
Inspirational Landscapes

Volume 2: Perspective Essays

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
This report	1
Commissioning the Essays	1
Perspectives essay writers	1
Copyright and intellectual property	1
LANDSCAPE OF THE COUNTRY WHICH MY FAMILY CALLS 'HOME'	2
TO THE CENTRE	5
A SORT OF SCIENTIST ON INSPIRING LANDSCAPES	9
BREATH AND REVELATION	12
LAND\$CAPE; GOLD AND WATER.	16
OUR LANDSCAPES	21
SEEKING THE SPECTACULAR	24
A CONSERVATIONIST'S PERSPECTIVE ON INSPIRATIONAL LANDSCAPES	28
JASPER GORGE, NT	34
LIVING WITH LANDSCAPE	37

INTRODUCTION

This report

The Perspectives Essays formed an important component of the Inspirational Landscape project. Volume 1: Project Report explains the overall project and the role played by the Perspectives Essays.

Commissioning the Essays

Experts from a range of different areas of landscape expression such as artists, writers, environmental activists, scientists were invited to prepare short *perspective essays*.

The invited essay contributors were selected to ensure that their contributions would provide:

- Inspirational and creative approaches
- A diversity of cultural perceptions
- A response to different landscapes and environments across Australia
- Different ways of responding to inspirational landscapes.

As well, the selected essay contributors were those who could write with clarity and passion about the subject of inspirational landscapes.

Each perspectives essay is around 1500-2000 words. A small honorarium was paid to each essay writer.

The *perspectives* essays were important as 'discussion starters' for the On-line Conference (see Volume 3) on Inspirational Landscapes and as an important source of ideas and approaches for the project as a whole.

Perspectives essay writers

The essays follow in the next sections of the report. They are also available on the web-site.

Robyne Bancroft (Indigenous heritage practitioner) - *Landscape of the country which my family calls 'home'*

Veronica Brady (Roman Catholic nun & academic) - *To the Centre*

Jamie Kirkpatrick (Ecologist, geographer & gardener) - *A sort of scientist on inspiring landscapes*

Jeff Malpas (Philosopher & academic) - *Breath and revelation*

Mandy Martin (Artist & lecturer) - *Land\$cape: Gold & Water*

Stephen Martin (Writer & researcher) - *Our Landscapes*

Sally Morgan (Artist & writer) - *Seeking the Spectacular*

Dailan Pugh (Conservationist & artist) - *A conservationist's perspective on inspirational landscapes*

Deborah Bird Rose (Life-affirming scholar & academic) - *Jasper Gorge, NT*

Jim Sinatra & Phin Murphy (Landscape Architecture professionals) - *Living with Landscape*

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LANDSCAPE OF THE COUNTRY WHICH MY FAMILY CALLS 'HOME'

Robyne Bancroft

Robyne Bancroft is Gumbaingerr born of Bundjalung Thungutti descent. She is an Elder in her community and is mostly involved with cultural heritage issues. Robyne is proud to have represented Australia at a UNESCO Conference on 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' at the Smithsonian Institute in Washing DC in 1999. She is also a graduate in archaeology from Australian National University. Robyne worked as a researcher on The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia and as cultural consultant on The Oxford Companion to Art and Literature. Robyne is currently employed as a Cultural Heritage Officer.

Many Aboriginal people in Australia regard landscape in ways common to their own life experiences, which differs from the white perspective of land and landscape. Many Aboriginal people consider the land to be sacred. This relationship includes the use of natural resources, social organisations, values and laws. Traditional knowledge is handed down in the form of story telling, knowing the place names within the landscape and being at one with the flora and fauna of that area. Creation stories relate special features within the landscape and involve the earth, the sky, the elements, directions, seasons and the ancestor's spirits of that landscape.

I acknowledge the great diversity and individuality of Aboriginal people and my clan is proud to be part of the strong revitalisation of cultural heritage that is now occurring. My people, the Djanbun people, of the Washpool area of northeastern New South Wales have an intimate knowledge of the land of our ancestors. Oral and cultural traditions are continued when the family return home from far and wide for the beginning of each year 'ceremony' time. What does this special time mean? It means that it is a time of renewing contact with the ancestors, with the landscape and with the clan, reinforcing cultural values and involves all members participating and contributing in some way to the special ceremony of the day.

The white man came to our country in 1840. Our clan and family lives were shattered. We were chased with rifles from the land where we used to hunt and fish. Thousands of sheep brought into our country had a devastating effect on the local native animals and plants. The kangaroos all but disappeared. Shooting our people and our animal food resources was a sport for the first squatters to come to our home. However, a small group of between 8 and 10 people of our clan survived. They did this by knowing where to hide and what resources to use to survive; they knew their landscape. Soon a move was made by the local squatter and his brother to persuade our group of their 'honourable' intentions as they set out to steal our land and its resources. These 'new' people desperately needed shepherds for the sheep that now ran amuck and they needed labourers to help them establish themselves on what they now called 'their land'. Our group resisted and Aboriginal people were brought in from other areas for this work. Only when two members of our group were left and both suffering from ill health did they come down from the hills to the outskirts of the squatters 'land'.

We welcome you to share a part of our special gathering. We remember the survival of our clan at the yearly ceremonies. The most important aspect of our ceremony is the 'smoking' and 'cleansing' undertaken by all family present. We have a special area, which was our clans meeting place and is now ours. On this sacred site people met, this was where rules of conduct, customs, rituals and offerings were made. This is where the descendants of the original custodians continue to meet.

We begin by gathering rocks from the river and using them to make a sacred circle on the riverbank. This circle has a small opening facing the rising sun, the east, and extending about three-quarters of a metre. In the middle of the circle we light a small gum leaf fire and put a coolamon of crushed ochre and also a container of water in the circle. Our Elders have 'meditated' while the younger ones gathered the river stone. At the appropriate time, an Elder with a novice younger adult stands in the circle with another Elder at the entrance. The

members of the group walk slowly, one at a time, clockwise into and around the inside of the circle while an Elder waves smoke from the fire onto the person standing halfway around the inner circle. The inner wrists and the forehead are daubed with a dot of ochre on each area and 'special words' are spoken to that person. They then continue walking leaving the circle the way they entered. At this time another Elder sprinkles the 'water of life' onto our person by dipping gum leaves in a container of water then shaking the leaves on each person as they leave the circle. Babies are carried by their mothers and are part of the same process.

This spiritual cleansing is to prepare clan members to 'walk' into the next year with health and happiness, remembering country and each one's place within the country of their ancestors. After the ceremony is completed we then form a circle and reaffirm our 'being' within the landscape. We promote awareness of our clans 'being' and we believe in sharing knowledge. Women play an important part in life for us and it is to the mother spirit that we dedicate our ceremony, so that our young ones never forget that they are from a matrilineal group within an east coast matrilineal nation. Throughout the ceremony we continually ask our ancestors to look after their descendants, guide us and protect us on our land. If any visitors to our country 'humbly' then they have to accept the consequences of their actions.

Those present know they have to contribute to the ceremony in a number of ways. The very young have painted handprints or various forms of 'art' done at the site. The older ones have already thought about and prepared a story on the birds and animals of the area. Others tell about the hills, the mountains, the rivers and creeks, the caves, the boulders and the landscape in general. Others in the group 'walk' the land. Elders keep a watchful eye on events and are there to give their support and guidance. We give thanks that we still live on and can return to our ancestor's country. We are pleased to have shared this small part of our special ceremony with you.

It hasn't been easy going since the white man came, to survive in one's own country, but we have done it and so have many other Aboriginal groups on the continent of Australia. It is not only at ceremony time that the family, who live in other people's country return home, but also during school holidays and whenever they can. We are not static, while maintaining traditional Aboriginal values; we adapt in order to survive in this new technological age. It is this feeling of interconnectedness to the landscape that calls us back.

Place names are important for continuity and it is continuity that allows us our place in the landscape. We have names and stories for features in the landscape and for animals and birds. We have names and stories attached to the stars that can be seen in the sky at night. Like signposts, certain features within the landscape give us our 'knowing' of our country.

A second major change occurred with our landscape in the 1870's. Gold was discovered, and the area was gazetted as a gold field. Not sheep this time, but thousands of people of all nationalities flocked to our country seeking their fortunes. Two small townships were established with boarding houses, butchers, bakers, part-time schools, pubs and various other small businesses. Hundreds of shafts were dug down deep in the earth and into the side of the hills. The gold boom only lasted a few years and most white people gradually left our country seeking their fortunes elsewhere. Some of the people stayed tried to eke out a living in an isolated and difficult terrain with two or three families becoming permanent residents for fifty or so years. The descendants of these early 'settlers' now return to reminisce, they too remember special places in the landscape. We are happy that they also appreciate our ancestor's country and all that it encompasses.

But all is not well nowadays. We now are experiencing our third major upheaval in the name of 'tourists'. (Named 'terrorists' by a family member). They arrive every holiday with their state of art four wheel drives, caravans and trailers. Trail bike riders have found nirvana on our country. They tear up the landscape, disturb the habitats of native animals and generally create havoc. There is nothing we can do about it. Big money people in Melbourne have bought most of the land in our country. They are absentee landlords with occasional visits to check up on their 'holdings'. Not all tourists are inconsiderate but many leave their bottles, beer cans

and living mess exposed on the river banks which we spend weekends cleaning up after they go. We don't like it but have accepted that this is the 'new' way.

As mentioned before, within our country were two gold mining towns. Not many people today know the layout of the towns however one man who still lives in this country and who had an intimate knowledge of both the European and Aboriginal sites and artefacts is Pat Bancroft. Now in his 80s, Pat shows family and interested people where old buildings were, where the gold mines were that he worked with his father. He knows the landscape and can read it like a map and he still continues the age-old practice of 'burning off' the grasses. We consider this recent landscape also a part of our heritage.

The broken down 5 stamper gold crusher of my grandfathers, the 130 year old, barely visible in the vegetation, cricket pitch a legacy of my great-grandfather's days in the 1870s. All the evidence left by our Aboriginal and European ancestors in the landscape gives us a feeling of belonging. Not only is the traditional spiritual landscape of importance, there is also the created landscape to consider. Homes were built over time from local timbers and strategically placed near water, protected from fierce winds by a mixture of natural native trees and imported European trees. Within the homestead landscape are the vegetable garden patches, the flower gardens, the fruit trees, the yards, the stockyards and 'chook' sheds, the corn crushing shed, the sulky shed and all the sheds, even the outhouse, have a story to tell.

Finally no words can really describe our feeling for the land and all that it encompasses. Just crossing over the big river and knowing we are in our ancestors', our country, gives us a special feeling of being home. Every part of the landscape says to us 'welcome back, welcome home'. As always a pair of eagles will come out and fly overhead to also welcome us. If we don't see eagles we then wonder what strangers are present and what they are doing.

Aboriginal people are custodians of a land given the task of looking after country. In this day and age unless one buys the land, the country very little can be said about our landscape. Many Aboriginal people do not own, as in property, the land, but we shall continue our role as custodians for as long as humanly possible. We have deep ties and memories to our homes within the landscape and these are still the 'ties that bind'.

The concept of inspirational landscapes means different things to different people. Many Aboriginal people regard the landscape and all that is within the landscape as relevant to their spirituality, customs, lores and laws and identity. Bushlands, Deserts and Plains, Woodlands, Wetlands, Swamps, Rivers and Waterways, inspire great poets, artists and authors from the desert people to the freshwater people to the saltwater people.

Consultation at grass roots level with those government departments and legislators who make decisions on hunting, gathering and fishing on ancestors' lands has to be meaningful and have positive outcomes beneficial to both parties. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody; appalling health statistics and high unemployment of Aboriginal people continue to have a major impact on Aboriginal people.

Throughout the disillusionment and despair there is always hope and pride. As shown by my families personal story above, and there are many similar stories throughout the country, which reinforces that the landscape and all that it encompasses is indeed 'inspirational'.

TO THE CENTRE

Veronica Brady

Veronica Brady was born in Melbourne. After gaining her Honours degree in English and History at the University of Melbourne she joined the Loreto Order of nuns, teaching in Loreto schools in Victoria and New South Wales. Veronica Brady has studied in both the United States of America and Canada where she gained an MA and PhD from the University of Toronto. Upon returning to Australia she spent several years teaching at Christ College Teachers' College in Melbourne before accepting a position in the Department of English at the University of Western Australia. She has remained here as an Honorary Senior Research Fellow since her retirement.

*Veronica has held a number of public positions, including the board of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and The Older Australians Advisory Council. She has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Australian culture and recent works include *Shall These Bones Live* (a study of attitudes toward Aboriginal culture and identity in Australian literature), *South of My Days* (a biography of Judith Wright) and *Caught in the Draught* (Collected Essays). Veronica has an abiding interest in matters of justice, particularly in our relations with Aboriginal peoples, and in environmental issues.*

Some of the best times of my childhood were spent wandering as a family around Victoria, sometimes close to home in the bush around St Arnaud, a former mining town on the edge of the Mallee where we lived, or driving through the flat plains of the Wimmera to explore the Grampians, the twin range which rise suddenly out of the plain. At other times we would go north through the Mallee to the Murray and on one great occasion travelled downstream nearly towards the mouth on one of the old paddler steamers. But somehow we always seemed to be passing through, on our way elsewhere rather than belonging. True, when we stopped and explored, I learned to cherish the land, sensing some mysterious presence there, in the Grampians especially -- I now realise that with its strange rock formations the area we called Wonderland must have been a special ceremonial place. But I also felt from time to time that that it did not like me very much, perhaps, I now realise, because there had been some kind of violence there in the past between settlers and the Aboriginal people of the place or perhaps because it was a place where I as a little girl should not have been.

Maybe if we had lived on the land rather than in a country town it might have been different. I am not so sure, however. By and large most of us look through coloniser's eyes, wanting to make it serve our purposes. This is a point David Malouf makes:

We came here as immigrants and brought our culture with us -- not just a language and the many forms of social organisation, but the crops and animals we needed to feed us and from which ... our economy has grown. So there ... is, at the centre of our lives here, a deep irony: that the very industry that gives us a hold on the earth has no roots in the land itself, no history, no past (1).

More recently this irony has been tinged with uneasiness as we come to understand more of the story of our dealings with the land's First Peoples and the effect our settlement here has had on it.

Patrick White's view of us as a people clinging to the fringes of the continent and to the fringes of the self makes sense to me, therefore. But not because it is negative. Rather if we think of ourselves in Tim Winton's terms as 'surrounded by ocean and ambushed from behind', waging 'a war of mystery on two fronts' it is positive. It suggests that we live in a place of possibility, of 'the spaces, the maybes' (2) in between what we are and have been and what we may become, and this is surely the aspect of colonisation and not merely for ourselves but also for the land and its First Peoples with whom we are yet to reach a proper accommodation.

The inspirational landscape I have in mind, the Lake Mungo National Park in western New South Wales helped me to understand more fully what this possibility might be. It was in fact a pretty desolate landscape, degraded by generations of overstocking and poor pastoral practices. Over the century or so of European settlement the wind has blown most of the topsoil away to form the towering sand dunes, known as the Great Wall of China, on the eastern side of the barren depression which was once a lake thousands of year ago. It is these dunes which have made the place a tourist attraction and a National Park. What had drawn me and a group of friends here, however, was something else.

A decade or so ago when it was still a pastoral property the station manager came upon a human skeleton exposed by the wind which proved to be the remains of a woman, 50,000 to 60,000 years old. Shortly afterwards, close by, the wind exposed another skeleton, a man's this time. The woman had been fine-boned and similar in body type to contemporary Europeans. But he had been over seven feet tall and built on a gigantic scale. Nevertheless these two groups of people seem to have lived peacefully side by side until her people disappeared during the Ice Age about forty thousand years ago. Some prehistorians speculate that they travelled north across the land bridge which then connected Australia to the rest of the world and may have eventually reached Europe. The giant people, however, survived here until new peoples from the north arrived who may have been the ancestors of some contemporary Aboriginal peoples and displaced them.

The vast historical perspectives these discoveries unfold take us far beyond the horizon of the Western culture to which we belong, intensifying the feeling that the land is somehow timeless which has become a cultural cliché. But here at Lake Mungo it was becoming an imaginative reality. It helped too that we had an Aboriginal guide. He was not himself one of the people who had lived here when the first European settlers arrived. They had been killed or driven out of their country, the survivors dispersed into Government Reserves or Missions. But he had been working on the station when the remains were discovered and later had been a Park Ranger. So he had developed a relationship with the country. Just as importantly, as an Aboriginal he was part of a culture familiar with the ancient history of the land and he told us something of this history.

When Mungo Woman and Mungo Man had lived here, perhaps 50,000 years ago, the arid depression before us had been a lake teeming with fish and marine life of all kinds, its shores rich in trees, plants and animals of all kinds, wombats the size of a horse today, for example. But the coming of the Ice Age had destroyed much of this life and as the weather became warmer and rainfall diminished during the centuries that followed the lake shrank and eventually dried up. Gradually the once fertile and timbered country became the savannah the first settlers found when they arrived. But where its Aboriginal inhabitants had adapted to the land as it changed and learned to live on its terms, those settlers, our people, tried to impose on it purposes and values we had brought from the other side of the world with the result that in less than a century and a half we have turned it into the semi-desert it has now become.

In the light of this story the complacent self-satisfaction of our present culture is almost ludicrous. But contemplating it also made me feel as if I was no longer a mere spectator. The land interrogated me, reminding me of the task we have not yet properly addressed which, Mircea Eliade argues, faces a people newly arrived in an unfamiliar country, the task of transforming it imaginatively, turning it 'from chaos into cosmos' (3), making it a mythical as well as a material presence -- as the land's First Peoples have done from time immemorial. To put it another way, it means making it a 'bride country', relating to it with love rather than in terms of conquest.

This, I think, is what Joseph Furphy was getting in *Such Is Life* when he wrote that it is 'not in our cities or townships, it is not in our agricultural or mining areas that the Australian attains full consciousness of his nationality' but in the interior, in places like this with its 'monotonous variety of ... interminable scrub...; so grave, subdued, self-centred; so alien to the genial appeal of more winsome landscape'. But it is precisely this strangeness, this difference from anything we had known which made it 'an unconfined, ungauged potentiality of resource', not because it confirmed our complacencies or made us relaxed and comfortable but because it challenged

them, asking us to explore its strangeness and discover the 'latent meaning' within it and then to interpret it 'faithfully and lovingly' (4). In our own times Freya Matthews puts it this way:

Born into this intimately companionable land that has for so long been singing along, humming along, with its inhabitants, non-Aboriginal Australians might also, if we collectively pause to feel the resonance of the endlessly poetic communiques that surround us, rediscover, in a contemporary context, some of the fundamental aspects of the Aboriginal relation to the world (5).

A key aspect of that relationship, of course, is a sense of the sacred, not generally common in contemporary Australia. But it happened to be Easter time and I was here with a group of people for whom the Easter story, a story of new life rising from death, still had some resonance. For once we 'white fellas' had a 'Dreaming' to connect us spiritually with the place in which we found ourselves and we decided act it out, get up early on Easter Sunday morning and watch the sun rise.

First of all we had to make a journey walking along a rough track in the half-light, our only guide a faint glimmer of light in the east. We sometimes stumbled on ruts and stones but it felt as if we were moving towards a promise signalled by the faint light which was nevertheless growing stronger as we went. We were walking through a desolate place, a land which had been 'opened by whips of greed' (6) wielded by our culture which had separated us from the larger life of the universe.

Finally we came to the rise which once had marked the edge of the lake and each of us found a place to sit and wait for the dawn, some in groups but most of us alone. But in a way we were not alone. Sitting in silence looking out across the space before us I also felt the presence of the 'invisible dead', the thousands of generations of his ancestors the indigenous leader Chief Seattle invoked upon the European settlers in USA. But we were also looking out over what the colonial poet Barcroft Boake called 'the wastes of the Never Never', 'out where the dead men lie' (7). These dead also challenge the confident story of triumphant progress, which we tell about ourselves and our history.

But nature was pointing to another story, a cycle of death and rebirth, echoed in the Easter story, as the light grew stronger, welling up from the dark earth, touching the stunted bushes and grasses and setting off the first twitterings of the desert birds, while above the slender line of cloud drifting above the horizon turned pink and gold as they caught the first rays of the sun. Then suddenly from behind the dunes it bounced up, a great crimson, new life emerging from darkness and death. This, I realised, is what the dead desired, their meaning, the meaning we had to carry on in this land. Judith Wright's poem about a pilgrimage to the grave of her grandfather who died in outback Queensland is about this task. At his graveside, earth was

....made of answers, the eyes of the dead. All those old tribes, dark trees endowed with sight, found new replies to night and day. Their glances forged a meaning between man and creature, creature and nature (8).

This is not poetic fancy. In fact, to quote Einstein:

Human beings are part of the whole we call the Universe, a small region in time and space. They regard themselves, their ideas and feelings as separate and apart from all the rest. It is something like an optical illusion in their consciousness. The illusion is a sort of prison; it restricts us to put personal aspirations first and limits our affective life to a few people very close to us. Our task should be to free ourselves from this prison, opening up our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and all of nature in its beauty (9).

The land's First Peoples whom we regard as 'primitive' and doomed to extinction knew this, that we are part of the fabric of life as a whole. The land was telling me that we have to learn from them not to dominate and exploit the natural world for our own selfish ends, learn the knowledge Patrick White invokes at the end of *Voss*, the story of the true discovery of Australia which 'overflows all maps that exist' (10).

That will not mean giving up on our culture but discovering the poetic and spiritual resources within it which will enable us to enter into the mystery of the land, deepening and, if you like, feminising the myth of exploration already important in our culture. As Stephen Muecke puts it in *No Road*, this

may mean leaving home and getting lost for a while, to admit that there may not be a road going anywhere that we all agree on, but that somewhere along that road is a local guide who knows the story we may never have heard before, a story that leads to a place in the desert ... where there is plenty of food and water (11).

But it may mean that we will be at home and able to share this sense with its First Peoples and live with them with mutual understanding and respect.

- (1) In *The Age*, Melbourne, Bicentenary edition, 23/1/1988.
- (2) Winton, T. 1998. *The Riders*. Sydney, Pan Macmillan, p. 51.
- (3) Eliade, M. 1974. *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, pp: 10 – 11.
- (4) In J. Barnes (ed), *The Portable Joseph Furphy*. St Lucia, Queensland University Press, p. 65.
- (5) Matthews, F. 1999. Letting the World Grow Old: An Ethos of Countermodernity, *Worldviews* 3(2): 135.
- (6) Wright, J. 1994. Jet Flight Over Derby. In *Judith Wright: Collected Poems 1942 – 1985*. Sydney, Angus & Robertson: 279.
- (7) In H.P. Heseltine (ed) *The Penguin Book of Australian Verse*. Ringwood, Penguin, p. 92.
- (8) In *Collected Poems* p. 208.
- (9) Einstein quote - not sourced.
- (10) White, P. 1976. *Voss*. Ringwood, Penguin, p. 446.
- (11) Muecke, S. 1997. *No Road: Bitumen All The Way*. Fremantle, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, p. 130.

A SORT OF SCIENTIST ON INSPIRING LANDSCAPES

Jamie Kirkpatrick

Jamie Kirkpatrick claims to have been 'largely incarcerated' in Melbourne until the age of 25. He then moved to Tasmania, working at the University of Tasmania long enough to have earned himself a gold watch. He has been Professor of Geography and Environmental Studies at this institution since 1988. Jamie's professional life consists largely of lots of committees, forms and marking. When not working he likes to spend time in the bush or doing things in the garden with the poet (Christina). He likes to read, write, do research and help people learn. Jamie Kirkpatrick has published extensively, including nature writing and scientific works. The book with which he has most enjoyed being involved is the beautiful In The Forest by West Wind Press

There is a theory that the archetypal inspirational landscape is an atavistic one in which human beings can camp in glades, and glimpse lake, river or sea through shrubs and trees. This is almost my view now, from an artificial cave. Over a sere winter herbaceous bed, and through Norfolk pine, blackwood and horse chestnut trees, the Derwent Estuary ripples greyly. On the other side of the Derwent the South Arm Peninsula presents a patchwork of dark bush and brown paddocks, its hills lying like beached whales, gazing longingly towards Antarctica. In the far distance I see similar hills, faint blue. These sit across another stretch of water, on the east of the Tasman Peninsula. There, Christina, the poet, and I, have temporary legal custody of the 100 Acre Wood, a block of dry bush centred on a ridge above one of the many Roaring Beaches of Tasmania.

On the day that we were introduced to the 100 Acre Wood, sea eagles circled overhead, waves shook the air, and southwesterly squalls striated Storm Bay, partly obscuring Bruny Island and the wilderness mountains in the distance. The landscape and bush are moulded by such squalls, with few signs of humanity. Yet simple dwellings hide among the trees, in a community that generally abjures electricity, clearing and logging, and hopes to keep its habitat harmonious.

I frequently drive to the north of Tasmania, and back, along the 'Heritage Highway'. I know that I have returned to my country at Spring Hill, where a small stand of Tasmanian blue gum signifies a descent into intimate valleys among rounded hills, with the Wellington Range almost, but not quite, achieving cragginess in the background.

There is a type of inspiration that derives from the process of growing into, and knowing, a landscape. Adrian Bowden, his father and I, once stopped in the pub at Ouse, on our way back to what passes for civilisation from a research trip in the wilderness. The Bowden family originally came from Ouse, which sits in a dry valley in inland Tasmania that has obviously suffered considerably from the European invasion. Over a few hills from Ouse lies another, more attractive, small town in another, more attractive, dry valley, named Bothwell. Adrian struck up conversation with one of the older locals, who found it difficult to believe that anyone would want to leave Ouse: 'Been here all my life. Went to Bothwell once. Did not like it much.' While I am not quite as parochial in my sources of inspiration from the landscape as the man from Ouse, my writing flows best in the context of those parts of my country where landscape harmony has been least destroyed and where I have an intimate knowledge of its patterns and moods.

As a geographer and ecologist I know landscapes in a way that most people do not. I suffer from temporal depth and temporal projection. I cannot stop myself from seeing the signs of degraded bush, the creeping erosion and salinisation in the paddocks, the real estate signs that presage the construction of angular Neobrutalist monuments to human endeavour, the pink tape that marks the prospective doom of centuries old trees, the shells and charcoal that mark the past lives of a brutally depleted people. I occasionally find myself crying at the many signs of the punishment we have inflicted, and will inflict, on our land and its inhabitants. On the

other hand, I can perceive the products of fire and tempest as part of the yin and yang of the bush. I can even envisage the landscape after growth societies based on fossil fuels pass away, or even after all people pass away. The poet who I love seems to me to perceive landscapes in a different way, through a temporal force field of accumulated emotion, the darkness of places of evil, the rejection of places of masculinity, and the acceptance of places with a palimpsest of female pleasure.

I have a platonic love for gardens, landscapes writ small. Gardens integrate the natural and the artefactual. Even the most anally retentive of gardeners is never totally in charge of their plants, or those of our relatives that eat them, no matter how much they confine them in concrete circles in a sea of white pebbles. The gardens that most inspire me are at the more natural end of the continuum that ends in the artefactual. The gardener plants in hope, gratefully accepts any, usually unexpected, aesthetic rewards that eventuate, and tries to ameliorate the aesthetic disasters. In old gardens of this kind the plants meld into each other, and the environment.

Like the gardens that most please me, the landscapes that most inspire me have harmony in space and time. This does not mean that they necessarily have colour combinations that would have pleased Gertrude Jekyll. Some sunsets I have seen are quite tasteless by many standards, eighties decorator grey and apricot. Harmony is deep adjustment to continuing processes. It is independent to some extent from rates of change. Coastal sand dunes are constantly changing, as is their wont; attempted stabilisation brings landscape disharmony. The ancient quartzite-dominated landscapes of southwest Tasmania can only be disharmoniously degraded by quarry and road cutting; stability violated.

There is a fitting rate and periodicity of change for individual landscapes and their components. This fitting change is more cyclic than linear. The cliffs may erode in a seemingly linear fashion, but the beds in the rocks that constitute them presage the beds in future cliffs, created from the products of their erosion.

This cyclicity, stability among change, can evidence itself in cultural, as well as natural, landscapes: the almost organic growth and maintenance of Georgian farm buildings and their gardens despite crumbling sandstone and dying individual trees; crops followed by fallow on fertile river flats; mixtures of field and forest long adjusted to topography; even the ever-evolving tangle of steaming and rusting pipes and boilers in the Electrolytic Zinc plant. However, most cultural landscapes in Australia could only be inspirational to the growth people, who value simplification in the process of linear change because it produces more for them in the very short term, or exhibits how very good they have been at making money.

At this point in this narrative I have developed the feeling that the landscapes that most facilitate my creativity and give me most pleasure are those with an internal harmony that have formed a substantial part of my existence. There now arises the question: are there qualities of such landscapes that make some even more exceptionally inspirational than others?

In 1999 in *Landscape and Urban Planning*, in a dry, academic article parsimoniously entitled 'Assessing temporal changes in the reservation of the natural aesthetic resource using pictorial content analysis and a grid-based scoring system - the example of Tasmania', Louise Mendel and I reported the results of scoring the types of scenes that were found in photographic representations of Tasmanian natural landscapes between the late nineteenth century and the late twentieth century. The photographs were dominated by scenes of high relative relief and/or those containing water. The proportions of photographs containing each of these elements were constant over the century. Landscape romanticism reigned.

Between 1972, when I first lived in Tasmania, and the present (2002) I have managed to have at least a few days of research fieldwork in the high mountains of Tasmania each summer. In the quest for alpine vegetation data I have walked excessively long distances with excessively heavy packs, and occasionally even risked helicopters. I have clung to rock faces, with lakes hundreds or metres, and one or two bounces, below. I have stood on craggy summits, with arrays of snaggle-toothed peaks fading into the far distance. I have camped by mountain lakes so remote that the native cats were unafraid to beg for food. I have wandered for days over the undulating Central Plateau, to see lake after lake between quadrats, but not much in the way of

relative relief. I have been very well exposed to water, cliffs and Gothic landscapes. The alpine landscapes I remember most fondly are all not overly marred by fire or human trampling, but, among the many such places, they tend not to be those that are precipitous, nor those well-endowed with water features. The subtle complexities in the details of the landscape stimulate me. Water and rock faces are a bit gross and dull for my tastes. I find waterfalls less interesting than herbfields, or string bogs, or mosaic bolster heaths. It might be different if I were a stream ecologist, or a geologist.

Surprisingly, for one who has done more than his fair share of sincere celebration of the alpine, rainforest and tall tree landscapes of the western Tasmanian wilderness, I find more inspiration in the dry eucalypt forests, grassy woodland, heaths and tussock grassland of the topographically gentle east of the State than I do in the wilderness west. Gothic scenes with vegetation reminiscent of an English garden seems to me to be the landscape equivalent of commercial television. The gentler, more complex, more pastel, more untidy, more biologically rich, Australian landscape is not even the SBS equivalent, but equal to a good book by an open fire.

I have been privileged to be involved in the processes that led to the declaration of two world heritage areas in Australia, those related to western Tasmania and the Blue Mountains. In both cases the IUCN assessor on the precursor field trips was a lovely and dedicated North American mountain man. Jim Thorsell was not particularly impressed by the beautiful, and globally unusual, Tasmanian mountains, with their lack of height, ice and crumble, but enthused on the wild south coast. We sat together on a sandstone rock in the middle of the Blue Mountains wilderness, eucalypt clad plateaus receding to the horizon in a blue pastel light. Not to his taste; Jim just wanted to talk about rainforests and glaciers!

Landscapes are spatially defined integrals of sections of continua of biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural diversity (I am a scientist after all). If one accepts the argument that diversity is worth keeping, then it is just as valuable to keep the red longitudinal dune landscape of the desert, with its richness of ants and lizards among its bizarre hummock grasses, as it is to keep the crumbling peaks and glaciers of the Himalayas. If one takes a representative approach to landscape conservation, that desert landscape is far more valuable than the Himalayas. If the Himalayas disappeared through a hole in the space-time continuum, like one of each pair of my socks, there would be plenty of other similar mountain regions left. There is only one Australian desert; only one real Roaring Beach.

If we are classifying landscapes as worthy, or not worthy, of maintaining in harmony, as is presumably the ultimate painful point of this essaying exercise, should we conserve those landscapes that appeal to most people, or those that most appeal to those with the most developed tastes in landscapes, or both. Personally, I believe that all our landscapes should be allowed to revert to, or maintain, their harmony, but that, if we persist with our foolish growthist habits, a representational approach to the conservation of landscape aesthetic values is the way to go, with a concentration on those landscapes that are most peculiarly and characteristically Australian. Such an approach would inevitably reflect high, more than low, taste, while not totally rejecting the low.

BREATH AND REVELATION

Jeff Malpas

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The inspirational is, literally, that which we take in – as we breathe in the air that sustains us. That which is inspirational in this way is not something that we take in because we choose to do so, but because we cannot do otherwise. The inspirational thus exerts a power that derives both from the nature of that which is taken in and from the nature of the lives – our very own – into which it flows.

Talk of inspirational landscapes might be taken to imply reference to a special kind of landscape – to just those landscapes that we ‘take in’, that have the power to influence and affect us, and that presumably stand out from those ‘other’ landscapes that are simply *there*, apart from us, in the face of which we remain untouched, unmoved, uninspired. But is the idea of landscape really the idea of something that can ever be understood as separated from us in this way? Or does landscape already bring with it the idea of a necessary involvement and influence?

There is certainly one very common view of landscape that does seem to involve treating it as something that, while it may have an influence on us and is undoubtedly influenced by us, is nevertheless something that stands removed from us. This view takes landscape to be the product of an essentially visual and representational construal of our relation to the world. Just as the English term has its origins in painting (1), so this view takes landscape to involve the presenting of the world as an object, seen from a certain view, structured, framed and made available to our gaze. Such ‘views’ may well affect us, but precisely because they are already seen as ‘views’, so they are separated from us, and our involvement with them is based purely in the spectatorial. As Raymond Williams puts the point “... a working country is hardly ever a landscape. The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation” (2).

This visual or representational view of landscape is crucial to the treatment of landscape as an ideological construction tied, for instance, to industrial capitalism and to male-oriented forms of social organisation. But while it is almost certainly true that the idea of landscape arises out of a certain sense of actual or potential separation from the physical surroundings in which one lives (by means of which those surroundings are brought to salience), and the structure of particular landscapes cannot be divorced from social and economic forms, the idea of landscape as essentially tied to a representational way of relating to the world seems to neglect crucial elements in the very experience of landscape out of which any such representation arises. For the *experience* of landscape is as much of the sound, smell and feel of the place as of anything purely visual. Moreover, such experience should not be construed as a merely subjective phenomenon — it does not take place ‘in’ the subject, but rather is rather part of the way the subject is herself ‘in’ the world.

Even considered in relation to artistic production, landscape does not first appear only representationally. The landscape artist is typically concerned with a certain view, a view that is already given, prior to the act of artistic production, in her own visual appreciation of a stretch of country or a particular scene, and with the articulation or re-working of that view in art. Strictly speaking, then, the work of landscape (whether it be in the form of painting, photograph, or whatever) is not merely a view, but rather a view *of a view* – hence its re-presentational character. But the very possibility of such a view already depends, from the start,

on a location that is within the landscape so viewed and an engagement with that landscape. Every such 'view' is of this character: it always already depends on an involvement and orientation with respect to some particular place or locale. Landscape as art derives from such involvement and orientation, and is a representation of it – although as a re-presentation, so it also presents only a certain view of that original and originary involvement.

Raymond Williams aside, then, landscape need not imply separation or observation. Indeed, landscape only arises as landscape out of our original involvement with the place in which we find ourselves as that place affects and influences us through its sounds, smells, feelings and sights. To experience a landscape is to be active within it, since it is by means of such activity that landscape affects and influences us – the nature of the place determines what is possible within that place. In this respect, then, all landscape is 'inspirational' in that all our actions, and every part of our life, draw on that landscape in which we act and live in an exactly analogous way to that in which we draw our life from the air around us. In fact, what we see in the artistic representation of landscape is not a representation of landscape as such, but rather a representation of the particular 'in-flow' – different in each case – of the landscape (and of the place) into the life and modes of life that arise within and in relation to it.

If all landscape is inspiration in this way, then landscape itself only becomes landscape through the way in which it is implicated in human lives as both affected and affecting. Even the wilderness landscape is made what it is, as wilderness, through the way in which it establishes a certain set of human interactions in relation to it and the way in which those interactions themselves establish the particular form of landscape that is 'wilderness'. This is not to say that landscape is somehow a 'construction' of the human – as if it were some form of cultural or social 'artifact'. While it is true that even the landscapes we most often think of as 'natural', are typically products of the interaction between human, environmental and other factors (3), this does not mean that the human somehow plays the determining role here. Landscape may be shaped by human involvement, but the human is itself shaped by landscape, and neither has the upper hand in this relationship – each is appropriated by and to the other. For this reason, too, we cannot think of landscape as merely that within which human activity is located and in which human lives are played out – landscape is, as Seamus Heaney says, both 'humanized and humanising' (4).

The landscapes that most inspire us – the landscapes that flow most directly into our lives – are often the landscapes that we take most for granted. Indeed, while landscape always implies involvement rather than separation in the sense associated with the spectatorial or observational, the recognition of landscape and its importance to us, almost invariably arises out of certain forms of dislocation and physical separation. One comes to understand and to know a landscape through movement within it, and one comes to understand and know a landscape as a landscape only through the journey 'there and back again' that takes one from one landscape to another – from the familiar to the strange and the strange to the familiar – or that shifts elements of the landscape itself. It is no accident that the rise of landscape painting as an art form is itself tied to the dislocation and disruption of the traditional landscape, especially in England, that occurred from the seventeenth century onwards. In contemporary Australia, the recognition of landscape, and the questioning of what it may be and what it may signify, has always been directly tied to the changes in the way in which the landscape is itself brought into salience through journey and return, whether it be the journey and return that occurs within the landscape through processes of disruption and change, or the journey and return that occurs as individuals, and sometimes whole communities, move within landscapes, across country, between places. When landscape is brought into question in this way, so too is our own *relation* to landscape – our own 'belonging', our own 'identity', our own 'place' – brought into question along with it. We cannot ask after landscape without also asking after the things that make up our lives — that are part of us, that matter to us.

The relation between landscape and life is not, of course, a simple and invariant one. The particular ways in which landscape affects us, the ways in which it 'flows in' to our lives,

depends on the ways in which our own lives are articulated in relation to that landscape, on the ways in which we engage with ourselves, with others and with the world, and on the narratives within such engagement is itself embedded and understood. For those of us who come from an Aboriginal way of life, for instance, the landscape, the 'country', will configure itself quite differently from the way it is configured for those of us from non-Aboriginal backgrounds — and so the way in which we see the in-flow of landscape will be quite different also. Thus, while landscape is always inspirational in the sense of flowing into and determining the human lives lived in relation to it, not every landscape or feature of landscape will be evident to each of us as being inspirational in the *same* way, nor will we always recognise landscape as being inspirational, in the sense at issue here, in *every* case.

Often, in fact, we recognise the inspirational character of landscape only in those landscapes that stand out for us in some special fashion — perhaps because of the role they play in particular narratives that are especially important to us, because those landscapes are brought to salience through their loss or destruction, or because the very majesty or beauty of those landscapes (their almost 'physical' effect on us) bring them immediately to our attention. This should not lead us, however, to overlook the inspiration that is associated with the ordinary, the constant and the mundane. Indeed, the landscapes that we celebrate as having some special inspirational character — whether it be the 'red heart' of Uluru, the rainforests of Northern Queensland, or the wild mountain country of Tasmania's South West — are often much less important to us, in terms of their real influence, than the landscapes that support our everyday lives. Thus, in Hobart, the South-West is a real and significant part of the wider landscape in which we live, but for those of us who live in or near the city, it is the contrasting landscape of hills and water, of the Mountain and the Derwent that flows more immediately and constantly into our lives. A certain set of rhythms, views, habits and modes of action are engendered by the enviroing landscape that are characteristic of the city and the place — within that landscape things are brought to light in a way that resists any clear elucidation, but which is distinctive nevertheless. For someone, like myself, who grew up in the similarly intimate and enfolded landscape of the North Island of New Zealand, that distinctiveness is matched, however, by a feeling of recognition and familiarity that the landscape also brings — for a New Zealander, Tasmania is, in more than one sense, very close to home.

As landscapes are inspirational — as they flow in to our lives — so the encounter with landscape is an encounter with that which makes us what we are. Moreover, the encounter with landscape is itself inspirational, albeit in a slightly different sense, inasmuch as it opens us to the very character of landscape and of life; it opens us to the revelation of the near and far, of the ordinary and the everyday, as well as of that which transcends the ordinary; it opens us to the world as that wherein our lives take on shape and meaning. Thus Geoffrey Hill writes: "Landscape is like revelation/it is both singular crystal and the remotest things"(5).

- (1) Although the original Dutch and German terms from which the English 'landscape' is derived have connotations of a unit of human habitation — see J.B. Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale 1984), -- 3-8.
- (2) Raymond Williams, *The country and the city* (London, 1973), p.120. By 'working country', Williams means country as its is a site of action and process. He goes on: "It is possible and useful to trace the internal histories of landscape painting, and landscape writing, landscape gardening and landscape architecture, but in the final analysis we must relate these histories to the common history of a land and its society".
- (3) See, for instance, Simon Schama's discussion of the essential interconnection of nature and culture exemplified in that archetypal 'wilderness' that is Yosemite National Park (*Landscape and Memory* [London: HarperCollins, 1995], pp. 7 – 10.)
- (4) Seamus Heaney, 'The Sense of Place' *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968 – 1978* (London: Faber & Faber 1984), p. 145.

- (5) 'The Mystery of the Charity of Charles Peguy', in Geoffrey Hill *Collected Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.185.

LANDSCAPE; GOLD AND WATER.

Mandy Martin

Mandy Martin is an artist and a lecturer in the Environment Studio, School of Art, National Institute of the Arts, Australian National University. Her work has always been concerned with the environment and our relationship to the landscape. This year she is working on a collaborative project, Land\$cape; Gold & Water, responding to the impact of the Cadia / Ridgeway gold mine on 10,000 hectares of natural habitat, agricultural land and the Belubula river in the Lachlan Catchment. It is an interdisciplinary project combining art and text and will be presented to rural and city audiences through a touring exhibition and accompanying publication. The project derives from 5 intensive field trips, organised by the Environment Studio and the participants include lecturers and students of ANU, personnel from other research institutions, local Cadia Region artists, Wiradjuri mentors, environmentalists, graziers and mine personnel.

The inspirational landscape I have chosen is that of the Cadia Region. I will describe it through the story of a collaborative, interdisciplinary project combining art and text; *Land\$cape: Gold & Water*. The landscape includes the Cadia Hill gold mine, owned by Newcrest Mining on 10,000 hectares of natural habitat, agricultural land and the Belubula River in the Lachlan Catchment, part of Murray Darling Basin in New South Wales. The project will be presented to local, rural and city audiences through a touring exhibition and accompanying publication.



Cadia Hill Mine. Artists, scientists, mine personnel and graziers working with Mandy Martin on Land\$cape; Gold and Water. Photograph by Mandy Martin.

The research for the project derived from 5 intensive field trips, organised by me for the Environment Studio, the Art School, ANU. The project involved staff and students of ANU, personnel from other research institutions, local Cadia Region artists, Wiradjuri mentors, environmentalists, graziers and mine personnel. We sought to engage the local community in a process whereby a broader range of landscape values are considered in the evaluation of natural resource use. Aesthetic evaluation of landscape is an important part of ecosystem services but little used or understood in Australia at present. Ecosystems offer human society a range of what can be described as services, just as a city offers buses, sewerage, electricity and roads. Ecosystem services include the natural allocation of rain, the price of individual trees, rare

plants, clean air or water. Other values like biodiversity and visual amenity can also be seen as a service. Our project aimed to use this methodology to place a value on the "Viewshed" or in mining terms, "Visual Catchment" and give that a value alongside other landscape values like indigenous, social and environmental values.

Establishing what is inspirational in this Cadia Region landscape is of course subjective and conditioned by many cultural factors. Working as a group of 16 people with the community will help to establish common ground. As an artist, I personally have responded to this landscape since I first visited it in 1995 and initially made small mixed media works combining conventional media with found substances including pigments and sometimes found supports like tin, signifying second- settler occupation. I was interested in the interlocked and bare boned hills and their special qualities of light. Gradually the series has evolved and currently I am completing a mosaic of 100 small canvases, half of them of the river and painted in a gold palette, using river sand and natural pigments, the other half of Cadia Hill Mine, painted in a copper palette, using tailings from the dam and sulphide concentrate from the sag mill. The small canvases are juxtaposed with a 570 cm diptych of the tailings dam with text inscribed in the foreground.



Mandy Martin: Installation at the Orange Regional Gallery, 2002.

Our family pastoral company own a property which they purchased in 1931, adjacent to Cadia Hill mine and also lease a neighbouring property, from the mine. We have been involved in the respective environmental impact surveys and development proposals from the start up of the mine and have worked closely with them, not only on the management of our leased property but also this project. As well, we are working with the mine and CSIRO to develop a long- term land management plan. This is aimed at integrating environment and production values on the Cadia Farms (14 properties purchased by Cadia Hill Mine for mining purposes and to act as a buffer zone) and through that protecting in posterity, the endangered Superb and Turquoise Parrots and the Yellow-Bellied Sheath-tail Bat and their threatened White Box and Yellow Box communities. The negotiations with the mine and CSIRO, and proposed reclamation efforts are all positive initiatives towards maintaining aesthetic amenity within the range of ecosystem services that we wish to build and retain. My husband, Guy Fitzhardinge and I have been working individually on these issues in the past and on a range of other projects. We felt the need to involve a larger local and interested group of artists and writers, not only to build our own knowledge but to engage in this contemporary ethical debate about

the value of landscape by inserting a more developed notion of aesthetic value into the discourse which is why we evolved “Land\$cape : Gold & Water”.

This inspirational landscape therefore is a contested landscape and one where rapid change has occurred and is still occurring. Effort and achievement therefore make this landscape inspirational.

Other things like the social displacement and grief at loss of Wiradjuri lands, native habitat, farming land and past environmental histories, for landholders and local community, heighten my emotional response to this landscape.

Another conditioner is the “Gold Footprint” or the hidden costs of the total energy, water, fuel consumed and rock mined to produce for example one gold ring, in other words this landscape has global drivers accelerating the rate of change, so my understanding of its inspirational qualities is coloured also by the scale of something small and precious being threatened by something large and ubiquitous.

A third set of conditioners which affect my aesthetic reading of this landscape includes other issues impacting on the health and value of this landscape like salination, weeds, cold water pollution, carp and degradation of land from grazing and agricultural practices, I know that what I see does not look as good as it did in the past when it was healthier.

Rebecca Solnit wrote in *As Eve Said to the Serpent. On Landscape, Gender, and Art* (1), “ There is something biblical about the casting out of the dwellers in our public gardens. And there is something dangerous about being on the wrong side of our own symbology, even if we’re on the right side of the fence”

This danger, this ability to tamper with the work of gods, to completely rework the profile, composition of a landscape, like the mere digging over of a garden plot is shocking when it is on the other side of the fence. My mother-in-law, the children’s writer Joan Phipson lives in this landscape also and now in her 90th year hears the mine grinding away 24 hours a day and the daily blasts reminds her that gold mines have the jurisdiction to dig right up to one’s garden fence. The property and region are the location and locale for many of her prize winning books including, “Watcher in the Garden”(2). Joan has written of a special waterhole and the tree we sit under, in the past year also with Joan’s lifelong friend Rosemary Dobson who has written several poems about the property. Other distinguished writers who have sat under that tree include Richard Nelson, who survived a furious summer storm to write about his encounter with the platypus. Both writers and artists of second settler Australian backgrounds have found the place special. Our neighbour, Meta Rothery, in her late eighties now, one of the original European descendents of the area, still living on the property first settled in the 1830s, paints a rich panoptica of images on rocks collected from the river at this spot. These are part of an installation for the exhibition, a river of rocks flowing through the space, representing the cultural inflows of the Belubula; foxes, cats, flowers, the queen, horses, dogs, Cathy Freeman, and “Plugger”, the football player!

As my own series of paintings has progressed I realised it was important to have a traditional Wiradjuri owner, voice their connection with the place. The Environmental Impact Surveys undertaken by both respective stages of the mine had located a scarred tree on Oaky Creek and I was keen it should be photographed before we erected the obligatory fence around it. Alana Harris, a Wiradjuri, born in Cowra completed this task and also as a water person made a series of photographs of the river. We exhibited these works “They Have a Faith to Move Mountains”(3) together at Bathurst Regional Gallery.

Other artists working on the current project include Marty Huehner, an ecologist/artist from the USA (and 11 of his students) who has made dental alginate prints of fox tracks, stalking birds on the surface of the tailings dam; Matt Higgins, an honours photomedia student, whose poignant digital images of a brilliant blue butterfly plastered on the dusty ground reflect his prime concern with local communities facing globalisation; Penny Stott, an honours painting student is researching threatened species particularly the superb parrot; and Nicki Dickson, also an honours painting student, who paints sublime images of noxious weeds like Bathurst Burr.

Weeds, carried by the wind, rivers and animals cross the mine fence. As do endangered parrots, bats and the indicator of environmental health, the bogong moth.

The death count of bogong moths from huge lights burning all night must be immense, that loss of night sky amenity not only affecting fauna but in the development phase, in our own house many kilometres away as the crow flies, we cast shadows from the light of the huge lights on the inside walls at night. We now, where there was previously dazzling clear night sky, have a city of lights burning orange, through the constant pall of dust, a change of aesthetic for certain.

Cultural change is always difficult to effect and because second settler Australian's brought their own agricultural systems and notions of the landscape picturesque with them, often it was impossible to even see the land for what it was and to see that what was being destroyed, was gone forever. Polo grounds, European gardens, vineyards and windfarms, fit with a Eurocentric vision of an ordered landscape and although we see all these on the other side of the fence, I don't think these things mean more to rural stakeholders than the long-term preservation of natural habitat and pastoral amenity. This is also true of the personnel we have met at the mine, many would consider themselves green. However I do think they may not have thought of the long-term consequences of loss of ecosystem services. Second settler Australians reshaped the grassy box woodlands of the Central Tablelands, long managed by Aboriginal fire farming and now the mine is finishing off that transformation, reworking the contours of the land into unnaturally shaped waste rock heaps and 95 meter high tailings dams. The unspoilt view amenity in the Cadia Region, once it was bitten into, seemed to change rapidly, a previously uninterrupted pastoral view now became a small city of activity. In the past 2 years the mine has built a road, power-line and pipe-line pumping water to the mine, through the property we lease from the mine. On the other side of that fence are the tailings dams.

Why worry, pastoral landscape is already spoilt, degraded by grazing and cropping? Maybe if we had valued this landscape more appropriately, valued it for the memories, the cultural history, the scale of this loss would not be so big. One of the four writers in our project and also a photographer, Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies PhD candidate, George Main, deals with these issues of grief caused by loss and displacement, his image of the waste rock heap through the abandoned shearing shed window, freezing in time this transition. Likewise Sarah Ryan, Sustainable Ecosystems at CSIRO, another writer and artist, works with digital photographs, to represent displacement, symbolically relocating from the living room of an imaginary Cadia farm a 1940s Raynham vase, a somewhat funereal lustre ware object, onto the tailings dam, into the old shearing shed, now a storage area for mine samples, and onto the waste rock heaps.

Local artist, Ken Hutchinson in his series of portrait paintings of people and the landscape reminds us that Worster's "howling world of nature" has always been a force in human life" (4) and that "without intending to do so, large-scale ventures seem to reduce ecological richness and human-scale endeavours to trivialities" (5). The landscape settings for his subjects become psychological stage sets, his hillsides are scattered with sheep impaled on the stumps of ringbarked White Box, tractors ploughing up paddocks right across the horizon into his subject's ear, leaving trails of red dust billowing out behind. Ken slams home the message that the grazing industry doesn't have a clean slate and massive changes to landscape have occurred as the results of bad grazing practice, the scale of environmental damage done by the mining industry is small in comparison with other rural industries. Peggy Spratt, honours painting student and biologist, paints with wax encaustic and found pigment the eroded gullies and ravaged hillsides of our agricultural past.

Wendy Teakel, sculptor, painter, and Naomi Greschke, make us aware that industrial agriculture and the monoculture of large-scale mining have similar implications for a landscape aesthetic, the loss of landscape amenity: "When a corporation gets so large it can wield power to externalise costs that should be properly be part of the price of the product it sells, then the public may reap the benefit of buying a (cheap) product but be forced to absorb ecological

costs that it did not agree to accept... The megacorporation may affect the taxes of millions of citizens and compromise the quality of life of future generations”(6).

Rebecca Solnit (7) says “ landscape’s most crucial condition is considered to be space, but its deepest theme is time”. Marty, besides working with dental alginate casting of the tailings dam, has constructed clay impression time lines of the deep time in the Cadia region, from the Devonian Fish fossils in nearby Canowindra and Fossil Hill, through the geological fault lines, natural flora, to European agriculture and finally the mine. These timelines, another landscape aesthetic, are presented sequentially in core sample boxes from the mine and fired with glazes from substances found at different sites at the mine and in the region.

Lex Beardsell, an honours painting student/ microbiologist, herself with Chinese ancestry, has constructed vertical landscapes reminiscent of Chinese scroll paintings, starting with rubbings of the 1880 Chinese gold- diggings along the river, the sluice walls covered now in lichen. She has responded to these subtle colourings and used natural substances like soil and ochre to make the rubbings then transferred historical photographic images into the works as a mere palimpsest. John Reid has photographed the river and the mine focussing on subtle issues of the impact people, the Wiradjuri, the Chinese through to the current 10 year pit, have had on the land.

Belinda Jessup, honours, Textiles, collects leaves from the White Box, Yellow Box, casuarina, mistletoe and lichen and dyes silk on the open camp fire, brewing in her witch’s cauldron an amazing array of landscape colours, twisting actual leaves into the fabric leaving a distinct imprint. The soils and concentrate from the mine on the other side of the fence also create colour, fitting Rebecca Solnit’s observation that “Attention to substance as a manifestation of nature unravels assertions about alienation from nature”(8).

The point of aesthetic evaluation by artists is that the art itself becomes the evaluation and although I could write clumsily about my choice of a gold palette to capture the light on the river at dawn, the cobalt blue of the sky at winter solstice and the naples yellow/pink light bathing the green underlaid with red ochre of hills crossed with sheep tracks, that is the job of writers. I would similarly love to prove that this landscape in Cadia Region is so special it should be frozen in time and even restored to a healthier version of its original aesthetic. And also to point out that the unspoilt rural vistas and natural habitats advertised as a tourist attraction are the very amenity which that industry depends on and which attract people to live in the area are being destroyed forever. We need to preserve what we have left and agricultural and mining havoc need to be rehabilitated so that the uninterrupted vista of rural arcadia can be re-established. We just have to go through the painful process of destruction before the reconstruction can occur.

(1)Solnit, Rebecca, *As Eve Said to the Serpent. On Landscape, Gender, and Art* University of Georgia Press. Athens. USA 2002, p.132.

(2)Phipson, Joan, *Watcher in the Garden*.

(3) *Auriferous*.

(4)*Remaking Reality. Nature at the Millenium* Routledge, London 1998 eds Braun, Bruce & Castree, Noel, p. 201, ref, Worster, p. 1096.

(5) *Fatal Harvest;the Tragedy of industrial agriculture* Ed Kimbrell, Andrew. Foundation for Deep Ecology 2002 California, p. 91 Paul Hawken.

(6) *Ibid; Fatal Harvest* p. 91 “Scale - Does It Matter?” Kirschenmann, Frederick.

(7)*Ibid; Solnit, Rebecca*, p. 53.

(8) *Ibid, Solnit, Rebecca*, p. 59.

OUR LANDSCAPES

Stephen Martin

Stephen Martin B.A., Dip.Lib, M. Sc. Soc., is a writer and researcher fascinated by people's response to the landscape and those elements, such as wildlife that attract people's attention. His relevant publications include A new land, European perceptions of Australia 1788-1850 (1993) and A history of Antarctica (1996). He is currently researching for a book on the many ways through which people have perceived and idealised the albatross.

To breathe is both unconscious and reflective – it is a defining act of life. So what makes us stop and take a breath at a particular place or landscape? Is there something recognisable in the lie of the land or in the way we see it? When is that catch of the mind or eye enough? What generates further interest, forms a covenant or becomes an obsession?

It's about people and the lifetimes of seeing and thinking, moving and learning and classifying, associating and differentiating becoming part of that view. As our familiarity grows, representations of that sight and its afterthoughts – the writings, dreams and images, grow a life of their own. Eventually these responses become part of the language of that land.

Some of the most interesting examples of this relationship can be seen in the experiences of Europeans exploring Australia.

On Saturday 19 July 1873 William Christie Gosse, while exploring the centre of Australia, saw what appeared to be a hill with holes near the top. On closer inspection he saw to his 'astonishment ... one immense rock rising abruptly from the plain; the holes I had noticed were caused by water in some places forming immense caves', he later wrote. He named it Ayers Rock. The next day he rode around the base of the rock, found a spring that he named Maggie's Spring and 'after walking and scrambling two miles barefooted, over sharp rocks, succeeded in reaching the summit, and had a view that repaid me for my trouble ... The top is covered with small holes in the rock, varying in size ... all partly filled with water. Mt Olga must be twenty miles west. Some low ranges and ridges west-north-west, one of which I think must be McNicol's Range; part of a lake visible, bearing north Mt Conner 96°, and high ranges south-east, south, and south west, with sandhills between.' Gosse saw with an analytical eye, surveying the lie of the land for later exploration and mapping. He continued 'This seems to be a favourite resort of the natives in the wet season, judging from the numerous camps in every cave. ... They amuse themselves covering these with all sorts of devices – some of them snakes, very cleverly done, others of two hearts joined together; and in one I noticed a drawing of a creek with an emu track going along the centre. I shall have more time to examine these when the main camp is here. This rock is certainly the most wonderful natural feature I have ever seen.'

Gosse and his party continued their explorations and on Monday 28 July were back at Ayers Rock. He wrote 'this rock appears more wonderful every time I look at it, and I may say it is a sight worth riding over eighty-four miles of spinifex sands to see'. On 1 August Gosse wrote that 'The rock presented a grand appearance this morning; close to our camp was a waterfall about 200 feet high, the water coming down in one sheet of foam.'

When Gosse stood on the top of Uluru and watched in wonder at its waterfalls, the experience was truly inspirational. It remains so. The 'rock', as it is popularly known, has become one of Australia's most enduring and unifying symbols. Uluru and its surrounding landscape is a symbolic heart to most Australians, revered by its Aboriginal custodians, and a place of tourist visitation from places around the world. Gosse's record of those few days of discovery and examination is indicative of our most significant shared perceptions of a unique landscape. It encompasses the scientific, the European explorer and the Aboriginal.

Sixty two years after Gosse stood on the top of Ayers Rock, Australian anthropologist Charles Mountford wrote that he was 'so impressed with the intense beauty and vast size [of Ayers Rock] that I set myself the task of making a survey of all phases of Aboriginal life associated with this wonderful feature.' Mountford's work has become one of the most respected and substantial contributions to European understanding of Aboriginal Uluru. Others have followed in this work. Barry Hill for example published *The Rock: travelling to Uluru* a remarkable personal interpretation of the region and its meanings in 1994.

Of course the traditional owners continue their interpretation and maintenance of Aboriginal explanations through their contact with visitors who come to this unique geological and spiritual landscape.

Uluru and its surrounds serve as a model for the approaches to preservation and landscape assessment. It is significant to European and Aboriginal cultures. It's a landscape of potential and a symbol of both modern and ancient culture. It's a central motif of the mystery and beauty of the Australian interior and a geographical, emotional and spiritual point of reference. It is a site of continuing scientific interest and explanation.

About twenty years ago, I climbed to the top of the MacDonnell Ranges at a spot just outside Alice Springs. It was mid winter and despite this and the fact that it was evening, it was hot, and the climb – if that is the correct word for such a low range, was hard work.

There was no defined track and, as I moved up to the top, over orange-red boulders, past clumps of dry green spinifex and shrubs, over tiny dry waterways and under the limited shade of ghost gums, I noticed ants in the cracks of rocks, lizards scurried out of my way. Above, kites circled in the air. For all I knew they saw me as potential carrion.

I was aware of the Aboriginal lore of the place, the European history of this beautiful range, and its geological age, but quite frankly after half an hour it didn't matter one jot. Occasionally I'd lift my head and look at the view but I wasn't too interested at this point.

Sweat seeped from my hair and down my back. It ran down into my eyes and stung. It soaked into my shirt and soon great wet patches grew outwards from my under-arms and the centre of my back. Flies landed on my wet forehead and drank. My thighs began to burn with the effort of stepping up and over the rocks and my back ached with the effort. My hands were scratched from grabbing at rocks and shrubs to steady myself or from pulling on them to further myself up the climb.

When I reached the top, exhausted, my heart banging and legs a little wobbly, I drank from the water bottle. Never does water taste so good and fresh as after a climb like that. It goes down the throat in a rush of cool and refreshment. Senses heightened but functioning more normally, I could look and think about the landscape.

At first sight the view, with its vastness and beauty was something of a shock. As I looked more closely it became wonderful. The range, old, red-orange and rounded, almost denuded of earth, stretched away to the north. Ghost gums, all skinny white trunks and dark green leaves, dotted the range. The land to the east seemed to stretch away forever. Immediately below lay Alice Springs and through it 'ran' the Todd River, with its accompanying green border of trees. Roads marked out patterns of transport and occupation. Away in the distance I could see the pearl like domes of the Pine Gap United States spy facility.

That moment and that scene are now gone. For all I know there may now be a track to the top of the spot on which I stood.

In contrast to Gosse's report, mine is a uniquely personal account of a landscape. My knowledge of the history, nature and politics of the place enlarged my experience of landscape. While linked to a geographical reality, it was intertwined with a sense of community and shared understandings.

There is much in common between desert and Antarctic landscapes – the openness, vastness and lack of human reference points - that inspire awe and curiosity. These landscapes are

geographical realities, and our memories of them are coloured by experience and history. Often they remain with us as treasured memories.

Many of us also hold an idealised landscape within us. Sometimes based on nothing more than textual descriptions or images, these may even become shared through common action, such as the efforts to preserve wilderness.

I once met Greenpeace organiser Lyn Goldsworthy, and we talked about the need to preserve Antarctica and its unique landscapes, many of which are significant to Australians and their history of visiting the continent. She wants Antarctica preserved because; 'it is in a pristine wilderness, because it is a zone of peace in a world of conflict; because it is mysterious in its isolation and inaccessibility; because we live our daily lives in an overcrowded and polluted world; Antarctica is gaining a special place in people's hearts.'

The American writer Wallace Stegner also wrote about the wilderness as an idealised, internalised landscape: 'We need wilderness preserved ... The reminder and assurance that it is still there is good for our spiritual health even if we never once in ten years set foot in it. It is good for us when we are young, because of the incomparable sanity it can bring briefly, as vacation and rest, into our insane lives. It is important to us when we are old simply because it is there – important, that is simply as an idea. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope.'

Through interpretations and experiences, landscapes can remind us of our past, our potential and our place in the world. We can look at the mythical, the historical, the artistic and the scientific views. Despite the essential fact that all landscapes change, we can protect landscapes of significance, we can make them reserves and parks, we can protect their defining characteristics such as river and ridge-lines and geological formations. By preserving wilderness we can protect a landscape of scientific or spiritual value.

Most of us have stopped and looked at a landscape. We've probably been taken by the spectacle of the view or an unusual feature, or the knowledge of a significant event that happened there. We'll sometimes wonder at the history of the place, or think about its wildlife, geology or ecology. We may recognise something – if it's a favourite place we'll feel comfortable and rewarded. Often this is enough. Sometimes the stories about a place will have greater meaning, or more significance than those of other places and these cultural associations enrich our understandings and experience of the landscape.

Our responses to a landscape - the catch and its aftermath – have in common shared symbols and descriptions and stories. Landscapes and the shared and respected perceptions they evoke form a conspiracy of understanding.

And that's worth keeping.

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SEEKING THE SPECTACULAR

Sally Morgan

Sally Morgan was born in Perth in 1951, where she currently works as a Professorial Fellow in the Centre of Indigenous History and the Arts within the School of Indigenous Studies at the University of Western Australia. She is well known for both her art and writing and was the recipient of a number of awards, including the Human Rights award for her first book My Place. She belongs to the Palku and Nyamal peoples from the Pilbara in the north west of Western Australia.

Into an ancient country, the tourists come. They seek the spectacular, and as they stand on top of a rugged cliff, or beside a cascading waterfall, their hand goes not to their heart but to their camera. Cliff and waterfall become immortalised in dramatic holiday photographs, and in glossy brochures that encourage ever more tourists to come. In our approach to preserving the environment we become mercenary, valuing land and life in ways that are narrow and ultimately unsustainable, driven by the tourist dollar and love of the extraordinary. An attitude of dominance means that it is easy to forget that nothing exists in a vacuum. All life is connected.



Sally Morgan Wannamurrayunga.

The State of Western Australia is an artificial boundary that came into being after Europeans arrived. Covering nearly a third of the continent the state border dissects a number of Indigenous countries. Before Europeans called Australia home, the state was part of a much

larger whole, a land traversed and nurtured by hundreds of Indigenous nations, each caring for their own boundaries of country. So long before I followed in the footsteps of my ancestors, my inheritance of blood and spirit brought Nyamal country and Palku country to my dreams. Before I ever walked my grandmother's and grandfather's country I dreamed of red earth, spinifex, round stone topped hills, wide river beds, rockholes, waterholes, nightsprings, crisp starry nights and long, hot dusty days. In some of my dreams I could look down and see the boundaries and bloodlines of my belonging. In other dreams I found myself looking deeply into the shapes, patterns and lifeblood of the earth, the rocks and trees, the wildflowers and the bush animals. When I first went to the Pilbara I was surprised to see how accurate my dreams were. The spinifex-covered hills that called to me in sleep were real and so alive. They knew me and I knew them. We belonged together in the same picture and I knew that long after my small life faded like the desert rose they would call to my children and my children's children.



Sally Morgan. Nyamal Country. 1991.

When I head out on the Marble Bar road and cross the wide, dry riverbed of the Shaw, I think of my grandmother's older sister and the other old people belonging to my extended family. They had a camp on the Shaw and some of them are buried there. My grandmother's sister was a good singer. Some of the old people say that when they sang for a corroboree you could hear her voice singing out high above the rest. There are songs for everything, but one of her favourites was about a river running a banker. A woman like my grandmother's sister would enjoy singing a wild song on the banks of a river that in the wet was wild. The rivers that crisscross her country are normally a series of deep river pools, but after a cyclone they come down in a rush, flooding the land, drowning the stock, damaging the boundary fences and making the squatter despair. But that's the beauty of country, everything has its place.

I remember the very first night I slept out in the open under the stars the smell of woodsmoke and eucalyptus hung in the air. It was the first time I had seen the night sky from my grandmother's country, so it wasn't surprising that when I finally slept I dreamt of the first fire, the first song, the first dance, the first people. In my dream the old station homesteads dotting the country slowly faded away. There was no muster to finish, no sheep to be shorn, no fences to be fixed and no saddles to be mended. The principles of life were as they had always been for thousands and thousands of years. The people walked the land and there was balance and respect. But change can come in the blink of eye.



Sally Morgan. Marble Bar Pool. 1990.

Marble Bar, the hottest town in Australia, is located 120 miles inland from Port Hedland. It's home to the famous, beautifully coloured bar of Jasper that sits in the Marble Bar Pool on the Coongan River. Early in the century the pool was a favourite camping spot for prospectors because it always had water. Men made it their main camp and went out from there to search the surrounding gullies for alluvial gold and tin. With the gold strike came a sudden influx of hundreds of mad eyed miners determined to make their fortunes. In my great-grandmother's lifetime she saw the explorers, then the squatters with their sheep and cattle, then the miners hungry for gold and tin. In the space of one lifetime the whole world changed. On the night I slept in the Marble Bar caravan park the stars were brilliantly bright but the breeze coming in from the desert was a little chilly. I zipped myself up in a small nylon tent and slept on a half blown-up rubber mattress on the ground. Before dawn a wandering horse picked his way through the caravan park and trod on me. When I unzipped the tent and told him to move his hooves he bent down and snorted in my face. Then he showed me his furry rump, flicked his

tail high in the air and swaggered away. It seemed an appropriate reminder of the way my people's lives had changed.

Corunna Downs Station, my grandmother's birthplace, sits between Marble Bar and Nullagine. The first thing you notice when you are heading out to the station are the soft, blue hills in the distance. For a long time there is nothing but a rough, winding bush track and scrubby, open country. Then suddenly there's a fence with a wide iron gate, outbuildings, and the homestead made from anthill mound and whitewashed too many times to count. The station owner or manager may be friendly or unfriendly, depending on his point of view. But whatever the welcome, this place has significance for my family. Here my grandmother was born under a big gum tree and while she was still screaming her first scream her Aunties smoked her to protect her from harm. Here her bare feet ran along the creek bank with the camp dogs following along behind and stirring up the dust. Here the old women taught her how to dance and sing and speak language. Here she hid from cyclones. Here she was whipped with the bullock's cane for stealing a piece of apple pie. Here she learnt how to survive in the squatter's Big House as a house-girl. And from here, she was taken away, never to see her country again. Here, when I look out from the homestead towards the hills, I can't help thinking that squatters may come and squatters may go, but the land and the people will always be tied together.

From a tourist's viewpoint, there is much in my grandmother's and grandfather's country that is not spectacular. In the Port Hedland Visitors Centre I once heard a city fella say that if you've seen one spinifex bush you've seen them all. Yet I never tire of painting them. The one thing my grandmother taught me very early in life was to know the world around you with all of your being. Sight, sound, taste, smell, feel and spirit. When all of the senses are used, then nothing is ordinary. As an artist I can see the life force in everything. Rocks, rivers, trees, plants, animals, people. That's what I paint, the energy of life. I don't worry about what should be protected, because I think it all should. And that makes the task both overwhelming and bittersweet. What I paint today, might not be there tomorrow.

In the south of Western Australia non-Indigenous people celebrated the first Foundation Day of the Swan River Colony by cutting down a tree. It was a signpost to the future, for we have been cutting down trees ever since. In the north of Western Australia sheep, cattle, horses, foxes and rabbits have made it impossible for some bush creatures and plants to survive. Waterholes have disappeared and plastic supermarket bags continue to turn up in surprisingly remote places. The very things which we destroy in our lifetime may one day hold the key to the world's future. But our arrogance allows us to assume that we know what the future holds, and therefore what future generations will need. They may curse us one day.

Even though I live in the city my grandfather is fond of telling me how to avoid being trapped by a river when its running a banker and where to find water in dry and dusty places.

'A nightspring,' he once told me, 'can't be seen. The water isn't there during the day, it only comes up at night. In times of little water you can still work, but unless you know where to find that nightspring you'll die. At the end of the day, no matter how thirsty you are, you have to wait on the nightspring. When it shows itself then you can save your life.'

As I stare out my city window, and see pavement where there once was bush, I wonder –

How do we inspire ourselves and the world to protect the things that are hidden against our time of need?

A CONSERVATIONIST'S PERSPECTIVE ON INSPIRATIONAL LANDSCAPES

Dailan Pugh

Born in Victoria in 1955. Became an active conservationist through involvement with the first Australian forest blockade at Terania Creek in 1979. A co-founder of the North East Forest Alliance in north-east NSW in 1989. As a full time volunteer coordinator for NEFA from 1989 to 1999 he organised numerous peaceful blockades, researched successful court cases, wrote innumerable media releases and submissions, lobbied a succession of State and Federal politicians and represented the conservation movement on a variety of committees at local, State and Federal level. Currently he lives at Byron Bay, is President of the Byron Environmental and Conservation Organisation and is trying to develop his artwork.

What is it about a natural landscape that inspires some people to devote their time and energy to protecting it? This is not an easy question as conservationist's motivations vary widely, may be incapable of precise identification and may vary over time. For this discussion I will limit my observations to forested landscapes, as these have been the focus of my conservation activities.

Probably the most accurate insight I can provide is by trying to identify what it was about natural landscapes that has inspired me to devote a large part of my life to their conservation. I supplement this with my perceptions of what has inspired other people to join the fight. Finally I make some recommendations as to how these could be identified and mapped across the landscape.

From places to themes

I was raised in regrowth woodland outside Melbourne. In my late teens I made a number of trips to north-Queensland where I spent some time living in rainforest. I fell in love with rainforest. It is hard to say why, undoubtedly the *fantastic aesthetic appeal* (giant buttressed trees, fantastic woven fig trunks, knotty vines, giant leaves) played a large part, though there was a more *intangible attraction* associated with its *life-force* (as represented by the abundance, variety, size and luxuriance of vegetation) which I never attempted to pin down (though for these purposes it could be classified as 'spiritual').

At that time my knowledge of rainforests was extremely limited, so my attraction was not associated with knowledge of their ecology, conservation status or heritage values.

This inspiration was so great that I resolved to live in the rainforest. I later moved to northeast NSW to look for my ideal property. While it was the rainforests of north-Queensland that had inspired me, I had decided to live somewhere with less climatic and political extremes. This experience of rainforests in a couple of places had transferred from a locality to the *theme of rainforest*.

For a while I stayed up the Terania Creek valley and spent considerable time exploring the rainforest at the head of the valley. This became a special place for me because of its relative naturalness (little past logging) and my familiarity with it. I became aware of the proposed logging, became involved with the local action group and eventually in 1979 I was arrested at the blockade trying to obstruct logging machinery.

The eventual success of the protest action in stopping logging inspired me to do what I could to stop logging of rainforests elsewhere in the region. When, in the lead-up to the 1982 rainforest decision, I heard of extensive rainforests further west which were proposed for ongoing logging I spent months exploring them and writing proposals for key parts to be protected.

I was fully operating on a thematic basis (i.e. trying to protect rainforest areas I had never before seen or heard about), though my inspiration had been broadened and deepened with

increasing knowledge of the ecology, conservation status and heritage values of rainforest. When I heard of small pockets of monsoon rainforest threatened by mining in the Western Australian Kimberly I helped to agitate for their protection, I did artwork and research for the Rainforest Information Centre to help publicise the plight of overseas rainforests, and after NSW's 1982 'rainforest decision' I continued to agitate for an end to all rainforest logging in NSW.

It is important to recognise that while my inspiration was initiated by tropical and sub-tropical rainforests it had broadened to include all rainforest forms. This is definitely attributable to increasing knowledge rather than aesthetics or 'spiritual' reasons. Walking in a dry vine thicket does not evoke the same level of emotional response in me as a tall stand of lush rainforest. But knowing that that dry vine thicket is extremely rare and threatened does increase its inspirational value for me.

On its margins the rainforest at Terania Creek was overtopped by Brush Box and eucalypts with rainforest understories. Conservationists called this rainforest and State Forests called it wet sclerophyll. State Forests were drawing their boundaries based on dominant commercial species and we were drawing them based on what they looked and felt like. In many cases these forests were formed of giant ancient Brush Box or eucalypts over lush understories of small to medium sized rainforest trees and/or palms. They were as inspiring (aesthetically and spiritually) as the rest of the rainforest.

By the mid 1980s I had found an affordable and remote rainforest property and was living amongst giant old eucalypts on the rainforest's ecotone. My increased familiarity with ancient eucalypt dominated forests and their inhabitants deepened my appreciation and understanding of them. The inspiration of the massive towering eucalypts was such that I began painting them. The fact that I had learnt that they were hundreds or thousands of years old added to my appreciation of them.

In the late 1980s I became increasingly concerned about the fate of oldgrowth forests. While I had experienced and been inspired by particular areas of such forests before, this took on a different emphasis when I went spotlighting with a zoologist and learnt about the array of fauna dependant for their survival on large hollows in ancient trees. Finding out about the ecology of hollow formation and the dramatic decline in a suite of animal species, along with hollows, in logging operations then inspired me to start campaigning on the *theme of oldgrowth forests*.

I had my first court case to protect a particular area of oldgrowth forest in 1988, the success of which inspired me to continue the fight. In 1989 I became aware of various individuals and groups scattered throughout northeast NSW fighting for various patches of forests which had one theme in common – they were all oldgrowth forest. I called a meeting and we formed the North East Forest Alliance (NEFA). From 1989 until 1999, I volunteered my time fully to the protection of forests in northeast NSW.

From the beginning NEFA had as its basic objectives the protection of rainforest, wilderness, oldgrowth and threatened species.

Naturalness

I think that both wilderness and oldgrowth are aspects of '*naturalness*', with the pinnacle of naturalness being an area formed by natural processes with little evidence of interference by people. I believe that it is people's appreciation of the concept of *naturalness* that has underpinned the relative success of the wilderness and oldgrowth campaigns.

It is worth recognising that each person's concept of naturalness is related to their experience and knowledge. A person with no experience of native forests could visit an area of regrowth and weedy vegetation and consider it the pinnacle of naturalness; with further experience and knowledge that person will begin to discriminate 'relative naturalness'.

Protection of oldgrowth was (and is) undoubtedly the main focus of NEFA's public campaign. In the beginning it is unlikely that many people in north-east NSW knew what the word 'oldgrowth' meant; after a few years of the campaign most people had probably formed some association with the name 'oldgrowth' and there was strong public support for its protection, even from people who had never seen it. Community attitude surveys have repeatedly shown the vast majority of people now support the protection of oldgrowth even though they have probably never experienced it for themselves, and I suspect never even seen meaningful images of it.

NEFA had regular blockades and attracted many people to come and undergo severe personal deprivations to try to stop logging operations. At Mummel Gulf one blockade went for three months through the middle of winter in very primitive conditions. At other blockades people would be threatened, run off the road, beaten up, arrested, jailed, fined, spend days locked onto machinery or up trees or tripods, spend weeks with minimal shelter in rain and mud, and still come back for more. Some people were willing to put their own lives at risk by placing themselves in dangerous (even life threatening) situations to make getting past them as difficult as possible, and some were badly injured in this process. Surely this displays an extremely high level of inspiration.

Getting people to commit to blockading degraded, low site quality or regrowth forest, no-matter what its other conservation values, was always more difficult. Without the aesthetic and associated spiritual appeal of older forest and larger trees people are less likely to be inspired sufficiently to put themselves through the trauma.

I believe that it is the concept of the 'most natural', 'least disturbed' and/or 'best bits' that people are inspired by. This is not a new concept, as I believe it was precisely this that inspired many people in the past to agitate for the protection of particular forest areas. All that was new was the labelling of this as 'oldgrowth' and a concerted promotion campaign.

In many instances oldgrowth may not be 'visualised', and when it is it will differ significantly between people depending on their experience and background. People who have something to lose (i.e. loggers) will always adopt the narrowest definition possible, ecologists will always need a rational definition to determine the category they give to a piece of forest, and lay people will base their assessment on what it feels and looks like.

For me the interaction of site quality and structure greatly influences the aesthetic and spiritual appeal (and thus inspiration) of a given stand of forest. From my experience, the naturalness threshold at which forests inspire people is below that for classing a stand as oldgrowth in scientific terms.

I think that if you took a bus load of people (with no phobias about the bush) off a city street and showed them around a variety of forest types and growth stages, most would identify similar areas of each forest type as having a high degree of naturalness and thus inspiration.

Remoteness

Wilderness had been pursued as a theme for years by other conservation groups; NEFA effectively incorporated it as a subset of its oldgrowth theme (while still campaigning for it specifically).

Many people find something very special and inspirational about being in an area where you are not aware of modern technological society (i.e. away from machinery noise and human structures), where you can think that maybe no person has ever put their foot precisely where you are, and can think that the place would have been the same thousands of years ago. I would class the feelings this generates as *intangible*, though they are an influence on the feelings generated by a forest's naturalness. They may be described as *spiritual*, and for the purpose of this discussion I will label them as being generated by a feeling of *remoteness*.

In tall wet forests you can get some feeling of remoteness in a small (few hectares) patch of forest that has escaped prior disturbance, provided it is within a larger stand of forest and remote from busy roads. There is no doubt that the larger an area is the more intense is the

sense of remoteness that can be felt, though it doesn't necessarily require the tens of thousands of hectares required for designation as 'wilderness'.

Threatened Species

In the past, threatened species have often been used as a reason for protecting an area of forest which is primarily being targeted for other reasons (i.e. rainforest, wilderness, oldgrowth). However, there are significant exceptions to this. Koalas, in particular, have inspired people in a variety of locations to fight for the protection of degraded and regrowth forests – they are a *theme* in their own right.

Within north-east NSW a greater emphasis is now being placed upon *threatened species* as a theme by forest conservation groups, with strong campaigns being run for degraded and regrowth forests that have very high biodiversity values. In some instances these have inspired people to blockade with a similar level of enthusiasm as demonstrated at oldgrowth blockades in the past.

Community attitude surveys have consistently shown threatened species to be one of the highest ranked conservation issues. Like oldgrowth, I think threatened species are an *inherent inspirational theme* that only requires a concerted publicity campaign to bring it to the forefront of people's minds. People focus on the 'cute and cuddly' with a hierarchy of preference for different types of species, with plants, fungi and algae down the bottom. However, even those threatened species at the bottom of the pile may still be considered inspirational, with the 'inspiration' probably coming from an inherent belief within most people that all species have a right to exist.

Landscape Features

Upon reflection I find it interesting that landscape features (waterfalls, watercourses, cliffs, mountains etc.) have not been more of a dominant theme in northeast NSW's forest campaigns of recent years. Certainly they have been a component of many campaigns and doubtlessly add to the experience of a place. This may be in part because:

- many of the most scenic landscape features have been included in national parks in previous community campaigns;
- many of north-east NSW's forests are tall dense forests in rugged terrain where the vegetation obscures scenic views and streams are relatively small and down steep slopes; and/or
- tall forests of big old trees and lush rainforests are generally more inspiring than landscape features.

I would hypothesise that landscape features become more important in drier landscapes where they are more readily viewed and where the best vegetation (structurally) is associated with sheltered and moister sites, which are in turn associated with landscape features (i.e. pockets of rainforest around waterfalls or in gorges, taller forests on stream banks, etc).

Cultural Values

It is equally surprising that non-Aboriginal cultural (i.e. historical, scientific, artistic, etc.) heritage has not been, in my experience, a strong reason given for people wanting to protect areas of forests in northeast NSW. However, *proximity* and thus *familiarity* have been important reasons for some areas. People are more likely to be inspired to protect an area if it is near to where they live, even if it is not oldgrowth, rainforest or habitat of threatened species.

Protection of areas because they are of importance to Aboriginal people has been a strong motivator for many conservationists. Obviously, in the case of non-Aboriginal people this inspiration is based on knowledge, while for Aboriginal people there are many more factors at work. In respect to NEFA's activities, Aboriginal people made it clear early on that they

wanted to determine what was appropriate for the sites they considered important. Again, I defer to this position; suffice it to say that there are many landscapes of particular inspiration to Aboriginal peoples.

Thoughts on identifying and mapping Inspirational Landscapes

In summary I consider that there are a variety of themes which contribute to the inspiration that a landscape generates. I do not consider that these need to be experienced to exist, although I would expect that most people visiting a place would experience most of them. The significance and breadth of these themes is influenced by knowledge, with some requiring knowledge to enable someone to appreciate the experience. For example, seeing an endangered animal in its natural habitat can be inspiring, though if you don't know its endangered it is just another animal. Even going to a place known to be the only place that endangered animal exists can be inspiring even if you don't see the actual animal – the same can apply to significant historical sites such as where some event took place.

In relation to forests, I think it is a combination of aesthetic appeal and feelings generated by the vegetation, which provide the greatest inspiration. I believe that the derived inspiration is primarily influenced by vegetation colour, texture and structure, site productivity and naturalness. Landscape features influence this, but become more important where the vegetation becomes poorer and less dominant. The wilderness indicator of remoteness would be a secondary influence.

I believe that knowledge of landscape features and components influences the level of inspiration generated by a landscape. Knowledge of the significance of a vegetation type or of the vulnerability of inhabitants of the landscape can inspire people in the absence of direct powerful aesthetic or spiritual inspiration

As major quantifiable influences of landscapes on people's inspirations I would identify:

- *Relative visual appeal of vegetation* - which incorporates aesthetics and feelings, and is influenced by structure, site productivity, colour, texture and form.
- *Relative naturalness* – which incorporates feelings, and is principally influenced by the degree of modification of the natural landscape and secondarily by a sense of remoteness from human influences.
- *Relative visual appeal of landscape features* – which incorporate aesthetics and feelings, includes waterfalls, streams, cliffs, mountains etc.
- *Natural themes* – which incorporates aesthetics, feelings and knowledge, where knowledge has broadened or intensified the inspiration originally generated by one part of a theme (i.e. rainforest, wilderness, oldgrowth etc.).
- *Natural components* - which incorporates aesthetics, feelings and knowledge, where knowledge about, or experience with, components of the landscape has generated inspiration (i.e. Koalas, threatened species).

I would suggest that maybe artistic representations of a landscape or sites identifiable by a community as being of particular cultural significance for natural values are in part reflections of the above influences. Though I recognise that there are many other factors influencing the place an artist chooses to paint (ie accessibility and familiarity) or that a community considers significant (ie proximity and familiarity).

I consider that there is still a need to identify sites of cultural significance to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and take these into account in delineating inspirational landscapes.

One approach could be to delineate all places of known cultural significance, identify common attributes and themes and then map these across the landscape. Another approach is to identify inspirational attributes and themes, use focus groups (preferably of inexperienced people with no pre-existing prejudices) to identify their relative significance and then map

these across the landscape. Known places of cultural significance can then be used to help refine the outcome and identify missing attributes.

For the second approach, which I prefer, it is necessary to identify the possible range of features that will influence inspirational landscapes and for which mappable data is available or able to be derived. These would include ecosystems, growth stages, naturalness, remoteness from settlement, threatened species habitat value, natural features and cultural heritage sites.

For some regions of Australia there is good mapped (often in a computer GIS) data which can be used. I have been extensively involved in the comprehensive regional assessments in eastern New South Wales and thus have a good idea of the mappable data available for this area. Based on my knowledge of this data I would recommend identifying:

- *Relative visual appeal of vegetation*: amalgamating ecosystems into a limited number of classes based upon a combination of aesthetic values and floristics (i.e. rainforests, wet heaths, forests dominated by stringybarks with a grassy understorey, etc.), and site productivity (i.e. separating the same ecosystem where it is growing on a steep slope and poor soils and thus stunted from where it is growing on flatter country and good soils and thus tall).
- *Relative naturalness*: regrouping structural mapping (which is only available for forests) into classes based upon naturalness (i.e. relative proportions of large old trees and site productivity) rather than existing 'oldgrowth' definitions. Including a review of the national wilderness inventory data classifications to capture the feeling of remoteness and an aspect of naturalness, though without a size threshold.
- *Relative visual appeal of landscape features*: using mapped and topographical data, along with a DEM, to identify, categorise and map the immediate view-sheds of prominent waterfalls, gorges, cliffs, mountains etc., and set distances from streams and waterbodies depending on their size.
- *Natural components*: combining the available distributional models for threatened fauna and flora into classes based upon the number of threatened species likely to occur at any particular locality. Given the low number of models for flora it would also be necessary to use plant locality data. For some species (i.e. Koalas) their distributional models could be used in isolation.
- *Cultural values*: delineating boundaries of sites identified as being of social and cultural significance (aesthetic, historic, scientific, geoheritage etc.).

Once the mapped data had been derived and collated then there would be a necessity to rank it in some form using focus groups, map it and refine the outcome. In such a process it would be necessary to recognise that some areas would qualify as 'inspirational' on the basis of a single value or a combination of values. For example, an area of high naturalness may be automatically included and one of moderate naturalness may only be included where it is also of high aesthetic or landscape value.

JASPER GORGE, NT

Deborah Bird Rose

Deborah Bird Rose is Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies at the Australian National University. She is the author of Nourishing Terrains, Australian Aboriginal views of Landscape and Wilderness (1996), Dingo Makes Us Human (winner of the 1992/3 Stanner Prize), and Hidden Histories (winner of the 1991 Jessie Litchfield Award). Her most recent book Country of the Heart is published by Aboriginal Studies Press and will appear in late 2002. Writing in the fields of anthropology, history, environmental ethics and religious studies, her work is focused on social and ecological justice. Her current work in progress is a book entitled 'Dreaming Ecology'.

During the strong silver nights dingoes howled up and down the gorge. For over a week we camped there – claimants, land council people, and the judge and his party. We were at the western edge of Jasper Gorge in a little flat called TK. The moon was big by night, but at dusk and dawn the place glowed like ancient burnished copper.

The land claim was successful and Jasper Gorge is now Aboriginal land. The road that runs south from the Victoria highway goes through the gorge and is still public. Every day people drive through, and every trip is another iteration of the path of the Black-headed Python, the great snake-woman who made this place.

The sinuous valley of the Gorge is the track of the snake. She formed the place with her swervy action, and other parts of the story can be seen along the cliffs. Over there is a large stone that is her coolamon; here the rock is split where she cut it with her hairbelt, and up there are more tracks. The Black-headed Python walked in the shape of a woman as well as in the shape of a snake. Like many Dreamings, she was a shape-shifter, and her metamorphic power extended beyond her body to impress itself into the country as well. Most impressive to me is the hill that bears the impression of her body where she stopped and sat. Perhaps the term 'sat' is not exactly correct. One side of this hill belongs to Ngaliwurru people, the other side to Karangpurru people. Here she stopped, said goodbye to the country behind her, and gave birth to the language, songs and people of the country before her.

In Jasper Gorge the Dreaming ancestor is so very visible that even a western person like me can see the story. I make no claim fully to comprehend the Dreaming, but the hills, gorge, stones and other marks vividly express the sacred geography of creation as it is impressed and embedded in Aboriginal country. Anyone can see it, and many of the Aboriginal owners wished that everyone would see it. When we asked about their concerns about tourism, for example, they said that they hoped tourists would come and that through being there would understand something of what they were seeing. For the traditional owners, the proof of creation and continuing ownership is right there, accessible to everyone.

You can see the past because it is there in front of you in the track she made. But you see creation in many ephemeral forms as well, and thus you can come to understand that creation was not only a one-off event in the past, but is an on-going process of life. In her coolamon the Black-headed Python carried the seeds of many plants that she distributed as she traveled. Her action in the world created botanical communities – in the hills she put the seeds for hill country plants, and out on the flats she put the seeds for that place. On the eastern side she put boab seeds and today the trees mark the southern edge of the distribution of boabs (*jamulang* in local languages). Every tree that grows, every plant put there originally by the Python, is a contemporary effervescence of the Dreaming. When the winds carry the fresh smell of spinifex and sugarbag you breathe creation.

Now the Gorge is experiencing a new wave of ecological change. In recent years the vegetation has been thickening up. One of the beneficiaries of changing conditions is a palm tree (*Livistona* sp, "Victoria River"). Known as *walmatj* in local languages, the palm tree is a

delightful food. From its earlier habitat along the lower edge of the escarpment the species has started marching down the slopes to establish itself in the gullies and washouts. Once palms were a rarity confined to the top; now they are rushing around.

The Jasper Gorge road was one of the early whitefella tracks in the district and thus was the lifeline to the inland stations. Supplies brought by boat to Timber Creek were taken inland by cart. The place where we camped, TK, was named for the boab (*Adansonia gregorii*, after the explorer Augustus Gregory) on which Tom Kilfoyle carved his initials in 1884. People camped here before continuing through the gorge which, in the early days, had a fearsome reputation for Aboriginal resistance.

One group of travelers consisted of two teamsters, Mulligan and Ligar, and their Aboriginal workers. In 1895 they camped at TK and were attacked by Aborigines. Barricading themselves among the stores from the wagons, they fought out a three-day siege, at the end of which they escaped back to the north. The day after their escape, Mounted Constable Willshire arrived on the scene, assessed the damage, and sent word to Victoria River Downs. Willshire went north following the teamsters, and the manager of Victoria River Downs, Jack Watson, rode out with a party of stockmen, trackers, and diggers who had been en route to the Kimberley goldfields. The official death count was sixty Aborigines shot in retaliation for this incident.

Later, when relations between whites and black had stabilized somewhat, the track was widened by dynamiting a huge stone that rested exactly where white people wanted to expand the road. Aboriginal people remember the stone as a Dreaming and increase site for turtles. It is now gone, although people speculate that some of the smaller stones along the roadside in that area may be fragments of the original Dreaming.

My introduction to the gorge took place over many trips during which people explained bits and pieces of the story, but I really only began to understand its gender complexity when I visited a site where the Black-headed Python woman is said still to be present. In one place there is a portion of rock that is part of her body; traditional owners assert that she herself is living and conscious right there in that stone. The paint is neither old nor new, but the area around the Python's genitals is clean and fresh. The stone-flesh has been rubbed with red ochre and beautifully cared for over the years.

On a visit in preparation for the land claim hearing, our party split into two groups, and the women led us (women) down the women's side of the hill. As I walked I reflected on the gaze, the recognition, the acknowledgement, and the empowerment that are involved in seeing one's embodied self there in the creation of the world. Aboriginal women and men carry portions of the knowledge, songs, actions and care of this place and this Dreaming in these ordinary times. It takes both – men as well as women – to keep the place in connection with the living generations. In the women's part I encountered a powerful and life-giving femaleness that encompassed me and enriches my gendered personhood.

This land claim was successful, albeit failing fully to satisfy people's aspirations. Ngaliwurru and Karangpurru people's sites, rituals, knowledge, and words contained the proof of the claim – and more. Through this legal procedure we began to unmake more than one hundred years of conquest which have included the most appalling forms of racial and gender cruelty. Aboriginal people's remembrance was shared with others, and thereby was linked to action that re-structured local, Territory and national power. Giving new shape to the future, our work also affirmed the resilience that enables people to salvage life from the death work of the past.

In Jasper Gorge I worked with creation, gender, violence, and dispossession to accomplish a step toward decolonisation. I became a participant in a form of care that is embedded in a world of flux. Here I worked with people to unmake histories of violence and loss, and here my own feet follow the footprints of the Python creator. Here, I think, many histories of cruelty – around gender, conquest, belonging, and other contentious domains – can be unmade and new histories and responsibilities can be made. The story is never complete.

Inspiration can be a power that connects us with the world in life-affirming and life-giving action. In saying this I am working counter to a western cult of beauty. My own landscape aesthetic was originally formed in the American west and thus was embedded in the American sublime. This aesthetic of transcendence inspires a person to stand outside herself, to rise above daily life and to partake of a larger glory. Jasper Gorge is a place where something else happens. This is a place of inclusion; it draws you into the world of continuity and flux, empowering you to act.

I am urging an intersubjective mode of inspiration. The aesthetic of the sublime, in spite of its emphasis on landscape, is really about the self, its capacities, limits and possibilities for transcendence. Much of the wilderness aesthetic literature bears an even more paradoxical vision of self. In wilderness the self can encounter the absence of its own kind. Delightfully, and with great personal meaning, wilderness can be a place where presence and absence each stimulate the self. Care of one's self is a significant practice, and when exercised in relation to place may become a transforming and renewing experience, but I think there is more to inspiration than the personal.

An intersubjective mode of inspiration takes a different track, seeking relationship between self and other. In this mode of inspiration both self and other can potentially flourish. My underwriting premise is that place is both a subject in the world and a site of intersubjective encounter amongst humans, and between humans and other living things. Inspiration deepens all the selves who interact in a given place.

From the premise of the subjectivity of place, I would want to say to people who might visit Jasper Gorge: do not go there simply to marvel at its grandeur. Go there to discover specific ways in which you can inscribe yourself more deeply into the world, to remake and unmake the histories that brought you there, and to learn and relearn the connections between your embodied self, other people, and the world of constancy and flux.

Better yet, find more places where this work can be done. Jasper Gorge is not a singular source of creation: it is one among many, a site for life alongside all the other sites for life in this country.

Further Readings

On Jasper Gorge, see:

D. Rose 1994 'Flesh, And Blood, And Deep Colonising, in *Claiming Our Rites: Studies in Religion by Australian Women Scholars*, M. Joy & P. Magee (eds), pp. 327-41. Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Wollstonecraft, NSW.

D. Rose 1996 'Histories and Rituals: Land Claims in the Territory' in *In the Age of Mabo, History, Aborigines and Australia*, B. Attwood (ed), pp. 35-53, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

On the cult of beauty, the sublime, and wilderness see:

J. Daniel 1994 [1992] *The Trail Home: Nature, Imagination, and the American West*, Pantheon Books, New York.

C. Oravec 1996 'To Stand Outside Oneself: The Sublime in the Discourse of Natural Scenery', in *The Symbolic Earth: Discourse and Our Creation of the Environment*, J. Cantrill & C. Oravec (eds) pp. 58-75, The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington.

LIVING WITH LANDSCAPE

Jim Sinatra & Phin Murphy

Jim Sinatra and Phin Murphy are principals of Sinatra•Murphy Pty Ltd., a landscape studio with a design ethos formed through experiences of working in rural and remote Australia. Primary areas of interest include artistic expressions in landscape projects that celebrate the cultures of people and the spirit of nature, and has included community planning and development in rural and remote indigenous communities.

The practice's experiences in rural and remote areas have been essential in driving the sensitivity of their design works. In the urban context Sinatra•Murphy is committed to exploring the role of art in expressing a landscape's identity. Artistic expression is inspired by both literal and enigmatic aspects of the Australian landscape, and developed in a manner to allow the landscape to determine the spirit of a site. The ultimate intention is a presence of place that has the strength and conviction in its elements being born from the site. Jim and Phin have received State and National Landscape Architecture Awards for their publications and design projects.

Excerpt taken from J. Sinatra and P. Murphy. 1999. *Listen to the People, Listen to the Land*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, pp: 1 – 4.) Reproduced with the permission of Melbourne University Press.

We turned the ignition off, and the silence of the place was eerie. The walls of the crater seemed to stand with the sole purpose of keeping the outside world from disturbing its sacred arena: a keeping place for the memories of millennia protected from the expanse of the surrounding landscape. We climbed out of our vehicle. Neither of us felt unwelcomed, but the presence of this place was intense.

We continued on the track leading to the eastern side of the crater until it abruptly stopped, then walked along a small valley - one of the many that disturb the crater's rim. We came across a waterhole a couple of hundred metres from our vehicle, but well hidden from the track. It was guarded by curved rock that had been swept smooth by wind and water since the beginning. Similar pockets of rock dot the slopes of the crater, forming countless caves and natural shelters. We had heard of rock art and hand stencils (1) in the area, but focused on being *with* this landscape rather than searching for things in it. As we climbed the loose sandstone of the inside rim, we came across several natural shelters large enough to house ten to twenty people. They had a definite sense of having been used over the years, and we then partly understood why this place was sacred to another culture and why we were not permitted to camp within its confines.

We drove out of the crater the way we had come, following the track that serpentine through the inner and outer rims shaded by desert oaks (*Allocasuarina decaisneana*) and eucalypts. Thankful for having a four-wheel-drive we traversed the plain, following a series of tracks until we found the place where we had camped on a previous trip. We dug a fire pit and lay the tarpaulin by the Mulga thickets (*Acacia aneura*) which crammed one of the numerous drainage lines that occasionally carry rain-water from the crater's slopes into the desert. After a fire-cooked meal our conversation trailed back to a sign in the crater, erected by the Northern Territory Conservation Commission and the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, which illustrated different world views through sharing two stories of how this landscape was formed.

Local Aboriginal belief understands that Tnorula was formed during the creation time when a large group of women danced across the sky. A mother put her baby aside, resting in its wooden baby-carrier while the women danced. The baby-carrier toppled over the edge of the dancing arena and crashed to earth, transforming into the circular rock walls of Tnorula. The mother and father searched for their child, but the infant was covered with sand and hidden from view. Today the mother, as the evening star, and the father, as the morning star, continue

their search for their missing earth-bound child while the women maintain their dance across the sky as the Milky Way.

According to the Western scientific understanding of Gosses Bluff, the crater is considered one of the most significant comet impact structures by world standards. It was formed around 130 million years ago when a comet of frozen carbon dioxide, ice and dust struck the earth at extremely high velocity. The force of impact resulted in a release of energy equivalent to one million times the energy of the Hiroshima bomb, upturning sedimentary formations of 2000 metres and leaving a crater about 20 kilometres in diameter. Erosion has removed the outer rim of the crater, leaving only resistant sandstone remnants of the core near the focus of impact, which was formed when deeply burned sediments were disrupted by the release of massive compressive forces (Flood 1990).

We discussed these stories in the context of trying to understand the land from different points of views, to observe the world differently from how we had been trained in our particular cultural environment. Experiencing a landscape like Tnorula and learning about distinctly different ideas of how it was created opened us to appreciate and respect landscape in a way which many people have lost through busy, complicated, modern lifestyles. Such experiences are important as they help us to become, again, more sensitive to the inherent relationship between people and land. We agreed that the value of the day's experience lay in the notion of seeing *both ways*. We didn't need the two stories of Tnorula to be printed on a bill-board to realise this. Just to walk through the landscape, aware of our own senses, helped us to respect that this landscape has always been, and no doubt will always be, a significant place for somebody else's culture.

The air chilled and the flames of the fire reduced to coals. Lying on the tarp, we gazed at a clear sky with a view of the stars that can only be experienced in the desert. The dancing women stretched from the sky's eastern horizon to the dark but unseen form of Tnorula; at their centre was the dark shadow of the Emu, which can always be seen in the Milky Way on a dark, clear night.

1. Stencils are a common feature of rock art, produced by holding an object against a rock face and, with the mouth, spraying liquid pigment around it so that a negative image is created. Stencils of the hand are the most frequent, but objects such as weapons provide information about changes in material culture.

Reference:

Flood J. 1990. *The Riches of Ancient Australia*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane.