University of NSW
1996–98 Lecturer, Printmaking Department, School of Fine Arts
Northern Territory University
1995 Lecturer, (P/T), Printmaking Department
College of Fine Arts, University of NSW
Lecturer, (P/T), Printmaking Department
National Art School, East Sydney Technical College
Tutor and Guest Lecturer, (P/T), Art Theory Department
Canberra School of Art, ITA, ANU
Custom Printer, Studio One, Canberra
Research Assistant, Canberra School of Art, ITA, ANU
1994 Lecturer in life drawing, (P/T), Canberra School of Art, ITA, ANU
1992–95 Lithography Lecturer in Open Art program, Canberra School of Art, ITA, ANU
1991–93 Lithography teacher and custom printer, Studio One - Printmaking workshop

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2009 *Becoming*, ANU School of Art Gallery, Canberra
2007 *Dancing with Shadows*, Foyer Gallery, ANU School of Art, Canberra
2005 *The Fourth Day*, Grahame Galleries + Editions, Brisbane

- 1998 *The Deluge*, 24HR Art, NT Contemporary Art Space, Darwin
 1997 *The Promised Womb*, aGOG, Canberra
 1996 *Chain of Being*, Studio One, Canberra
 1993 *In the Beginning*, Photospace, Canberra

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2007 *Caring for Land*, Australian National Botanic Gardens, Canberra
TROUBLE, ANU School of Art Gallery, Canberra
Phoenix Art Prize 2007, ANU School of Art Gallery, Canberra
Water, Water, Foyer Gallery, ANU School of Art, Canberra
- 2006 *Unbound: artists' books from the collection*, State Library of Queensland
- 2005 *Hazelhurst Art Award*, Hazelhurst Regional Art Gallery, NSW
Hobart Art Prize, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Tas
Willoughby Art Prize, Sutherland Regional Gallery, NSW
- 2004 *33rd Alice Prize*, The Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, NT
- 2004 *2004 National Works On Paper Award*, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Victoria
- 2004 *Contemporary Australian Prints from the Collection*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW
- 2004 *Swan Hill Print and Drawing Acquisitive Awards*, Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery, Victoria
- 2004 *The 2004 John Glover Art Prize*, 'Falls Park Hall', Evandale, Tasmania
- 2004 *John Leslie Art Award*, Gippsland Art Gallery, Sale, Victoria
- 1999 *Shifting Currents*, COFA Staff Show, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney.
- 1998 *Fremantle Print Award*, Fremantle Arts Centre.
- 1996 *Polish/Canberra Lithography Exchange*, Gallery of Fine Art, Lodz, Poland.
Fremantle Print Award, Fremantle Arts Centre.
Artist's Books Fair, Brisbane.
- 1995 *Wild Cargo*, Masters Graduating Exhibition, Canberra School of Art Gallery, Canberra.
God Save The Queen, Members Show, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra
Interlude, COFA Staff Show, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney.
Borderlines, Spiral Arm Gallery, Canberra.
- 1994 *The print, the press, the artist and the printer . . .*, ANU Drill Hall Gallery, Canberra.
Passages of Time, Long Gallery, Wollongong.
Exhibition of Visual Art, Australian Universities International, Australian High Commission, Singapore.

- 1994 *Artist's Books*, Grahame Galleries, Brisbane.
Artist's Book Fair, Brisbane
- 1993 *Students Print Art*, Machida City Museum of Graphic Art, Tokyo.
- 1992 *92 Pressing*, Spiral Arm Gallery, Canberra.
Raft Press Book Project, National Library, Canberra.
C.S.A. Student Drawing Exhibition, Foyer Gallery, Canberra.
- 1991 *The Seahorse*, Ralph Wilson Theatre, Canberra.
- 1990 *Telecom Art Award*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney.
- 1989 *Graduating Students Exhibition*, The Works Gallery, Sydney.
National Student's Art Award, Mitchell College, Bathurst.
 Invited Artist, *Sydney Printmakers Annual Exhibition*, Blaxland Gallery, Sydney.
Three Way Print Show, The Works Gallery, Sydney.
- 1988 *National Student's Art Award*, Mitchell College, Bathurst.
Women's Show, Cell Block Theatre, Sydney.
- 1988 Invited Artist, *Sydney Printmakers Annual Exhibition*, Blaxland Gallery, Sydney.
Sydney Printmakers Exhibition, Macquarie University, Sydney.
- 1987 *Exchange Print Exhibition*, Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney.
- 1985 *Graduating Student's Show*, Cell Block Theatre, Sydney.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2007 *Caring for Land*, exhibition and forum, Australian National Botanic Gardens, Canberra
- 2001 Presentation, *Islands in the Sun*, Print Symposium, NGA
- 1998 Artist-in-residence, School of Art, Wollongong University
- 1997–98 Co-ordinator of Australasian Print Project, Print workshop, Northern Territory University
- 1995 Printing and production of Artist's Books for Anne Brennan for the exhibition *Secure the Shadow*, at the Greenway Gallery, Hyde Park Barracks Museum, Sydney
- 1995 Exchange Portfolio, a collection of prints by artists from Canberra, Hobart, Melbourne, Sydney.

AWARDS & GRANTS

- 2008 Konika Minolta Postgraduate Award
- 2007 Graduate Materials award, Canberra School of Art, ANU
 Fieldtrip grant, ANU
- 2006 ANU Postgraduate Award, PhD Scholarship
- 1998 SOCOG grant for Australasian Print Project as part of Sea Change Festival.
- 1997 Sponsorship for the exhibition, *The Promised Womb*, Northern Territory Government, Department of Arts and Museums

- 1997 Australia Council Grant for Australasian Print Project
- 1996 Project Grant: New Work, Visual Arts/Craft Fund, Australia Council
- 1996 Project Grant for Artist's Books collaboration, Northern Territory University
- 1996 Skills development grant to attend the 2nd Asia-Pacific Triennial conference, NT Office of the Arts and Cultural Affairs
- 1990 Oxford Art Printmaking Award for Graduating Student.

CITATIONS

- 2007 *Treasures from the Heritage Collections 2006/2007*, catalogue, State Library of Queensland, pp. 13–14
Trouble, Exhibition Catalogue, ANU, Canberra
- 1998 Tremblay, Theo, 'Lithographers of Canberra in Poland', *IMPRINT*, Vol 33, #3, p. 26
- 1997 Grishin, Sasha, 'Little Gems of Lithographs', *Canberra Times*, p. 20, 1/12/97
- 1994 Grishin, Sasha, *Canberra Printmakers, Printers and their Audience*, Catalogue Essay, Canberra
- 1992 *Art Monthly*, Australia, July, # 51
- 1992 *IMPRINT*, Spring, Vol. 27, #3

PUBLICATION

- 2009 Hogan, J., 'Drawing as Dialogue', *Art Monthly Australia*, #220, June 2009

COLLECTIONS

- Artbank
- Art Gallery of NSW
- James Hardie Collection of Australian Fine Art,
State Library of Queensland
- Northern Territory University Art Collection
- College of Fine Art collection, University of NSW
- Colin Biggers and Paisley law firm, Sydney
- The Printmaking collection, Canberra School of Art, ITA, ANU
- TAFE College, Toowoomba

1. Transitions: Land, Mark, and Spirit

Looking for a new visual language about land that acknowledges and respects the Indigenous inhabitants of Australia.

2. Outline

How does an abstract mark communicate notions of transcendence? Can these marks be read across cultures? My thesis will be an investigation into the concept of visual language as a means of developing a dialogue about concepts of land in Australia. What is the role of abstraction in investigating notions of spirituality? Is it possible to change views of country through abstract images? Through an analysis of the imagery, materials used and cultural belief systems I will examine the possibilities of dialogue through art.

How do we read abstract images across cultures? Can they reveal cultural beliefs? How is knowledge gained, lost or misinterpreted? I am interested in how visual language can be used to have a cross-cultural dialogue. My main interest is in place and spirituality. These two areas are intrinsically linked to specific cultures. How can such regionally specific interests be communicated and appreciated in a broader context? Through the process and analysis of drawing I will investigate the intention and cultural significance behind a mark and how that is communicated through visual language. What importance is the performance of the drawing, as different notions of recording an event can shift across cultures?

3. Studio Practice Component

CONTEXT

My aim is to develop the language of abstraction as it pertains to spirituality and place. I intend to use drawing and printmedia to develop a visual language that will communicate about the land and culture of settler Australians and our search to be placed in the land. I believe that this is only possible if we have a spiritual connection to the place we live in and that is communicated and expressed in our art and culture. Underlying this investigation is an acknowledgement of the indigenous inhabitants of this country and their multivalent relationship with their land.

Through a series of exhibitions comprising drawings and prints I aim to develop my visual language. I will pursue visual art as a form of knowledge that can construct and inform us about the nature of the world and our human condition. I am particularly interested in the abstract space that happens within an artwork and that can convey meaning across cultures and across different forms of knowledge.

ISSUES

Art is a reflection of a society's belief systems. I believe it is of paramount importance to find a language that acknowledges and accepts the Aboriginal people of Australia. I wish to develop images

that acknowledge the presence of Indigenous people and the colonial processes that dislocated them from their land, culture and family. With this acknowledgement a language may emerge that allows difference to be acknowledged and respected and will allow us to sit together in this country and respect and care for it.

Issues of spirituality and place, which incorporates investigations of cultural belief systems, colonisation and ecology, will underpin this investigation. In modern culture, theories of the Big Bang, evolution, wave particles and genetic coding are part of our thought structure. Our visual language incorporates images of the universe from satellites and telescopes as well as DNA structures, microbes and sub-atomic particles. These images are often read into abstraction from western culture but can they be read cross-culturally? Are there equivalent clues and images in other art traditions? Scientific theories of how our eyes and brain receive and analyse images will be investigated to see if images can be constructed to challenge the way we view. Often images result from an interaction with materials that also play with our perception and these techniques become part of an art tradition. The phenomenology of art is an important part of the project as I search for a new language.

METHODS AND OUTCOMES

Drawing will be my primary process for investigation. I intend to develop series of drawings that investigate specific places. These places are chosen due to their significance to me in the development of my relationship with this land. A constant investigation will be sites around Gundaroo, NSW, where I live with my family. These sites are part of my daily life and I will continually investigate my relationship to these sites and the issues that are revealed through thoughtful process and research. This research incorporates site-specific investigations where I develop the processes and materials that are appropriate for my intentions. Other sites will be chosen as I develop my contacts with artists and we choose places to investigate. These will be around Canberra, at places chosen by our community as worth protecting such as Namadgi National Park and Wee Jasper and also further afield as I investigate places that have been instrumental in developing my investigation such as Darwin, Uluru, Kakadu and sites in western NSW and around Brisbane.

Artists Books: My site-specific research results in hundreds of research drawings in different materials and processes. These drawings are roughly grouped together in Artists Books, which I think of as a Visual Language library. These include notebooks, sketches, rubbings and more finished drawings that are conceived as Artists Books.

Drawings: After the initial investigations I arrive at the methods and materials most appropriate to the issues being pursued. I then develop a series of large drawings that relate to each other and elaborate on the themes and issues underlying the work. In the development of the series I will allow the number of works, scale and materials to be decided in response to the site and the issues being covered. An important aspect of the drawings is my response to the materials and ground on the site. I use dams and rivers for soaking the paper, ochres for colour and the ground itself for rubbings.

Lithographs: I intend to do lithographs about the sites I visit. These will use the lithographic processes to develop certain aspects of the sites. Lithography offers the use of the multiple, the possibility of

recording the development and metamorphosis of an image, through erasure and re-drawing. That it is used on stones imported to the region adds another inherent layer to the image. Lithography has an ability to produce a distinctive wash that conveys meaning due to its formation from time and on a geological formation that is especially relevant to my subject matter. Another quality of lithography is the beauty of deletions of the image that give a new texture but gives clues to what was present before.

Etchings: During my Masters degree I developed a series of etchings based on the colonisation of Australia. I aim to take these prints back into the land and see the transformation of colonial imagery in contact with natural processes. I will also take fresh etching plates out to specific sites and work directly on to them. These will be presented in small series, in book or folio form or to be presented on the wall.

Wall Drawings: Part of my investigation is pursued on the walls of my studio. I draw directly on the wall in charcoal and use this process to try out different marks to develop a visual language. This refers to the different history of making marks in our lived environment, from cave paintings, religious frescoes and the painted prayers on houses in parts of India. The ritualistic and humbling, time-consuming process leads to important discoveries about the art process and myself. The studio wall drawings are intended as a personal investigation. However, I hope that it will lead to the ability to do site-specific wall drawings in other locations.

CONTEXT

Abstract art has been interpreted in many ways since its inception into the Modernist art canon. I am interested in the pursuit of the spiritual in abstraction rather than Greenberg's formal interpretation of the flat picture plane. Modernist artists such as Mondrian and Malevich pursued a program of abstraction that could be read as images of spirituality. However, I perceive myself more aligned to many of the women who work within or alongside the dominant modernist tradition. Artists such as Eva Hesse and Agnes Martin managed to produce works that subtly revalue the conventions of abstraction and minimalism. My aim is to depart from this western tradition of art and, through a cross-cultural dialogue with art from Asia and indigenous artists, make it pertinent to Australia.

I am particularly interested in artists locating themselves in the Land and looking for an alternative to western landscape traditions to communicate the importance of land to culture and spirituality. There have been debates as to whether some Aboriginal art traditions can be regarded as abstracts. There is a responsibility in looking at art to read the operation of the work and the intention of the artist. The Asia-Pacific Triennials have been an intrinsic part of opening up cross-cultural visual dialogue. Artists such as Ufan Lee have presented abstract images whose spiritual content is apparent to most viewers. I am particularly interested in his etchings and drawing, which are held at the Queensland Art Gallery. Sue Lovegrove in her unpublished dissertation researched Ufan Lee and other artists of the Korean school of Monochrome Painting. The Asia Pacific Triennials have been a very exciting forum for cross-cultural dialogue in the arts. There has been a range of debates and discussions about how traditions have changed and developed through their interaction with other traditions. My research into abstract space, place and metaphysics will be a further engagement with this dialogue.

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