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REPORT

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Abstract

INSIDE OUTSIDE BUSINESS: research into questions of Australian identity. This work explores issues that frame my identity as a non-Indigenous Australian in relation to those issues that frame the identities of two Indigenous Australians of the Larrakia Nation. Through this investigation, my intent is to demystify aspects of Larrakia people and their culture, explore issues surrounding the representation of the Australian Indigenous people, and achieve an understanding of my own identity within contemporary Australia.

A study taking the form of an exhibition of a website exhibited at the Canberra School of Art Gallery from February 25th to March 2nd, 2000 which comprises the outcome of the Studio Practice and other Units, together with the Report which documents the nature of the course of study undertaken.

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Introduction

I feel it is important to briefly illustrate the events leading to the commencement of this research, so as to establish the frame through which I have approached this work.

I am a New Zealand-born Australian citizen. My family moved to Australia in early 1975 when I was 10 years old, having lived in Tonga during 1973 and 1974. Over the next 5 years of my childhood I lived in the Northern Territory in the city of Darwin, Nhulunbuy, a mining town in Arnhem Land¹ on the Gove Peninsula and Christmas Island, off the north western coast of Western Australia. Apart from three years in Sydney and two years overseas, I have been based in Canberra since 1979.² On my return to Canberra from overseas, I found that after my recent experiences I could not return to the routines my life once had. I had the experience and a maturity that often comes when removing oneself from the comfort of the known. During this re-examination I heard the Aboriginal voice challenging my perspective of the Australian history I had learnt at school. For the first time I heard the word invasion being used when referring to the settlement of Australia. It was during this period of reflection that I began asking questions of myself and others.

I met from Kununurra in Western Australia, the artists of the Waringarri Aboriginal Arts Organisation and their manager Kevin Kelly during a visit they made to Canberra in 1994. Following an invitation, I made a pilgrimage to the Kimberley region in 1995, where I spent time with members of Waringarri, including Kevin Kelly and among others, artist Rover Thomas. An invitation emerged from this visit to develop some collaborative photographic projects with the artists. While exploring funding possibilities to revisit Waringarri, I sought out members of the local Aboriginal community here in Canberra. At one point I was asked why I felt the need to travel to the other side of Australia to involve myself in issues of Aboriginality? I found myself confronting my own misconceptions and ignorance, as I realised I was falling victim to the common misinformed belief that 'true' Aboriginal people are those that live in the outback. In fact, I was to discover that the largest communities live on the eastern coast of Australia. Highlighting this misconception among others has remained central to my work throughout this course of study.

What I did not realise until much later in my course of research, was that I had begun a process of re-examining my relationship with this country and my own personal identity, specifically in relation to Australian Aboriginal Peoples.

I continued establishing contacts in Canberra. My initial introductions were with Susanne O'Neil of Larrakia Country and Flo Grant an Elder of Wiradjuri Country and a member of the Regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

¹ Arnhem Land is an Aboriginal Reserve situated in the northeastern corner of the Northern Territory.

² During this overseas experience I lived and worked in England for a year and spent the second year working as a cruise ship photographer travelling between Cyprus, Israel and Egypt.

Commission Council (ATSIC).³ I also established contact with the then ACT Indigenous Arts Officer Rob Russel. I have found, as a non-Indigenous Australian, introductions are an important way to establish connections with members of the Aboriginal community. It was primarily through these consultations that my initial research proposal emerged to involve members of the local Aboriginal community in a photographic and multimedia documentation of themselves and their culture.

My working method has been significantly influenced by the *After 200 Years* bicentennial photographic project.⁴ The project provided a new perspective for my photographic practice. Taylor summarises this photographic approach in the introduction to this publication, "The approach we developed aimed for a genre of collaborative documentary photography in which the participants could control and direct the work of the photographer, the selection of images and the text that would accompany them."⁵

This framed my approach to a commission I received with two other artists, to participate in the Canberra Hospital Art in Working Life project, *The Heart of the Hospital*, 1995. This project documented hospital employees in their work environment and allowed the exploration of work place issues. It was important to involve the staff in the art production process and incorporate their representation of their work place environment.

I supported hospital staff as they engaged in the photographic process and produced their own photographic interpretations, and I instigated an interview process to inform the images that I produced. This culminated in a collaborative five-by-one metre photographic mural that is exhibited adjacent to the staff dining area at the Canberra Hospital.

For the first time my art practice was to include the voices of others. The experience I gained from this project has heavily influenced the working methods employed throughout this course of study.

The aims and objectives of the initial research proposal were as follows:

- examine issues of racism, stereotypes, representation of Aboriginal people, and attempt to demystify the local contemporary Aboriginal culture and the people themselves;
- inform the wider community of contemporary Aboriginal culture and individual Aboriginal lifestyles and values;
- provide an educational tool and reference/research resource suitable for usage by the indigenous and non-indigenous people of Australia; and
- facilitate the involvement of Aboriginal community members in the art production process.

The proposal included two major phases. Firstly, to produce a body of photographic portraits of, and in collaboration with, prominent members of the Aboriginal community of Canberra. I hoped that this would generate

³Larrakia Country surrounds the Darwin area of the Northern Territory. Wiradjuri Country covers a large part of inland New South Wales and borders with Nguunawal Country which includes the Canberra region.

⁴ Taylor, Penny(ed), *After 200 Years Photographic Essays of Aboriginal and Islander Australia Today*, Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988

⁵ Taylor, 1988

further community interest and participation in the second phase in which I planned to continue to develop the portrait concept but within a multimedia format. I hoped that this medium would allow the possibility of creating multi-layered portraits, generate interest from the participants and the general public, and achieve a wider distribution of the project material.

Working Methods, Relevant Concepts and Contexts

Semester 1 1997

Work and Working Methods

In the first semester of study it was important to gain an understanding of the multimedia medium, both from a conceptual and technical point of view. I met constantly with Rob Russel on production issues and began meeting members of the Aboriginal community to discuss the project. Through these contacts I was invited to be the official photographer for the Aboriginal Nations and the Australian Constitution Conference in May. I also began the portraiture process.

I attended the Photomedia classes in Multimedia and Adobe Photoshop. In the Multimedia class I gained an introduction to production techniques for the World Wide Web and CD-ROM mediums. In the Photoshop class I received an introduction to digital imaging with the software package Photoshop, and the scanning of two-dimensional material. With this early experience and the guidance of regular tutorials with David MacDowell, I began developing flowcharts to explore possible layouts for the multimedia component.

I spent time refining my black and white medium format processing technique during the semester with the fine art photographic print in mind. Once I started digitising the image for the multimedia format, however, I found that while the fine art black and white image suited the gallery wall, it lacked the same impact on the computer screen. I believe this is primarily due to the small presentation size and image resolution of the standard 15-inch computer monitor⁶. Another governing factor is the low display resolution of the computer screen.⁷ This caused a re-evaluation of my

⁶ The compositional space available on a computer monitor reflects the standard of the video card installed in the viewer's computer unit. This determines how many colours can be displayed, and the screen resolution settings available. A significant number of internet users preceding 1998 had monitors operating at screen resolution setting of 640x480 pixels (<http://www.statmarket.com>). What this effectively means is that although the pixel space of the screen is 640x480 pixels, by the time the browser window frame, navigation bar, location bar and any other options are activated, the actual compositional space available is reduced to 600x300 pixels. Any element outside of this area would require scrolling to be seen. While scrolling itself is not necessarily a problem, if the web page relied on being viewed in its entirety and was larger than the 600x300 pixel space, then the visual integrity could be compromised. This could also be used to advantage of course. My layout accommodates this principal. As of 1999, inline with the rapid development of computer hardware, a screen resolution setting of 800x600 pixels can be assumed as the lowest common denominator (statmarket). This gives a non-scrolling compositional space of 720x420 pixels.

⁷ The computer monitor is set at 72 dots per inch(dpi) and it is pointless to present the media at anything higher than this, as the screen is unable display the difference. The lower the resolution of an image, the smaller the digital file size, and the quicker the image will load on screen. This factor is fundamental to the Internet medium.

photographic approach. I now photograph in colour and predominantly on a 35mm camera as this provides more than enough image definition for the computer screen. If I require a black and white image the digital process allows for a simple conversion from colour.

During production discussions with Rob Russel, it was decided that I would interview the participants as the first step of the material gathering process. After evaluation of this material and discussion with the participant, I would then shoot the relevant images. I began developing a series of questions for the interview process, which I would also video as a means of documentation. The video would provide material that could be incorporated into the multimedia format in phase two.

The Aboriginal Nations and the Australian Constitution Conference took place 23–24 May 1997 at Old Parliament House, prior to the Reconciliation Conference the following week in Melbourne. As conference photographer, I was provided with an important opportunity to meet prominent people in the ACT and on a national level who were involved in issues of Aboriginality. This forum improved my historical understanding, and most importantly, brought me up to date on some of the issues being currently debated. I gained for the first time a genuine appreciation for what was to become known as the Stolen Generations. *The Bringing Them Home Report* by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission was about to be released. I also gained a greater understanding of WIK, deaths in custody and for the first time I heard of Aboriginal Sovereignty. Involvement in the conference also increased my profile within the Aboriginal community.

While the liaison and planning was continuing, I felt it was important to begin the image making process. I started by working with Anthony Lee of Larrakia Country who was interested in the photographic process. I had recently been introduced to Anthony and he was happy to make himself available to allow the refinement of my working method. (see fig.1)



fig.1 Images from the first shoot with Anthony.

I also took the opportunity to shoot some images of Susanne O'Neil with her mother while she was visiting from Darwin. Susanne was on the list Rob and I were compiling of prominent members of the Aboriginal community for phase one. Susanne was also an important point of contact as I developed my working approach. I photographed Susanne, her mother Mary and her daughter Emma in the urban context of Susanne's home. I thought it was an excellent opportunity to include the three generations of women in the same

frame. I placed them in the living room for a formal portrait and included Ian, Susanne's partner and the sword Brighid. Although I had viewed Brighid previously, this was the first time I photographed her. (see fig.2)

Brighid is a spiritual entity represented here on this earth plane as a six-foot sword. She symbolises a blending of Aboriginal spirituality with the Celtic and provides a European framework in which Susanne can offer Aboriginal spiritual guidance and healing. Susanne and Brighid work with many people who no longer find solace in the European religious traditions and are looking to the Aboriginal spiritual traditions for answers. Susan and Brighid assist people to reconnect with the earth spirits and find their spiritual path.



fig.2 Images from the first shoot with Susanne O'Neil.

A difference of opinion regarding the direction of the project began to develop between Rob and myself. Diverging agendas emerged in relation to his role as the ACT Indigenous Arts Officer, and the need on my part for a greater autonomy to enable the freedom to respond to the developments and issues explored through this course of research. My commitments to the academic process could not accommodate all his requirements and expectations. During May, Rob unfortunately decided to withdraw his involvement in the project.

This is always the risk when working in collaboration with others, that a projects' emphasis can shift as it matures and responds to the input of the participants, the material gathered and the artists vision. This left me without a key contact and point of introduction to the prominent members of the Canberra Aboriginal Community. I continued to foster the introductions I had already developed and hoped that these would lead me further.

Relevant concepts and contexts informing the work

This semester I began researching issues of photographic representation, and looked for other photographic approaches to the documentation of indigenous people in Australia. I also looked for other examples of multimedia projects and displays.

I began by investigating the photographs by Nicholas Alder of Aboriginal people, in particular Alder's photographic and conceptual approach. He set out to address his lack of knowledge of Aboriginal people by documenting the Aboriginal people living in the remote areas of central Western Australia.

This project culminated in a touring photographic exhibition and the publication *Portraits from an Uninhabited Land*⁸ in 1988. The title of Alder's project originated from the British declaration on their arrival to Australia in 1788 of terra nullius, that the land was uninhabited.

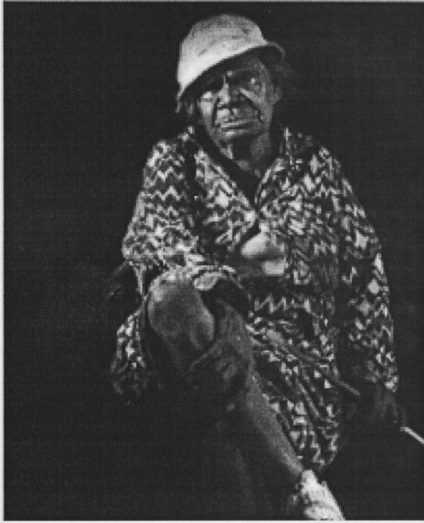


fig.3 Rosie Noonoo Napaltjarri,
Walmajarri/Kukatja, Mulan
Nicholas Alder 1988

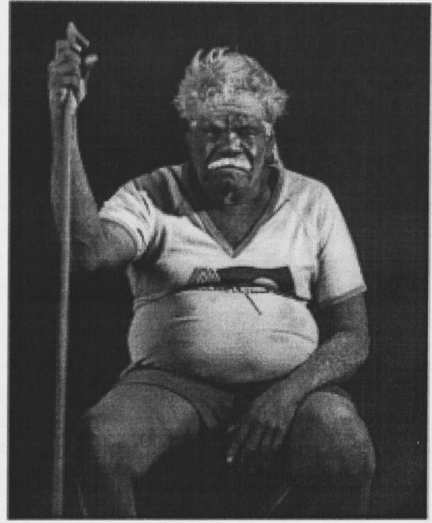


fig.4 Dicky Unghango Wallambi,
Kalumburu
Nicholas Alder 1988

Alder writes in the introduction, "It was with this total lack of knowledge but with the desire to seek out these 'non-existent' people, and with the belief that the key to understanding the mysterious landscape of Australia would be through it's original inhabitants, that this project began".⁹ I felt this summed up my own position reflecting my lack of understanding of Aboriginal people and the country, and the aspiration to rectify this situation through the process of my research.

In response to Alder's work my supervisor Martyn Jolly asked me to consider the text *Race, Representation and Photography*.¹⁰ This publication investigates the manner in which Australian Indigenous peoples had been mis-represented by non-Indigenous photographers. The editor Dewdney questions the ability of non-Indigenous photographers to genuinely represent issues outside their own experience. This perspective was completely new to me and questioned my working method at a fundamental level.¹¹

⁸ Alder, Nicholas, *Portraits from an Uninhabited Land*, Bantam Press, locationnnn, 1988

⁹ Alder, 1988

¹⁰ Dewdney, Andrew(ed), *Racism Representation & Photography*, Inner City Education Centre, Sydney, 1994.

¹¹ It was not until I participated in the art theory unit Points of View in the following semester that I was exposed to Post-Colonial theory and gained the theoretical background to fully realise the issues surrounding mis-representation of Indigenous people by the non-Indigenous gaze.

Alder went to great lengths to take the photographic studio to the 'bush.' By removing his subjects from the context of their 'outback' background and placing them in front of a black canvas, this would remove the distractions of the 'wild west' environment and allow the viewer to see his subjects as individuals.¹² I had thought this an excellent idea and was planning to include the studio setup in my working method. Dewdney again forced me to re-evaluate my approach as he argued that the studio approach decontextualised and actually dehumanised the very individualities Alder was trying to document.¹³

Dewdney had provided a mirror in which I saw that my own approach was in danger of reinforcing the representation of Aboriginal people as objects and the 'exotic'. I revisited the collaborational working method developed in the *After 200 Years* project,¹⁴ which I hoped would ensure my approach and work would avoid this problem, and not fall victim to the 'white gaze'.

In response to this theoretical exploration, while photographing Anthony Lee, I sought to place him within an environment, a context, to anchor rather than have Anthony floating in an indeterminate space as with the Alder approach. After discussion, Anthony and I chose an outdoor location with spiritual significance within the Canberra region. We hoped this representation would place Anthony within both Country and the urban context. (see fig.1)

This theoretical discussion also influenced my approach to the images of Susanne O'Neil. I positioned the three women in front of Susanne's house to include the urban context. I also suggested that I photograph the family in their living room in the European tradition of the formal portrait. I wanted to maintain the urban context and specifically refer to the suburban home. I hoped that this living room could be read as the living room of any other Australian, whether Aboriginal or not (see fig.2).

I visited the indigenous exhibition at the Museum of Sydney and paid particular attention to the multimedia component. The exhibition approach was aimed at the general community and international visitors. The information was very accessible and did not presume any prior knowledge. This approach mirrored aspects of my strategy. The multimedia aspect I found very informative and provided excellent ideas for my own project planning. Particularly interesting was the use of a photographic collage as the entry point. The individual images that formed the collage were active, and gave access to the section of the project relevant to the image selected. The navigation system was simple and effective and was to influence my approach later in the semester.

¹² Alder, 1988

¹³ Dewdney, 1994

¹⁴ Talyor, 1988

Semester 2 1997

Work and Working Methods

Following the departure of Rob Russel and in light of the knowledge I had gained in the multimedia classes the previous semester, I began this semester re-evaluating my initial proposal and questioning the viability of these plans. I began developing material with Susanne O'Neil and Anthony Lee after successfully gaining their involvement in the project. I continued to develop my multimedia concepts and skills through research, discussion with my supervisor and industry contacts, developing flowcharts and continuing to attend David MacDowell's multimedia class. This included investigating QuickTime Virtual Reality (QTVR), the video digitisation process and extending my HTML skills.

Without the facilitation offered by Rob's involvement, and in consultation with my supervisor, I concluded that the original plan was too ambitious within the time frame of this course of study. I needed to reduce the numbers of other people involved to simplify the project. I had established a good relationship with Susanne O'Neil and Anthony Lee and I successfully invited them to become involved in the project. Not having to dedicate time to seeking the involvement of many more people and establishing new working relationships, I could spend that time generating a greater detail of material and exploring theoretical issues. For instance, how do I as a non-Indigenous Australian represent the Australian Indigenous story?

Creating a website and a CD-ROM would demand considerable conceptual and technical development time and I felt I needed to commit to one medium or the other. I was influenced by a discussion with Simon Pockley who believed that the opportunities existing with the Internet outweighed those of the CD-ROM.¹⁵ This confirmed a general shift within the electronic arts at this time, away from the CD-ROM to the Internet. This was largely due to the technological advances taking place within this medium and after consultation, I made the decision to concentrate on the Internet and develop a website.

The World Wide Web (WWW) had disadvantages in relation to the limited capacity at the time of its programming language Hyper Text Markup Language(HTML). A website is also at the mercy of the capacity of the viewer's computer, the brand and model of WWW browser installed, and the speed of the modem connection available. These limitations were offset however, by the ability of the website to be available on a global scale and the ability to update the work at any stage without disrupting the distribution process. Once a CD-ROM has been burnt, updating is only possible by re-burning and redistribution. This access and immediate updating ability is one of the Internet's greatest assets. The work can achieve a fluidity that can go beyond the original intent as the artist gains a greater understanding of the material and medium, and the site responds to the input of a global audience.

¹⁵ Simon Pockley whose doctorate through RMIT revolved around the website "A Flight of Ducks."

I commenced the interview process this semester with Susanne and Anthony. I interviewed Susanne first, which I documented on video. I put together a selection of questions that would allow a conversational style approach to the interview and raise issues of identity, family, relationships and spirituality. I also asked Susanne to talk about some of the common misconceptions and clichés she had experienced living in Canberra. Pauline Hanson and the One Nation Party were at this time generating extensive media coverage and this was also discussed.

A number of important details emerged from the interview. This included the Larrakia People's social structure that informs Susanne's identity and frames the relationships with her family. We also discussed issues surrounding the blending of Aboriginal and Celtic spiritual forms.

I employed a simple cinematic approach to the interview. I was conscious of how the video would influence the viewer's perceptions of the material. Placing Susanne in the landscape I felt ran the risk of repeating clichés; however, it was a step forward from the studio environment context as explored last semester through Alder's work. Although not entirely happy with this solution, I felt it important to at least begin the documentation process and hoped a more appropriate context would emerge. After filtering the afternoon sun through a photographic scrim, which softened the light, and using the on-camera microphone, I set the camera on a tripod and allowed it to run throughout the interview from the one angle.

On viewing the material, a few problems were immediately apparent. Using the on camera microphone proved to be flawed. The microphone emphasised the surrounding ambient sounds, including a background hum from city traffic, which muddled the recording of the voice. I sought the input of Judith MacDougall.¹⁶ She suggested the use of a specialised microphone mounted on a boom, bringing the microphone closer to the subject and also the use of a better quality video camera.

While I had been concerned with the landscape's context, I was not prepared for the effect generated by setting the camera to only include Susanne within the visual frame of the video. Using a one shot approach, focusing only on Susanne with my voice asking questions out of shot, produced a dislocation of my presence, of my identity for the viewer. The visual approach I had employed was in danger of reinforcing the colonial gaze and would again place me outside the frame, looking in.

While digesting this information and looking for a solution, I found the Art School had a SVHS camera, but accessing a cardioid microphone was proving more complicated.¹⁷ While the search to obtain better quality sound continued and conscious of not wanting to have my work stagnate while trying to solve technical difficulties, I interviewed Anthony using the SVHS camera and relied again on the camera's microphone. However, during this shoot I included myself in the shot. The resulting shooting technique was still visually crude, although at least an improvement on the previous approach.

¹⁶ Judith is a documentary film maker who works in partnership with her husband David MacDougall at the Centre for Cross Cultural Research ANU. I meet Judith and David through the art theory unit *Points of View*.

¹⁷ Super VHS video offers a higher optical and audio recording than standard VHS.

With Anthony I employed a similar thematic approach to the interview with Susanne. I asked questions around Anthony's identity, his family and his spirituality. I also asked questions relating to his art practice and sought his opinion on issues regarding the current reconciliation debate in Australia.

The history surrounding Anthony's surname of Lee emerged as he discussed his Larrakia identity. Lee comes from Anthony's grandfather Jimmy Su Lee, whose father was Chinese and mother Japanese. Anthony mentions in the interview that it was not uncommon to have relationships formed between the Asian and Aboriginal people in the northern areas of Australia due to the close proximity of Indonesia and Asia. This aspect was to become a feature in the final work as it challenged my notions of what constituted Aboriginal. Here was someone who was Aboriginal yet had a Chinese name.

We talked about the layers of meaning in his work, which he referred to as inside outside business. Anthony used this expression when referring to the layers of meaning accessible to the viewer in his artwork. This accessibility is determined by the relationship with the artist and the amount of Larrakia traditional knowledge available to the viewer. This typified my position in relation to Australian Indigenous issues and lay at the very core of this research proposal. I felt I was on the outside, that I lacked the knowledge to understand the Indigenous code. Through this course of study, I sought to reflect my journey as I traveled from the outside, through these layers of code, to the inside, to a point of understanding. Using Anthony's expression, inside outside business as the title of the project seemed encapsulated this. The challenge now was to represent this journey in such a way as to remain approachable for those who did not have the code, or to perhaps at least offer a key.

In David MacDowell's multimedia class, I explored the process of digitising the video material. The digitised video, however, was proving to be a significant problem in a couple of areas. Firstly, the file sizes that video generated, even with the use of file compression and the streaming process for viewing, meant that the viewer had to wait long periods of time before the video would play. It was also necessary to have the appropriate plugin installed before the internet browser could download the file. After further trials and discussions with David, I decided that the effort required by the viewer to observe the video file outweighed the impact the video was actually having on the work. I decided to simplify the process and include the audio file only. This achieved considerable file size reduction and, in conjunction with the streaming audio process, seemed a satisfactory compromise. Including audio on the website, I felt would enrich the experience for the viewer, but more importantly, help anchor the presence and identity of Susanne, Anthony and myself within the work. I began to develop the HTML and a Shockwave player to play the audio tracks online.

I felt it important to place my work within the urban context to challenge the common colonial representation of Aboriginal people as the exotic native living in the Outback. I sought to highlight that Aboriginal people are living in the suburbs just as the majority of Australians are, in houses that just as well could be the viewers' own.

I thought this concept would be ideal to combine with QTVR.¹⁸ It would be possible to represent the participant's living rooms using this technique, and utilise this as a means of entry to related sections of the website. This would not only provide an interesting interactive approach, but more importantly I hoped to highlight that these living rooms could just as well be located in any other Australian middle class household. Once here, the viewer could scan the domestic space and enter further areas of the website by selecting objects in the living room. For example, clicking on the family portrait hung on the living room wall as a means of entrance to the section that discusses the family structure.

After refining the photographic technique using my living room as the testing ground, I reconstructed Susanne's office at the University of Canberra. I saw this as a means of familiarising Susanne with the process before asking to document the personal space of her living room. This also gave me a means of thoroughly testing the material on the WWW before taking it further.

On gaining a better understanding of the QTVR production process, I realised it would be possible through the digital process to expand on the usual linear approach of representing only one space within the one scan. The QTVR process calls for a 360-degree photographic scan of still images to document the space. These images are then digitally stitched together to form a seamless image with no apparent beginning or end, giving the viewer the impression they are scanning around a three-dimensional space. With careful application in Photoshop it would be possible to blend two different spaces. For example, Susanne's living room dissolves into a personally significant space in the landscape and then back to the living room. This takes place within the one 360 degree scan and is not to be confused with the process of offering a multi-node QTVR experience which is like moving through a door from one room to another.¹⁹ This possibility was not followed up at this point due to other priorities including the urgency of gathering further source material with Anthony before he returned to Darwin. Now that his studies were finished he was returning to be with his children.

I continued to develop the flowchart illustrating possible layouts for the website. The flowchart presented for the previous semester's assessment did not reflect the decision to focus on the WWW, nor the possibilities presented by the QTVR process.

I continued to shoot photographic stills, focusing primarily on the documentation of Anthony's art practice. This involved documenting the production of a commissioned wooden carving Anthony was creating for the completion of a Diploma of Arts at the Canberra Institute of Technology, and the documentation of a series of paintings produced for the exhibition

¹⁸ QTVR is a virtual reality technology that produces a 3 dimensional environment on the computer screen, that the viewer can move around and through using their computer keyboard and mouse. It is created by photographing the space with a standard stills camera and stitching these 2 dimensional images together to form the 3 dimensional effect.

¹⁹ Brisson, Dominique, *Musee d'Orsay Virtual Visit* CR-ROM, Montparnasse Multimedia, France, 1996. This CD-ROM is a very good example of what is possible with the standard approach to QTVR.

“Expressions of Day and Night”, at the Canberra Hyatt Hotel.²⁰ I also photographed at various stages, Anthony, his son Trent, his niece Emma O’Neil, and attempted where possible, to involve myself in the frame.

Anthony has two children, Natasha and Trent. In the Larrakia tradition, Anthony is responsible for his son’s education in traditional Larrakia Law, while the daughter’s is her mother’s responsibility. After presenting the images with Trent to my supervisor and my peers in the Photomedia seminar process, the concept emerged of exploring how Anthony balanced his son’s education in traditional Larrakia Law, with that of a state school education and Trent’s experiences living a contemporary Australian lifestyle.

During this semester, I purchased the web authoring software package Macromedia Dreamweaver. In conjunction with an understanding of HTML and Dreamweaver, I have been able to expedite the webpage construction process of my work. I developed a number of web pages as a means of refining my construction technique and testing my concepts and source material in the web environment. This encompassed the development of a Shockwave audio player, navigation system, background image tiles, controlling type and page layout through the use of layers and DHTML, creating links, interactive process of rollovers, and file management systems for the Internet environment.²¹ (see fig.5)

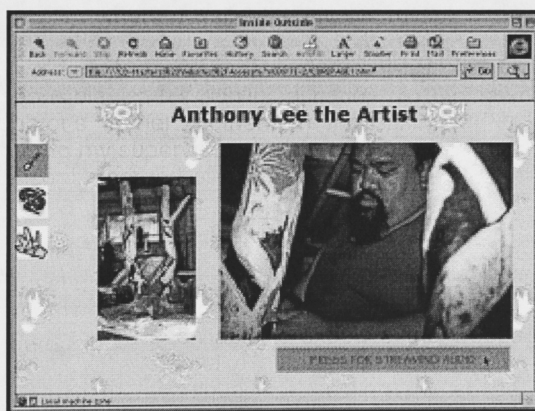


fig.5 Web page example Semester 2/1997

While exploring possibilities regarding the project aim - to inform the wider community of contemporary Aboriginal culture and individual Aboriginal lifestyles and values - I questioned the suitability of the gallery context to effectively compliment this aim. My target audience may not readily frequent the gallery environment and I have also often felt the multimedia art form lacks the presence of the more traditional art forms in the gallery context.

²⁰ This piece was commissioned by Susanne and her partner Ian as a stand for Brighid

²¹ DHTML stands for Dynamic Hyper Text Markup Language and is an extension of the standard HTML. DHTML is the language supported by fourth-generation web browsers.

With this problem in consideration I investigated the shopping mall, the heart of suburbia, which has always attracted my curiosity for its theatre and dynamics of space. I revisited Belconnen Mall with the installation of the website in mind, and watched the interaction of the people, in particular around the food court and entertainment area. It is here that shoppers pause from their missions, film patrons rendezvous, and teenagers hang out. To install a kiosk containing the project at this juncture of time and space, I thought would provide an excellent opportunity to catch the attention of the suburban mind.

Relevant concepts and contexts informing the work

This semester I commenced my first core art theory unit, *Points of View*. The themes investigated through this unit of study provided an awareness and language to articulate theoretical issues surrounding, among others, post-colonial theory. I refined the skills needed to examine and articulate these issues in the written format. I was also significantly influenced by discussions with my peers, in particular two indigenous artists, Rea Saunders and Brook Andrews.²² Rea and Brook were undertaking Post-graduate studies in the Photomedia department at this time. Debates on the Australian national stage of the time were also informing my approach. Wik, the Stolen Generation and the One Nation Party all contributed to the frame through which I was viewing my work.

Through the theory unit I reviewed the exhibition *Portraits of Oceania*, and then extended this theoretical discussion with the inclusion of the exhibition, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*.²³ *Portraits of Oceania* was a series of photographs of the Indigenous peoples of Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa taken around the turn of the Nineteenth Century by colonial photographers. The first essay discussed European principles of ethnographic representation of the time, the influences that lead to the uniformity of the facial expressions of the photographic subjects, and how the gallery context influenced the reading of these images.

The second review extended the theoretical discussion to include the exhibition *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*. The two exhibitions, I argued, ask the viewer to re-examine the past, in light of the present, to look again at the information on which current Australian history has been based. Previous documentation of the late nineteenth century has historically seen Aboriginal people "framed within a European culture...locked into a European viewpoint."²⁴

Studying these two exhibitions side by side, it becomes apparent that each exhibition informs the other and establishes a broader perspective and appreciation of the complexity of the relationship between the Indigenous peoples and European colonialists. This highlights the need to re-examine the established colonial histories of Oceania, and the failings of European

²² Rea Saunders in her art practice drops her surname and identifies herself as Rea.

²³ *Portraits of Oceania*, Art Gallery of New South Wales 1997, curator Judy Annear. *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, National Gallery of Australia, 1994, curator Andrew Sayers

²⁴ Sayers, 1994.

principles of ethnographic representation. "For the colonial photographer this crisis of recognisable signifiers was increased by the presence of Indigenous people whose representations lay outside the visual codes of Europe".²⁵

Earlier in the semester I examined the CD-ROM *Under a Southern Sun*.²⁶ This CD featured nine prominent Australian artists and included a portrait, a profile, significant works and audio of each artist. I investigated the navigation system, the interface design, the layout, and constructed a flowchart for my reference. Overall, it was a very accomplished production and an important influence. An alarming production note was the team of professionals who put the project together. This included a production manager, graphic designer, director software specialist, audio technician, and a researcher. There were also specialists involved in the collection of the source material. It took this team approximately a year to produce the CD. This was a note for concern questioning my own expectations relating to the outcome of the multimedia aspect.

The time I have had discussing the project with my peers throughout the course has been invaluable. In particular this semester, discussions with Rea Saunders and Brook Andrews have broadened my perspective. Rea talked about placing the Aborigine in the centre of the urban frame and the lack of work investigating this concept. These discussions helped to clarify and nourish my own thoughts regarding my work and the urban Aboriginal experience. I discussed with Brook the 'white gaze' and possible ways to avoid reinforcing this colonial frame. Brook asked me to consider turning the camera on myself.

Semester 1 1998

Work and Working Methods

I had to simplify my construction approach to the website this semester which meant some tough decisions regarding the techniques I had spent time developing over the last couple of semesters. I started to build the website as a complete unit with the intention of going online this semester. I also produced some further documentation material with Susanne O'Neil.

Re-accessing the web pages I created last semester, I found a number of problems stemming from the fact that the large majority of Internet users were not in the habit of constantly upgrading their web browser and installing the latest plugins. This generally resulted in the public being a generation of browser behind the latest release. Without the latest browser and although prompted to install a plugin if a web page requires it, the viewer often would simply go elsewhere. The pages I had put together all required the latest browser, not to mention that DHTML behaves differently in the different brands of browser, and specialist plugins to view the audio and the QTVR. The earlier design concept to develop the QTVR as the gateway to each main section of the site did not eventuate because of this reality. If the viewer did not have the QTVR plugin, the whole site would effectively collapse.

²⁵ Fox, Paul, *Portraits of Oceania*, *Portraits of Oceania*, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, 1997.

²⁶ *Under A Southern Sun* CD-ROM, National Gallery of Australia, 1997

I began rebuilding the website with the plan to go online this semester. Using the website design philosophy articulated by David Siegel, I produced an entry tunnel, moving to a contents page, branching out to the various main sections, and then finishing with an exit tunnel.²⁷ I felt it was important to design the website using this conventional layout approach so as to not distract the viewer from the material, and also in recognition of the generalised audience I sought to engage.

Suzanne O'Hair

Back Home Links Refresh Home Favorites History Search [Print](#) [Full Screen](#) [Larger](#) [Smaller](#) [First Page](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Last Page](#)


Address: <http://www.kauai.net/peoples/kauai/peoples/ohair/ohair.htm> (1/2000) after the 2000 census (2/2000) [Go](#)

Hello, my name is Suzanne O'Hair.


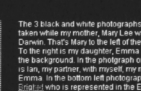

My mother is a Elder of Larrakia Country, in the Northern Territory of Australia.

I am the eldest of 15 children, the mother of 3 children myself, and also now a grandmother

If you would like to know more



The 3 black and white photographs below were taken while my mother, Mary Lee was visiting from Darwin. There Mary is the left of the top photograph. To the right is my daughter, Emma and that's me in the background. In the photograph on the right there is Jan, my partner, with myself, my mother and Emma. In the bottom left photograph my husband (English) who is represented in the Earth dimension in the form of a sword.

*** central, rose - mother - full ***

fig.6 Susanne's Introduction page

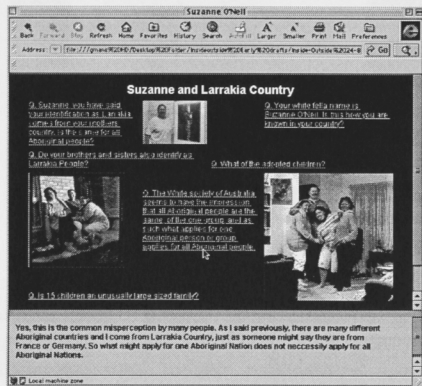


fig.7 Susanne's Question and Answer page

²⁷ Siegel, David, *Creating Killer Websites*, Hayden Books, New York, 1996

required the viewer to click on the questions before the answer would appear in the second frame. (see fig.7)

My voice was to emerge through the journal concept, which went through various draft phases before finalising in the current form. (see fig.8) The first page I created sought to reflect my response to the National Sorry Day acknowledged on the 26 May 1998.

I created a background tile to generate the page metaphor and scanned handwritten text to contrast alongside the computer generated type. I included a short written response to place my voice in the frame and newspaper clippings from the press describing the day. I also provided links to other websites as a springboard to further references, ATSIC the Sorry Day section of the Australian Cultural Network, and Apology Australia, a site providing the opportunity to record an apology online. Inserting these links placed the page outside a simple representation of a journal and embraced one of the fundamental applications of the Internet, that of linking information.

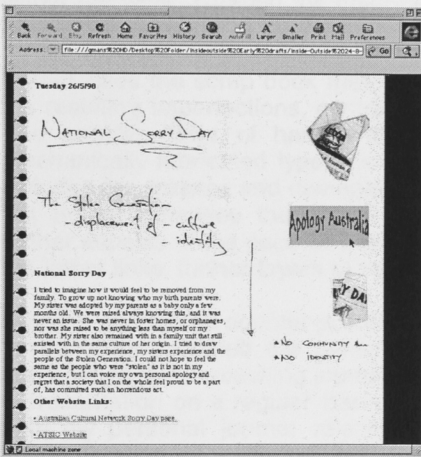


fig.8 Sorry Day Journal page

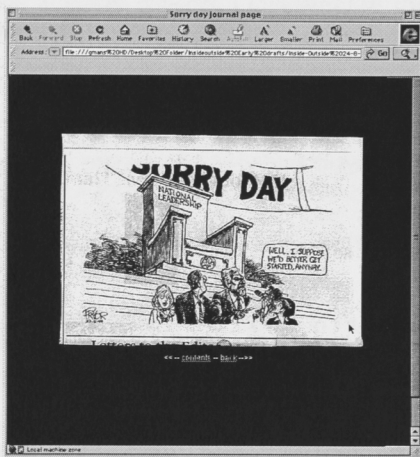


fig.9 Opened section of Diary page

Establishing the procedure to go online was largely facilitated by the Dreamweaver software once I had gained the necessary ANU permissions; however, my file management technique required further refinement. One extra space or letter in a file name and the web page would not load, or locating an image in the wrong folder and the browser would not be able to display it. This is a very tedious aspect of the Internet, but precise attention to detail must be maintained. Positioning the work online is the final stage in the construction process as it is only here that the work can be fully tested for functionality.

Exhibiting the work in the public domain for the first time, I approached with a sense of trepidation, largely due to the lack of resolution of the project material. In the current climate surrounding issues of Aboriginality and representation, the Alder experience reminded me how easy it is for a non-Indigenous person, despite their best intentions, to have the work

misinterpreted. The standard working practice of more traditional art forms, includes a resolution of the concepts and artwork in the privacy of the artist's studio before exhibiting in the public domain. The site was online, and I felt my unresolved work was laid bare for public scrutiny. In hindsight, I realise now that it is one thing to have the work online, it is another to have people locate, and access the work. For a viewer to access the work through a search engine, it is necessary first to notify those search engines that the site exists, and with an address as obscure as the ANU student addresses,²⁸ it was highly unlikely anyone was going to stumble across the site. Nevertheless, at the time and influenced by my previous work practices, I was uncomfortable with the work being in the public domain.

Relevant concepts and contexts informing the work

Researching material on the web I discovered the online work, *The Place* by Joseph Squier.²⁹ *The Urban Diary* component of Squier's website inspired the illustration of a journal component as a means of including my voice within the work. Through the theory unit, *Arguing Objects*, I investigated the Aboriginal Memorial in the National Gallery of Australia (NGA).³⁰

Squier uses the scrap book metaphor, retaining a sense of the organic and the resulting imperfections, contrasting the perfection of the digital medium. The angelic flaws of hand written text counters the perfection of the mechanically fabricated type. His diary page retains the punched holes and includes the creases and damaged edges as if torn, hinting at the discarded. Yet Squier polarises the organic with the technology, to link and reveal further aspects of the page as seen in the second image below. By activating the latent links, further layers of meaning are revealed.

Squier's successful counter-pointing of the organic and the digital in the web environment provided the genesis of the conceptual development of two approaches to the resulting journal component of my site. I could construct a representation on a regular basis (for example every month) of the entries from my personal journal relating to my research. This could involve a documentation of collected discussions, references, ideas and images. Secondly, I could construct the journal page around a concept as is illustrated with the Sorry Day journal page. (see fig.8) This approach would benefit from revisiting and further reworking over time, reflecting the development of the ideas expressed.

²⁸ At this time the site address was <http://www.anu.edu.au/~s3090141>

²⁹ Joseph Squier is Associate Professor, Head of Research Initiatives, Coordinator of Curriculum, Media Narratives Center, School of Art and Design, University of Illinois. His work *The Place* can be found at <http://www.art.uiuc.edu/ludgate>

³⁰ Ramnaging Artists, 1987-88

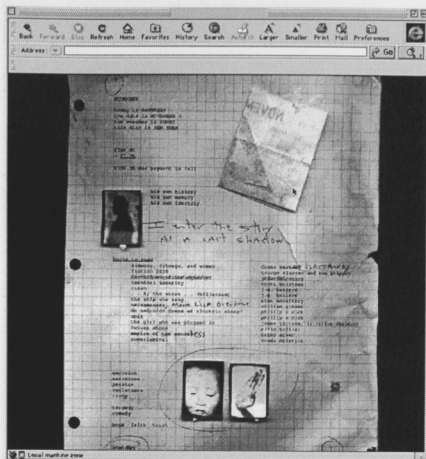


fig.10 Urban Diary by Joseph Squier

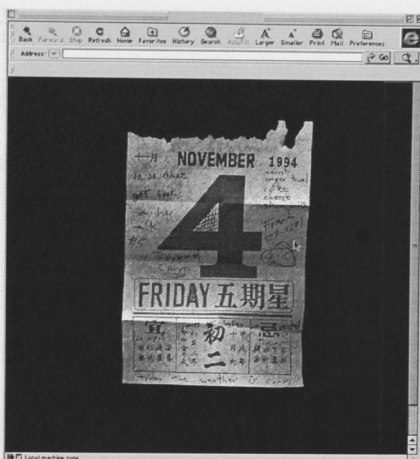


fig.11 Opened section of Diary page

The journal metaphor importantly would allow a sense of freedom of expression, and could demonstrate the development of personal ideas and knowledge reflecting the evolving process of my research. This had much appeal. Within the politically charged public arena surrounding Indigenous issues, my non-Indigenous voice is in constant danger of misrepresentation. The relief I felt with the realisation of the journal concept, made me appreciate the blow to my confidence experienced through the investigation of Alder's work in the first semester of study.

I researched the history of the Aboriginal memorial, examined the implications of the NGA context for this work and contrasted this with the contextual implications of the Australian War Memorial Museum (AWM). I also extended the post-colonial frame explored last semester, to include an investigation of the approaches to memorialisation of Australian history from an Indigenous perspective, and how this has been influenced by counter-memorial code used in Germany to memorialise the Holocaust. In the following semester this research was to inspire the creation of a digital representation of the Aboriginal Memorial within the Australian War Memorial context, and another representation with the iconic *Sunbaker*, 1937 by Max Dupain.

Semester 2 1998

Work and Working Methods

I commenced this semester with the creation of the digital placement of the Aboriginal Memorial within the AWM context. (fig.12) This was an excellent means to illustrate the theoretical discussions explored in the Art Theory unit Arguing Objects of last semester.

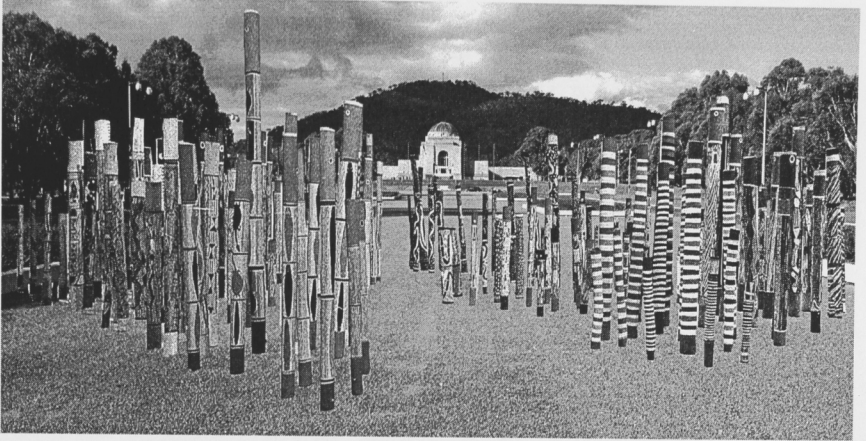


fig.12 Aboriginal Memorial as Counter-memorial

Here the artwork is clearly positioned in the colonial code of the war memorial tradition. This cross-cultural reference between the Aboriginal Memorial and the unknown soldier tradition, serves as an excellent entry point for non-indigenous Australians to read the political message of the artwork within their own "national myths surrounding war."³¹ Installing the memorial as illustrated framing the entrance to the AWM, would provide the environment in which to encourage an alternative perspective while viewing the other works in the AWM.

It is important to note that there currently exists on permanent exhibit only one memorial acknowledging the Aboriginal involvement in past Australian conflicts. This takes the form of a plaque attached to a rock in the Mount Anislie Reserve behind the AWM. It is not located on the AWM grounds nor is it clear how to find this memorial. When I inquired at the information desk inside the Museum, the attendant knew of the memorial's existence, however could not explain how to find it.

Having gained an understanding the symbolic value of the Aboriginal Memorial within the European tradition of the war memorial, I looked for other possibilities. The iconic value of Dupains' Sunbaker 1937 within the Australian national identity provided another excellent opportunity to recontextualise the Memorial. (see fig.13)

Illustrating jointly the Sunbaker with the Aboriginal Memorial combines a significant national icon of the Australian Non-Indigenous culture with an equally significant national icon of the Indigenous culture. Through the placement of the Sunbaker over the Aboriginal Memorial I hope to invoke a sense of the Non-indigenous culture as the blithe sleeping giant, unaware of the grave it covers. The burial poles perforating the base of the sun baking figure represent the emergence of the increasing numbers of voices representing the Indigenous perspective.

³¹Hall, Lee-Anne, *Aboriginal Art - Resistance and Dialogue. The Political Nature and Agency of Aboriginal Art*, School of Art Theory, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, 1995.



fig.13 Aboriginal Memorial and Sunbaker

This image in part depicts my own experience. Prior to the commencement of this research I was the sunbaker, oblivious to Indigenous issues, enjoying the sun, surf and sand of my culture, blissfully unaware it was largely at the cost of the Australian Aboriginal people.

Continuing to work with the myth surrounding Aboriginal people and the urban environment I asked Susanne to participate in a shoot with the sword Brigid. This was also an opportunity to work with Brigid and discuss the blend of Aboriginal and Celtic spirituality she represents. (see fig.14)



fig.14 Brigid and Susanne



fig.15 Brigid and Susanne in web context

³² The text at the bottom of the web page reads: The Bear is a guardian of the physical world and represents the power of the family. The bear symbolises strength, determination, bravery, introspection, and inner knowledge.

At the time I was discussing the representation of the sword Brighid with Susanne, the sword resided in the garage. The carving supports her and at the base are crystals, some rocks and Aboriginal carvings. The first time I documented this scene the garage door was closed. From the discussion of the work prints with my supervisor, emerged the suggestion to open the garage door to locate Susanne and Brighid firmly in the suburban context. What also materialised was the reference to the urban shrine.

Placing the image on the website I established links to describe the significance of the motifs on the carving and other aspects of the shrine. To ground the work I also included some of the garage contents in this process. (see fig.15)

Relevant concepts and contexts informing the work

I spent time with Jon Rhodes while he was a visiting artist to the School this semester. During 1970, Jon had spent time in Nhulunbuy documenting the devastation the Nabalco Mining Company was having on the lives of the Yolnu people at Yirrkala. My experience as an eleven-year-old was somewhat different. Listening to Jon's account reinforced for me the different perspectives that can emerge from within the same environment.

I was also interested how as a non-Indigenous person Jon represented the Indigenous perspective. His working method involves spending long periods living and travelling with the people he is photographing, often revisiting and continuing the photographic process over time. A relationship is established much as I have done with Susanne and Anthony.

Semester 2 1999

Work and Working Methods

This semester has largely been a period of consolidation and refinement of the work. There has also been an important conceptual distillation of the issues surrounding the work.

The website has gone through a major revamp of the interface and refinement of the material. One factor has been the upgrade of the work from a third generation to a fourth generation browser friendly website. The entry tunnel now contains my voice, which frames the work and sets the context.

The writing of this report has provided an excellent process of consolidation of the project material and the theoretical issues explored during this course of research. It has been a time to acknowledge the elements that have been successful, those that have not, and those that are yet to be fully realised.

The exhibition of the material has posed problems. As discussed in semester two 1997, I have often felt that screen presentation of multimedia in the gallery context, lacks the same presence as the more traditional art forms. In response I have organised the use of a data projector to place the website on the wall and have been considering exhibiting excerpts from the website

on the surrounding walls. After discussions with my supervisor Martyn, I have come to the conclusion that these images would appear out of context, and lack continuity normally associated with a body of work exhibited on a gallery wall. It was also important not to distract attention from the website itself, as the projects' strength lies in the context established through the participation of the viewer in the exploration of my journey.

Relevant concepts and contexts informing the work

This semester during the process of consolidation, I revisited all the previously gathered project material. I also realised after discussions with Martyn Jolly, the importance of a self-portrait series I have been working on for a number of years and how this has also been shaping my approach.

Over a number years, I have been working on a self-portrait body of work that emerged from my under graduate experiences. This work has not been exhibited, nor do I have any immediate plans to do so, although they do appear on numerous fridge doors. It is something I contribute to as the opportunity arises and is an outlet, often a light and humorous respite from the pressures of the daily commitments. Generally the images take the form of snapshots. (see fig.16 and 17)

A single line of text drives the images:

**Being a white middle class heterosexual male,
I wondered if I would ever have anything to say.**



fig.16 Cruiseship Photographer with genuine imitation sequin bag, 1993.

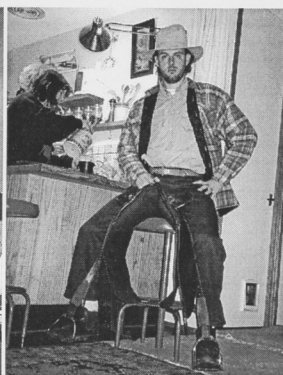


fig.17 Urban Cowboy, 1997

As the emphasis of this project moved away from Susanne and Anthony, and towards questions of my own identity, this self-portrait series gained a greater validity. This work signaled I have been questioning in various forms, the factors shaping my identity since my undergraduate studies, and has been informing my approach from the commencement of this journey of inquiry.

In consultation with my supervisor Martyn Jolly, I decided to employ a similar writing style as used by Jon Rhodes in his catalogue for the Whichaway? Exhibition 1998. The conversational style of the catalogue introduction and the telling of his personal story in the catalogue article *Origins*, invites the viewer to participate in Jon's journey. Importantly this provides an insight into the factors that have shaped Jon's life and provides the frame through which the viewer can place his work. I felt this was an appropriate approach to convey my story.

Conclusion

The project has been through some significant changes since commencement of this research. Some of these changes have been out of my control while others have reflected my new appreciation of the electronic medium and theoretical based issues.

The initial proposal relied heavily on the involvement of other people to facilitate the completion of the work. When this did not eventuate, the work shifted to include only two Indigenous people and perhaps most importantly, the addition of my voice. The emphasis of the project shifted from telling the story of others to the articulation of my own.

The involvement of only two other participants has allowed broader latitude in which to explore relevant theoretical issues. This has included a greater understanding of the photographer and subject relationship particularly regarding the representation of indigenous people, and the importance of acknowledging my perspective through which the work is framed. This has also allowed the opportunity to explore the cultural complexities of Anthony and Susanne's backgrounds.

The shape of the artwork has shifted from the CD-ROM format to the creation of a website. This reflects the advances in technology and the greater distribution of the project the Internet medium allows. This is in keeping with the initial project aims.

Throughout the course of study, I have battled constantly with my own expectation that I should be somehow incorporating the larger issues represented in the media and discussed on the national stage. Reconciliation, WIK, the Stolen Generations, the debate stimulated by the One Nation Party among others. I have come to realise that these issues are far too complex to solve for one person within one research project, and I ran the risk of losing Susanne, Anthony and myself as individuals. This individualism is an important aspect as it grounds the work and provides a personal aspect to which the viewer can identify. In regards to solving the issues the work raises, I now realise if I can encourage the viewer to ask questions of themselves, then to a large extent I have been successful.

There is enormous potential for this project to continue evolving. The possibility to generate an email dialogue with the viewers, myself, Anthony and Susanne, the expansion of the journal concept as my inquiry continues, and broadening the scope of the hyper-links to other websites. There is also the possibility of other installation spaces through the use of kiosks in locations such as shopping centres and public spaces.

It has been important to bring some of the issues raised throughout the project to a sense of resolution. During the final stages I have arrived at the significant realisation that the main focus of this work is not about the indigenous story, although this story is represented. It is about the process of re-examining my relationship with this country and my identity within this context, specifically in relation to the Indigenous people of Australia. Having I believe achieved this, and as I look back at my original research proposal, to a large extent it is only now I feel I am in the position to finally begin.

Addenda

Proposals

Initial Project Proposal 1996

Master of Visual Arts by Course Work

Documentation of Contemporary Aboriginal Culture of the Canberra Region

Aims and Objectives of Research Proposal

- Document utilising the mediums of photography and multimedia computer packages, the contemporary culture of the local Aboriginal communities in the Canberra region.
- Communicate and inform the wider community of Contemporary Aboriginal Culture and individual Aboriginal lifestyles and values.
- The project will examine issues of racism, stereotypes, representation of Aboriginal people through photography, and attempt to demystify the local contemporary Aboriginal culture and the people themselves. As the project develops, the consultative process with community members and Art School staff will highlight further issues and these will be taken on board as they arise.
- Provide an educational tool and reference/research resource suitable for usage by the Aboriginal and wider community.
- Facilitate the involvement of Aboriginal community members in the art creation process. Each portrait will be a collaboration between the artist and the participating community members.
- Mount an exhibition which creates community interest and participation in the further development of the project - Phase One.
- Produce an interactive multimedia CD-ROM, WorldWide Web site and exhibition - Phase Two.

Methods and Resources

- Research existing reference material including relevant books, articles, previous photographic and electronic media projects.
- Working method and technique, developed during the "Heart of the Hospital Project", will provide the foundation for the artists working method and outcomes of this Masters Study.
- Members of the Aboriginal community will be consulted. This project has been discussed with and endorsed by Rob Russel the ACT Indigenous Cultural Development Officer. Introductions to the community will be facilitated by Rob Russel and other prominent members of the community.
- Interview participating community members to acquire background material and develop the appropriate approach for each individual portrait.
- Produce a portrait of the participant in their own environment based on the interview information and consultation with that person. This environmental portrait will be the central image of each piece.
- Further development will take the form of photographic essays created by myself and the community participant to add further depth and detail to the environmental portrait.
- Incorporate text and other relevant material supplied by the participant into the environmental portrait.

- Resources required for the project will include photographic and computer facilities. Photographic facilities will include access to a black and white film processing area and a black and white darkroom. Computer resources will include access to Macintosh compatible hardware able to run desktop publishing, photographic manipulation, and multimedia software packages.

- Technique will be developed through ongoing experimentation and consultation with Art School staff.

Outcomes

- Phase One Exhibition. I envisage this exhibition to take the form of portraits of approximately ten key members of the Aboriginal communities. Each portrait will consist of a single 50 x 60 cm black and white environmental portrait photograph, supported by a photographic essay of 15 to 20 images, 8 x 12 cm each, placed in a single line alongside. Text where appropriate will be worked into the photographs.

- Phase Two Exhibition. I envisage 5 to 10 high-end computer terminals, spaced through out the gallery, running the CD ROM packages and World Wide Web Site. The photo collage portraits that appear on the front page of each portrait, will also appear in mural size on the surrounding gallery walls. There is also the possibility of direct screen projection. This will enhance and reinforce the experience of the multi-layers of the CD ROM portraits. The distillation of the multimedia package onto a World Wide Web site will allow access to the information by those people who lack access to the high-end computers necessary to run CD-ROM packages.

New Skills Required

- Training in multimedia software packages.
- Training in electronic publishing.
- Further development of existing photographic skills as appropriate.
- Build upon existing experience with community art projects.
- Further personal artistic development.

Semester 1 1997 Outline

1 Aims of the project outline

General Aims

- Document utilising the mediums of photography and multimedia, the contemporary culture of the local Aboriginal communities in the Canberra region.
- Communicate and inform the wider community of Contemporary Aboriginal Culture and individual Aboriginal lifestyles and values.
- The project will examine issues of racism, stereotypes, representation of Aboriginal people through photography, and attempt to demystify the local contemporary Aboriginal culture and the people themselves. As the project develops, the consultative process with community members and Art School staff will highlight further issues and these will be taken on board as they arise.
- Provide an educational tool and reference/research resource suitable for usage by the Aboriginal and wider community.
- Facilitate the involvement of Aboriginal community members in the art creation process. Each portrait will be a collaboration between the artist and the participating community members.

Prior Practice and Experience

Photographic Artist for "Heart of the Hospital" Community Arts Project

Wooden Valley Hospital (now Canberra Hospital)

Sponsored by the Australia Council for the Arts through the ACT Trades and Labour Council

- produced 5m x 1m photographic collage mural
 - organised a slide show in conjunction with poetry and song performance
 - photographed hospital staff at work
 - conducted photographic classes for hospital staff
 - facilitated the process for hospital staff to utilise the photographic medium to express work place issues
- See CV for further information if required.

2 Methods and Resources

- Research existing reference material including relevant books, articles, previous photographic and electronic media projects.
- Working method and technique, developed during the "Heart of the Hospital Project", will provide the foundation for the artists working method and outcomes of this Masters Study.
- Members of the Aboriginal community will be consulted. This project has been discussed with and endorsed by Rob Russel the ACT Indigenous Cultural Development Officer. Introductions to the community will be facilitated by Rob Russel and other prominent members of the community.
- Interview participating community members to acquire background material and develop the appropriate approach for each individual portrait.
- Produce a portrait of the participant in their own environment based on the interview information and consultation with that person. This environmental portrait will be the central image of each piece.
- Further development will take the form of photographic essays created by myself and the community participant to add further depth and detail to the environmental portrait.
- Incorporate text and other relevant material supplied by the participant into the environmental portrait.
- Resources required for the project will include photographic and computer facilities. Photographic facilities will include access to a black and white film processing area and a black and white darkroom. Computer resources will include access to Macintosh compatible hardware able to run desktop publishing, photographic manipulation, and multimedia software packages.
- Technique will be developed through ongoing experimentation and consultation with Art School staff.

3 Context

Wider context

- The context in which to view this work I consider at this stage to be within the genre of social documentation. A similar precedent to the *Heart of the Hospital* Art in Working Life Project.

Reference Material

- This proposal has been discussed extensively with prominent members of the Aboriginal community including the ACT Indigenous Arts Officer, and these people have been involved and continue to be involved in the development of this project. Before I launch into any collection of material, I discuss the possible implications to avoid any cultural misunderstandings. This is the procedure I have followed since the project was a raw idea and it is an imperative part of the ongoing consultation and collaboration process employed in my working method.

• *Racism Representation & Photography*. Compiled by Andrew Dewdney. Published by the Inner City Education Centre, Sydney 1994.

• *After 200 Years*. Edited by Penny Taylor for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1988.

4 Anticipated Outcomes

• Demonstration of acquired skills in HTML language and Web design, Director software, and Photoshop software.

• Flow chart of possible CDROM design layout.

• Contact sheets and work prints from initial photographic shoots.

Semester 2 1997 Outline

1 Aims of the project outline

General Aims

• Document utilising photographic and multimedia mediums, aspects of contemporary Aboriginal culture.

• Communicate and inform the wider community of contemporary Aboriginal culture and individual Aboriginal lifestyles and values.

• The project will examine issues of racism, stereotypes, and representation of Aboriginal people. Also attempt to demystify contemporary Aboriginal culture and the people themselves. As the project develops, the consultative process with community members and Art School staff will highlight further issues and these will be taken on board as they arise.

• Provide an educational tool and reference/research resource suitable for usage by the Aboriginal and wider community.

• Facilitate the involvement of Aboriginal community members in the art creation process. Each portrait will be a collaboration between the artist and the participating community members.

Prior Practice and Experience

Photographic Artist for "Heart of the Hospital" Community Arts Project

Woden Valley Hospital (now Canberra Hospital)

Sponsored by the Australia Council for the Arts through the ACT Trades and Labour Council

• produced 5m x 1m photographic collage mural

• organised a slide show in conjunction with poetry and song performance

• photographed hospital staff at work

• conducted photographic classes for hospital staff

• facilitated the process for hospital staff to utilise the photographic medium to express work place issues

• See CV for further information if required.

2 Methods and Resources

• Research existing reference material including relevant books, articles, previous photographic and electronic media projects.

• Working method and technique, developed during the "Heart of the Hospital Project", will provide the foundation for the artists working method and outcomes of this Masters Study.

- Members of the Aboriginal community will be consulted. Introductions to the community will be facilitated by prominent members of the community.
- Interview participating community members to acquire background material and develop the appropriate approach for each individual portrait.
- Produce a portrait of the participant in their own environment based on the interview information and consultation with that person. This environmental portrait will be an important aspect of each piece.
- Further development will take the form of photographic essays created by myself and the community participant to add further depth and detail to the environmental portrait.
- Incorporate text and other relevant material supplied by the participant into the environmental portrait.
- Resources required for the project will include photographic and computer facilities. Photographic facilities will include access to a black and white film processing area and a black and white, and colour darkrooms. Computer resources will include access to Macintosh compatible hardware able to run desktop publishing, photographic manipulation, and multimedia software packages.
- Technique will be developed through ongoing experimentation and consultation with Art School staff.

3 Context

Wider context

- The context in which to view this work I consider at this stage to be within the genre of social documentation. A similar precedent to the *Heart of the Hospital Art in Working Life Project*.
- Discussion of the Australian Identity and how it is perceived.
- The representation of Indigenous cultures and postcolonial theory

Reference Material

- This proposal has been discussed extensively with prominent members of the Aboriginal community, and these people have been involved and continue to be involved in the development of this project. Before I launch into any collection of material, I discuss the possible implications to avoid any cultural misunderstandings. This is the procedure I have followed since the project was a raw idea and it is an imperative part of the ongoing consultation and collaboration process employed in my working method.
- *Racism Representation & Photography*. Compiled by Andrew Dewdney. Published by the Inner City Education Centre, Sydney 1994.
- *After 200 Years*. Edited by Penny Taylor for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1988.
- *Portraits of Oceania*, both the exhibition and the catalogue essays by C.Cooper and A.Harris, B.Croft, P.Fox, and M.Hayes.
- *Pirating the Pacific*, both the exhibition and the catalogue essays by N.Thomas, M.Mackay, R.Gibson.
- "Constructing the Other: Race and Representation", L. Astbury, Photofile No 51 August, 1997
- "Anthropology & Photography: reworking the archive", D.Loscke, Photofile No 37, November 1992,

4 Anticipated Outcomes

- Demonstration of acquired computer skills in:
 - HTML language and Web design
 - Director

- QTVR Panoramas
 - Digitising video
 - Digitising sound
- Put together the flow chart of the CDROM layout, designed in semester one.
 - Contact sheets and work prints from photographic shoots.
 - Video footage

Semester 2 1998 Outline

1. Aims of the project outline General Aims

Continue to develop the website Inside Outside, documenting aspects of contemporary Aboriginal culture. I am continuing to work with the two indigenous Australians from the Larrakia Nation, Suzanne O'Neil and Anthony Lee.

The website seeks to communicate with and inform the non-indigenous community of Australia and international viewers, about issues of contemporary Aboriginal culture and individual Aboriginal lifestyles and values. In this sense I am attempting to demystify contemporary Aboriginal culture and the people themselves. The project seeks to examine issues of racism, stereotypes, and representation of Aboriginal people.

The project aims to reflect my own journey of inquiry as I continue to explore issues informing the reconciliation debate currently underway in Australia.

Prior Practice and Experience

The working method established during my involvement as the photographic artist (or facilitator) for the Heart of the Hospital Community Arts Project is playing an important role shaping my approach for this project. The Hospital project sponsored by the Australia Council for the Arts and the ACT Trades and Labour Council involved documenting not only my own perceptions of hospital life, but also those of the hospital staff. The outcomes included; a slide show in conjunction with poetry and song performance, a 5m x 1m photographic collage mural reflecting hospital working life, the publication of a 72 page book of photographs, songs and written reflections that the 3 artists collected. An important aspect of the project was to facilitate the process for hospital staff to utilise the photographic medium to express work place issues.

2. Methods and Resources

Resources required for the project will include photographic and computer facilities. Photographic facilities will include access to a black and white film processing area and a black and white, and colour darkrooms. Computer resources will include access to Macintosh compatible hardware able to run desktop publishing, photographic manipulation, and multimedia software packages.

It will be necessary to continue to develop my skills in Dreamweaver; a web authoring software package, Photoshop as an image and graphic preparation medium for the website, and other software packages as required.

3. Context Wider context

The context of my work rests within the genre of social documentation and is informed by post-colonial theory. This theory is particularly important in determining the direction and approach of the work. This is reflected in the incorporation of my own story into the project illustrating and identifying the frame through which the work is being produced. The context of my own experience and perceptions as an inquisitive non-indigenous Australian is defining my approach not only to my subject matter and project design, but also defining the intended

audience. This audience I see as other non-indigenous Australians in the general community. Those people who are unlikely to access academic publications or involve themselves in art forum debates.

The work is being constantly informed by current community debate on issues of national identity, representation of Indigenous Australians, and the reconciliation process between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians that is presently under way in this country.

Reference Material

This proposal has been discussed extensively with prominent members of the Aboriginal community, and these people have been involved and continue to be involved in the development of this project. The publication of material is involved in discussions to highlight the possible implications to avoid any cultural misunderstandings. This is the procedure I have followed since the project was a raw idea and it is an imperative part of the ongoing consultation and collaboration process employed in my working method.

See attached bibliography for further references

Influential Website references

- Flight of Ducks at www.cinemedia.net/FOD/

I met the author of a *Flight of Ducks*; Simon Pedock a PHD student at RMIT Melbourne, late 1997. His experience as a non-indigenous Australian publishing material of indigenous Australians and his confession as a WWW junkie has been influential in my own approach to my own website and the material I have been gathering. His views on the WWW as a medium and its accessibility, compared to CD-ROM influenced my decision to concentrate my own efforts in the WWW. Simon's success initiating an email dialogue with himself and visitors, and then publishing that dialogue has become an important aspect in the structure of my own project. This I plan to implement this semester.

- www.art.uiuc.edu/ludgate

The diary aspect of this website by Joesph Squier titled *The Place*, has provided the inspiration for the journal component of my project.

- www.culture.com.au/scan/boomalli/blakkweer/index.html

This site by Brook Andrews and Rea has provided a perspective of sexuality and other contemporary issues affecting Indigenous Australians within the internet medium.

- www.killersites.com

This website provides an important web design and technical resource linking with the book *Creating Killer Web Sites* by David Siegel (see the attached bibliography)

- www.dreamweaver.com

This is a technical support site for Dreamweaver the web authoring tool I am utilising to create my website. This site also provides examples of other websites incorporating Dreamweaver.

4. Anticipated Outcomes

- Demonstration of acquired computer skills in:
 - HTML language and Web design
 - Macromedia Dreamweaver
- Contact sheets and work prints from photographic shoots.
- Develop the aspect of the website discussing Susanne's spirituality blend of Aboriginal and Celtic traditions which is represented in the form of a sword called Brighid.
- Develop the representation within the website of myself and my own history in relation to how I came to be presently in gauged in this project.

- Initiate the Journal aspect of the site to include the Aboriginal Memorial, it's role as a war memorial, and illustrating the relocation of the Aboriginal Memorial to the context of the Australian War Memorial Museum.

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Semester 2 1999 Outline

1. Aims of the project outline
- General Aims

Continue to develop the website Inside Outside, documenting aspects of contemporary Aboriginal culture. I am continuing to work with the two indigenous Australians from the Larrakia Nation, Susanne O'Neil and Anthony Lee.

The website seeks to communicate with and inform the non-indigenous community of Australia and international viewers, about issues of contemporary Aboriginal culture and individual Aboriginal lifestyles and values. In this sense I am attempting to demystify contemporary Aboriginal culture and the people themselves. The project seeks to examine issues of racism, stereotypes, and representation of Aboriginal people.

The project aims to reflect my own journey of inquiry as I continue to explore issues that are shaping my identity and how these issues relate to the shaping of Susanne's and Anthony's identities as Larrakia people.

Prior Practice and Experience

The working method established during my involvement as the photographic artist (or facilitator) for the Heart of the Hospital Community Arts Project (1996) is playing an important role shaping my approach for this project. The Hospital project sponsored by the Australia Council for the Arts and the ACT Trades and Labour Council involved documenting not only my own perceptions of hospital life, but also those of the hospital staff. The outcomes included; a slide show in conjunction with poetry and song performance, a 5m x 1m photographic collage mural reflecting hospital working life, the publication of a 72 page book of photographs, songs and written reflections that the 3 artists collected. An important aspect of the project was to facilitate the process for hospital staff to utilise the photographic medium to express work place issues.

2. Methods and Resources

Resources required for the project will include photographic and computer facilities. Photographic facilities will include access to a black and white film processing area and a black and white, and colour darkrooms. Computer resources will include access to Macintosh compatible hardware able to run desktop publishing, photographic manipulation, and multimedia software packages.

It will be necessary to continue to develop my skills in Dreamweaver and Fireworks; both web authoring software packages, Photoshop as an image and graphic preparation medium for the website, and other software packages as required. I will also need to continue to develop my skills in HTML and dynamic HTML code.

I will also be developing my Adobe Photoshop skills in digital image creation and print output.

3. Context

Wider context

The context of my work rests within the genre of social documentation and is informed by post-colonial theory. This theory is particularly important in determining the direction and approach of the work. This is reflected in the incorporation of my own story into the project illustrating and identifying the frame through which the work is being produced. The context of my own experience and perceptions as an inquisitive non-indigenous Australian is defining my approach not only to my subject matter and project design, but also defining the intended audience. This audience I see as other non-indigenous Australians in the general community. Those people who are unlikely to access academic publications or involve themselves in art forum debates.

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Reference Material

This proposal has been discussed extensively with prominent members of the Aboriginal community, and these people have been involved and continue to be involved in the development of this project. The publication of material is involved in discussions to highlight the possible implications to avoid any cultural misunderstandings. This is the procedure I have followed since the project was a raw idea and it is an imperative part of the ongoing consultation and collaboration process employed in my working method.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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As previously listed

Art Theory References

As previously listed

Influential Website references

- Flight of Ducks at www.cinemedia.net/FOD/
- www.art.uiuc.edu/ludgate
- www.culture.com.au/scan/boomalli/blakkweer/index.html
- www.bratta.com

4. Anticipated Outcomes

- Design a new interface for the website to enable a greater interaction with the site material by the viewer. This new interface will endeavor to create a sense of conceal/reveal reinforcing the Inside Outside Business title and concept of the work. This interface will also endeavor to add a greater level of visual sophistication to the work.
- Insert a new chapter/page explaining the Inside Outside title and concept.
- Develop the portrait chapter on myself in the same style as that of Susanne and Anthony. This will attempt to provide a representation within the website of myself, my own history and story in relation to how I came to be engaged in this project and the journey I have traveled bringing it to fruition.
- Demonstration of acquired computer skills in:
 - HTML and DHTML code
 - website interface design and production
 - Macromedia Dreamweaver software
 - Macromedia Fireworks software
 - Adobe PhotoShop

Exhibition

- Wall project the website for viewer interaction.
- Develop a digital image for each of the portrait chapters; that is an image representing Susanne, Anthony and myself. These images will provide a representation of the material in each of these chapters. This will allow multiple access by viewers and achieve a greater presence for the work within the exhibition space.
- Develop a digital image representing the Brigid chapter.

I would also like to thank the staff of the Royal College of Art, London and especially for their support and assistance in getting through out my studies.

My thanks to Dr. Peter G. Smith for his help and advice with the code and always available for my questions.

A very special thank you to my father, Dr. Peter G. Smith, for his patience, his understanding and his support in my studies and in my life.

The final thank you goes to my mother, Dr. Peter G. Smith, for her patience, understanding and her support in my studies and in my life.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my fellow post-graduate peers for their comments, ideas and support, particularly Rea, Brook Andrews, Sylvia Velez and Cathy Laudenbach.

I would also like to thank the staff, David McDowell, Mary Roberts, Nigel Lendon and particularly Anne Brennan for their guidance and patience through out my studies.

My thanks to Damian Claassens and Mark Gunning for all their help with the code and always answering my phone calls.

A very special thanks to Martyn Jolly for his constant support, inspiration, patience, his ability to pull me back on track and to remain unimpressed until I got it right.

The final thanks goes to Susanne O'Neil and Anthony Lee for their guidance, patience, answering all my questions, inviting me into their homes and for their friendship.

CV Biography

Grant Ellmers

Born 1965, Kaiapoi, New Zealand

Education

- 1997–2000 Candidate for Master of Arts (Visual)
Canberra School of Art, Institute of the Arts, ANU
- 1984–1987 Bachelor of Arts (Visual)
Canberra School of Art, Institute of the Arts, ANU

Group Exhibitions

- 1996 Suburban Supermarkets, Faculty of Environmental Design
Staff Exhibition, University of Canberra
- 1995 Melbourne Streetscapes, Faculty of Environmental Design Staff
Exhibition, University of Canberra
- 1987 Graduating Exhibition, Canberra School of Art, Institute of the
Arts, ANU

Solo Exhibitions

- 1994 Sydney Streetscapes, Tosollinis, ACT

Publications

- 1995 Heart of the Hospital, sponsored by the Australia Council for the
Arts through the ACT Trades and Labour Council

Commissions

- 1995 Heart of the Hospital, sponsored by the Australia Council for the
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Collections

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Weinman, Lynda, *Designing Website Graphics.2*, New Riders Publishing, USA, 1996.

Influential Websites

There were many websites that I viewed throughout the course of my research, the following websites however had a major influence.

www.statmarket.com

www.cinemedia.net/FOD/

www.art.uiuc.edu/ludgate